

Enhancing English Language Skills through a Collaborative Drama Project

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We have to admit that drama activities can give a variety of benefits for English foreign language learners of all ages in Indonesia. This article describes how a collaborative drama project could enhance twenty-seven undergraduate students in the sixth semester of the English education study program of a small private college in Cimahi, West Java, Indonesia. Drama, which could be considered a literary exposure for the participants, is one subject being taught as intra-curricular activities for 3 credit hours per semester, where they took the subject for the whole semester. The final assignment for this subject is a collaborative drama project in the English language. The article summarises the benefits of using collaborative drama activities to enhance the participants' English language skills and offers recommendations for the implementation of similar projects for other language instructors. Further, the challenges of organizing collaborative English language drama projects at the college will be outlined. As the final elucidation of this article, the participants' experiences during the collaborative drama project were analysed briefly through an interview as feedback on the research. Their self-perceived learning through collaborative drama is also highlighted.

Keywords: collaborative drama project, English language learning, undergraduate students

Introduction

In the Indonesian curriculum for all level schools starting from elementary, junior secondary, secondary until tertiary, English is one compulsory subject that must be taught to learners as the first foreign language. At the tertiary level of education such as in our institution, students who are eager to prepare themselves to be English teachers could choose to study in our English study program. We offer a good arrangement and quality of English education since our curriculum has recently been adjusted to the newest governmental law of education to accommodate pedagogical content knowledge, language content knowledge, curricular knowledge, assessment and evaluation, and information computer technology in the curriculum of the English study program.

In our school context, the students are expected to be able to use English in daily life, especially for communication. Thus, English learners need to be actively using English to master it well. Students' involvement and engagement in the learning activities could help them escalate their language skills (Akbari, Naderi, Simons, & Pilot, 2016). One way to enhance students' English language skills is

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by performing a Drama play. Drama activities are not only useful in helping the students acquire foreign language skills, but they can also foster students' development of intellectual, social, and emotional skills (Schenker, 2017). Doing a collaborative drama project provides opportunities for students to engage in learning activities and foster their language skills (Alasmari & Alshae'el, 2020; Guliyeva, 2011; Nanda, 2016; Schenker, 2017; Uysal & Yavuz, 2018).

Previous studies have pointed out some benefits of having a collaborative drama project for students. Alasmari and Alshae'el (2020) found that drama helped students to develop their communicative skills, such as speaking fluency and stronger bonding with the teacher and their peers. In addition, students' motivation, self-esteem, spontaneity, and empathy improved during the drama activity. Another benefit is that the students increased their vocabulary acquisition (Alshraideh & Alahmadi, 2020); and social engagement and language comprehension (Nanda & Susanto, 2021). More empirical studies on the effect of drama exercises on the foreign learner are needed (Uysal & Yavuz, 2018). Thus, this study aims to describe how a collaborative drama project could enhance EFL undergraduate students' language skills, especially in terms of speaking skills at a small private college in West Java, Indonesia, where most of the students are from a homogeneous cultural background that is Sundanese. Some recommendations and challenges in conducting drama activities will also be outlined in this paper.

Literature Review

Drama activities have been employed by teachers in classroom activities. Drama in language learning is seen as an authentic and contextualized learning approach that promotes students' engagement, which is critical for students' language development (Anderson & Loughlin, 2014; Uysal & Yavuz, 2018). Some research found that students who engage in drama activities gained positive effects, such as increased oral language use, creative writing, and reading comprehension as they involve in the activities (Anderson & Loughlin, 2014; Schenker, 2017; Stinson, 2015). Some researchers emphasize that drama provide valuable opportunities to develop students' communicative competence (Alasmari & Alshae'el, 2020; Alshraideh & Alahmadi, 2020; Anderson & Loughlin, 2014; DeCoursey & Trent, 2016; Guliyeva, 2011; Nanda, 2016; Schenker, 2017; Stinson, 2015; Uysal & Yavuz, 2018).

In this article, drama is defined as the portrayal of fictional or non-fictional events through the performance of written dialogue either prose or poetry. Dramas can be performed on stage, in film, or on the radio. Dramas are typically called plays, and their creators are known as "playwrights" or dramatists." Etymologically, the term "drama" comes from the Greek word which means an act or a play and to do or to act. The two iconic masks of drama-the laughing and the crying face- are the symbols of two of the ancient Greek Muses: Thalia, the Muse of comedy, and Melpomene, the muse of tragedy (Langley, 2019). Drama promotes students' communicative competencies through increased language use frequency. It allows them to gain more vocabulary through drama play and peer interactions, have

clearer pronunciation and intonation, enhance fluency, be more expressive, and obtain more knowledge of grammar (Gill, 2013; Schenker, 2017; Thirsk & Solak, 2012).

Additionally, the drama could boost students' communication skills through collaboration with others. Doing drama activities requires collaboration between students-students and student-teachers throughout the process (Nanda & Susanto, 2021; Stinson, 2015). The collaborative activities could help students to develop themselves in cooperating with others, which includes negotiating ideas and giving supportive feedback to achieve a shared goal (O'Toole, Stinson, & Moore, 2009). These activities are helpful to boost their emotional development, interpersonal skills, and teamwork (Dawoud, Hasim, & Saad, 2020; O'Toole, Stinson, & Moore, 2009; Schenker, 2017; Stinson, 2015; Uysal & Yavuz, 2018). As students work together, are heavily involved in the activity, and do something different from the everyday learning activities, their creativity, motivation, and self-confidence could increase along the process (Gill, 2013; Nanda & Susanto, 2021; O'Toole et al., 2009; Uysal & Yavuz, 2018). The increased creativity, motivation, and self-confidence lead to students' achievement and spontaneous language use (DeCoursey & Trent, 2016; Nanda & Susanto, 2021).

Practicing drama also allows the students to widen their perspectives by exploring a world that they never experienced, as they are stepping into others' shoes. This exploration could lead the students to practice their empathy and reflect on themselves as they see the similarities as well as the differences between them and the characters (O'Toole, Stinson, & Moore, 2009; Schenker, 2017). While performing dramatic activities, students need to observe and be aware of their surroundings, as they have to coordinate with other performers. Being aware and reflective of the situation is critical for good dramatic communication (Maley & Duff, 2005). In short, students' affection and focus are being upskilled through drama.

Despite the benefits of doing drama, there are some challenges in conducting drama activities in language learning. Firstly, there are usually not enough credit hours to practice drama in the classroom (Nanda & Susanto, 2021). Due to the limited time, it is quite difficult to set rehearsal schedules that could fit all members of the group (Shcenker, 2017). Secondly, students' creativity in creating, preparing, and performing drama could also depend on the nature of the drama task itself (Jacobs, 2017). In other words, the teachers, school culture, and course expectations could contribute to the drama performance, increasing the complexity of a drama task. Thirdly, the students might have problems memorizing the lines and pronouncing the words, especially when they have to perform a drama in a foreign language (Schenker, 2017). Lastly, logistic and facilities issues could be some of the challenges in conducting a drama play (Shakfa, 2012; Schenker, 2017). Some schools or institutions might not have an appropriate venue to perform the play. In addition, preparing the props, costumes, lighting, and all logistics required for the play could be time-consuming.

Methods

Research Context

This study is conducted in one small private college in Cimahi, West Java, Indonesia where students who want to be English teachers are trained in an English study program. Drama is an intra-curricular subject, which is purposively included in the curriculum of undergraduate study program. The researchers perceived that the uniqueness of this study is that drama is taught to the students who do not have literary or arts background since education is the main emphasis of the English study program. The students are not prepared to be professional actors or actresses, in reverse they just learn how to appreciate literary work through drama. None of the courses in which drama pedagogies play a dominant role, on the contrary drama includes acting out any parts of the play, even some scripts were written by the students themselves. Due to the English study program's interest in artistic student performances, collaborative drama activity was implemented in the English language as a final project at the end of the semester. They would perform their own drama on the classroom stage, therefore they started to form groups, discussed the theme of their drama, wrote the scripts, and decided the content and the characters in the drama. In this phase, the lecturer helped the students direct their own drama, including the length of their performances around 30 to 40 minutes.

Actually, before preparing the collaborative drama the lecturer had explained basic theories of drama, which covered terminologies, history of drama, character and characterization, dialogue, monolog, etc. as it is outlined in the syllabus. It seemed appropriate for a first attempt at staging an entire play. The students were engaged in this activity, particularly because they are going to work in groups collaboratively, which is important in the activity. They had to practice for approximately eight weeks before performing, which made the engagement became more intense. During drama practices, the researchers observed the activity to see the peer interactions that occurred in each group and their speaking ability.

During practice, each group also prepared posters to invite their friends or lecturers to watch their performances. Reading lines was first practiced as their favourite part and discussed with the lecturer their goals and preferences for participation in the play. Before rehearsals began, the lecturer evaluated the scripts and made several cuts if it was needed considering it a challenge for students to memorize the dialogue. The first round of rehearsal consisted of simply reading the lines together. Related to the student's speaking ability, the students assessed each other and gave feedback on their peers' pronunciation, intonation, and pace. They also translated the lines to make sure that everyone in the group had a good understanding of the content, especially their own character lines. After the first round of rehearsal was completed, which took approximately two weeks, the rehearsal moved to the act of their own characters as they were about to perform on the stage. The stage was decorated in their own classroom since the main auditorium was renovated, so they had to use available rooms. It took a long time

for the students to memorize their own lines. Thus, in the first few rehearsals on the stage, they read their texts. Only after the students had memorized all the texts, they were able to act out their roles freely. It was a great challenge for some students to memorize the lines in English as a foreign language. Luckily, they collaborated with their peers in doing it and they motivated each other during the practice session.

After the second round of rehearsals, the participants were more ready to act out the roles and prepared their props and costumes. Actors, the director, and lecturers all contributed to creating and bringing props and costumes. These were important for students as they helped them improve their acting. Towards the end of the semester, as the performance date got closer, each group had its own schedule to have more rehearsals. This improved their capacity to memorize the whole dialogue, acted out their characters in the play more confidently, and performed their drama as well as they could. Some of the students even made some improvisation and gave some new ideas during the practice stage as they had a better grasp of the stories and characters. The rehearsals took half a semester since the other half was used to learn the basic theory of drama, then here it came when each group should perform their collaborative drama.

The plays were performed one Friday morning until late in the evening. The classroom was decorated based on each group's theme, so it took several minutes for each group to redecorate it when shifting from one group to the other. The lecturer, students, and the audience enjoyed the performances tremendously. Some students made improvisations on their dialogues during the play for various reasons. Everyone was proud of his or her achievement in performing their characters in the plays. The performances were a huge success. The researcher as well as the lecturer were so proud of the participants' speaking English dialogue where mostly Sundanese English accents were not as clear as it was during the rehearsals. The basic line as the main focus of this article was why some poor English-speaking students could speak English well during the performance, which the researcher guessed because of drama impact on their English learning. Reflecting, there were certainly some challenges, but also some benefits resulting from collaborative drama activity.

Research Site and Participants

The study utilized a single case study methodology with some elements of ethnography. The study was located within an interpretive paradigm. Ethnographic inquiry is qualitative and naturalistic (Yin, 2018; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011) and peer was carried out without disturbing the natural setting. Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, and Razavieh (2010, p. 29) define case study research as "a type of ethnographic research study that focuses on a single unit, such as one individual, one group, one organization, or one program. The goal is to arrive at a detailed description and understanding of the entity (the "case")."

The selection of the study site was based on the school's reputation of maintaining its own characteristics as one school of higher learning that prepares English teachers in Cimahi, West Java, Indonesia. Besides, one researcher is one

faculty staff in the research site. The participants are the sixth-semester students divided into two classes A and B. Thus, they have learned Speaking subjects for four semesters starting from Speaking 1 (English for survival). For this study, the researchers took one class consisting of 27 students as the participants in which most of them speak Sundanese as their regional dialect or indigenous language since the majority were from several areas in West Java. Their cultural background was resemblance homogeneous Sundanese cultural background. Their English ability belongs to low-moderate level ability seeing from their grades achieved during Speaking subjects. Presumably, this lower speaking ability was caused by their inability to articulate their ideas or opinion in English.

Before this study commenced, we discussed our research project with the participants as part of our research ethics (Bickman & Rog, 2008). Although they did not fill out the consent form openly, they were all well informed about this research whether they agreed or declined to participate in this research project. In this study, the researchers played their roles as participant observers to get the 'emic' perspectives of the students throughout the project. We attended the groups' rehearsals once when they were preparing for their performance. In addition, we also interviewed some of them after their collaborative drama performance. The 27 students were divided into six groups. The name of the groups retrieved from the students' drama titles: *Loo; This Is Love? Fond of You; The Rose of My Eyes; The Puppet; and Kiznaiver*.

This study was conducted to answer the following research questions:

1. How does a collaborative drama project enhance students' English language skills?
2. What are the benefits and challenges of collaborative drama projects performed by the students?

Instruments

Several instruments were employed to gather the data; observation, questionnaire, and interview. The observation was used to provide a detailed description (Mansell, 2011) of the students' collaborative activities and information on their speaking skills. The students' collaborative activities and peer interaction were observed and written in field notes. The students' speaking skill was observed with the help of an observation sheet that was structured from CEFR descriptions of speaking proficiency.

Twenty-seven students were observed in this study. The observation was conducted twice; once during the drama practice of each group, the other one was conducted during the final drama performance. Both of final performance and process of practicing are recorded by video recorder and audio recorder. To figure out the kind of peer interaction that existed during the process of drama performance preparation, as well as students' perception of their speaking skills before and after having a drama performance, we also distributed a questionnaire to all of the 27 participants. It was conducted to gain some insights into the students' points of view related to the peer interactions that existed during drama

performances as well as their speaking skills before and after drama. The data collected from the questionnaire was also used to provide more evidence for the findings (Yin, 2018). The questionnaire consists of 51 questions. It was divided into three sections: peer interaction in collaborative drama; speaking skills in pre-drama and drama activities; and questions related to drama performances.

Finally, to pursue in-depth information around the topic and to follow up on certain responses to the questionnaires and observations (McNamara, 1999), an interview was employed in this study. The result of the interview was analysed to support and assure the discussion from observation and questionnaire data. The interviewee was seven students who represent low, moderate, and high skills in speaking English. The interviewees were given codes such as Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, etc. To abbreviate it, they will be mentioned as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, and P7 in the following sections.

All data from observations, questionnaires, and interviews were all gathered and analyzed by Creswell's (2014) thematic analysis. The data were generated into three themes: peer interaction, benefits of doing drama, and challenges. Each theme is presented in the following section.

Results

This section is devoted to depicting the results of data analysis, which leads to the findings. We displayed the data according to the themes as the focus of the study. We implemented the ways to ensure that the research results are valid by writing the description, interpreting, and triangulating the data from the observation, interview, and questionnaires (Cresswell, 2014). Therefore, the results of data analysis were displayed from the three sources of research instruments.

Peer Interactions

Data from students' interviews showed that peer interaction during the drama practice greatly contributed to the students' speaking and acting skills. Having peers who assessed and gave feedback on their performance during pre-activity was influential in helping them to improve their skills.

"All members of the group gave feedback and suggestions on each other's pronunciation and intonation during the practice" – P2.

Other interviewees also mentioned a similar thing. One of them was P7; she said that her group members gave feedback on other members' Speaking aspects.

"We gave suggestions and corrections on some of our friends' Speaking if there was something off" – P7.

An example of the giving and receiving feedback activity was seen in one observation of practice sessions. When P4 performed his line, he mispronounced "*chill out*" as "*child ot*," his friends immediately gave correction and said "*chill*

out” appropriately. He acquired it and said, “*oh, chill out.*” This interaction represented that the students assessed other members’ speaking skills during the practice and gave feedback to achieve the shared goals. This finding is in line with O’Donnel and Topping (1998) who mentioned that in peer learning, students could assess and be assessed by their peers to achieve a certain goal. This type of interaction was called peer assessment (O’Donnel & Topping, 1998).

The peer assessment in P4’s case above brought a positive influence since it helped him to acknowledge his mistake. The observation data revealed that P4 pronounced the phrase “*chill out*” correctly in the final drama performance. It indicated that the peer assessment also helped him to improve his speaking skill. Moreover, this finding validates Nanda and Susanto (2021) who found out that students’ pronunciation developed through drama activities.

Similarly, P1 admitted in an interview that he could have gained more knowledge on Speaking during the practice period. He added that his peers’ explanation was easy to be understood.

“I acquired a lot of knowledge related to speaking, especially about pronunciation from the drama practice. My peers’ explanation was easy to be understood for me. Also, practicing frequently and being drilled by P7 made me give more effort to performing the play.” – P1

P1’s statement above explained that he acquired more knowledge related to Speaking through more exposure to the language. Having partners to practice his Speaking skill was also indicated as a helpful aspect to bring out his best effort of his during the practice sessions. In other words, peers can enhance one’s motivation during the practice period. This finding resonates with Schenker (2017) who states that drama connects students and allows them to make a learning community.

All of the interviewed students mentioned that their teammates had a role as motivators for them. They encouraged each other to practice and to be able to perform their best. One of the interviewees, P4, said that he acknowledged his teammates as a source of his motivation.

“I see my teammates as my motivation. Whenever I see them, I have a motivation to be able to perform my character well”. – P4

The statement above explicated that there was an emotional element formed along the process of practicing the drama. It validates Anderson and Loughlin (2014) who mention that dramatic activities “engages students’ affective states” (p. 268).

Not only contributing to students’ knowledge and motivation, but peer interaction also contributed to students’ self-confidence when they performed on the stage. For instance, P3 said in the interview that she usually felt anxious when she needed to speak in front of many people. However, she felt much more confident when she performed the drama. She said that her teammates radiated confidence that affected her performance positively.

“I think my friends’ confidence affected me. I did not feel nervous on the stage and made some improvisations subconsciously. Maybe because my friends did not express too much anxiety on the stage, so I felt more relaxed and thought that everything was all right.” –P3

P3’s statement above, which said that she did some improvisations subconsciously, resonates with Nanda and Susanto’s (2021) finding. They found out that drama had enhanced students’ creativity, which led them to use the language spontaneously. It also indicated that they were constantly thinking and making decisions as they performed, not only memorizing the scripts.

Similarly, P6 also stated that her teammates’ confidence was contagious. Her confidence increased when she saw her friend make a mistake on the stage, but he kept going without any hesitation. Then, P6 said to her friends:

“He can do that; let us do what he does. We can do it as well.” – P6

P3 and P6’s statements on infectious confidence were also supported by the questionnaire data. Data from the questionnaire showed that 79% of 27 students felt that their friends’ confidence affected theirs positively. The finding echoes an agreement with Gill’s (2013) statement that students could gain more confidence through dramatic activities.

However, not all groups radiated confidence. During the observation of the final performance, we found a group that seemed anxious on the stage. All members of the group showed nervousness and were less expressive. One member of the group, P5, stated in an interview that her anxiety on the stage was more dominant than her confidence. She admitted that her friends’ anxiety affected her, but it was not the main source.

“My friends’ anxiety affected me, but that was not the main thing. The main thing was, I was nervous because I tried so hard to remember my lines and the pronunciation.” – P5

The excerpt above explained that anxiety could also be contagious. The questionnaire data also revealed that 66% of 27 students found their friends’ anxiety also affected them. In other words, one’s anxiety on the stage can increase as they see their friends also experience the same thing.

Benefits of Doing Drama

The data revealed some benefits of doing drama. They are listed as follows:

- Enhance students’ motivation

It was mentioned earlier that the students’ recognized their peers as a source of motivation. Additionally, the data presented that being a part of drama activities was essential in increasing the students’ motivation since they had a role and a goal. Being involved in a drama play required students to perform in front of some

audiences. To be able to perform well, they need a lot of practice. The participants in this study said that they practice frequently, which influenced their performance positively.

“I think practicing a lot and being encouraged by my teammates had helped me to perform better on the stage.” – P3

“Drama was something new for me and I was so passionate about it. I suddenly became the ‘campus boy’ one day before performing drama; I stayed at the campus until 1 A.M to prepare everything for the final performance. It was very unusual of me. I think drama performance made me want to go to the class more than before because I am closer now with my friends in the class.” – P1

Performing well on the stage became a goal that made them put in a lot of effort during the practice period. Because of their practice, the observation data revealed that most students’ Speaking skills in the final drama performance were better than in the rehearsals. The finding indicated that doing drama increased the students’ motivation to practice a lot and helped them to enhance their stage performances.

Moreover, P1’s statement also explicates that drama could boost motivation to attend regular classes since he had more close friends. It indicates that drama is beneficial to increase students’ motivation to go to class since it promoted students’ interaction and engagement with the subject. This finding is in line with Schenker (2017) who found out that being involved in dramatic activities is motivating.

Dramatic activities included producing and preparing a drama to play into account. It required a lot of time and involved creative processes along the way. This creative process was found to be essential for students’ interest development. Some students said in the interview that they found some new interests related to literature after producing and playing drama. One of the students, P7, mentioned that she became more interested in drama plays after completing the drama project as a scriptwriter and performer.

“I have more interest in English drama now. Ever since I became a scriptwriter, I started to explore English drama plays and I want to know more about it.” – P7

Similarly, P6 also had a stronger urge to develop her creative writing skill. She said that being a scriptwriter had encouraged her to write more stories.

“I like writing stories, and the last drama project made me more enthusiastic to write more stories.” – P6

P7 and P6’s increased motivation and interest in some aspects of literature after being heavily involved in the drama production was evidence that drama could boost students’ motivation and enhance their interests.

- Enhance students’ speaking skills and vocabulary mastery

Rehearsing for the performance helped the students to increase their speaking skills. The observation data revealed that many students showed improvement in their speaking skills in the final drama performance. It was proven by the result of the students' speaking assessment level in the practice activity and final drama performance. The table of the students' improvements can be seen below.

Table 1. Students' Speaking Level Improvement

Students' speaking level	Practice activity	Final drama performance
Elementary	11 students	4 students
Intermediate	8 students	12 students
Upper-intermediate	8 students	11 students

The table above presented the speaking skill level improvement of 27 students in this study based on observation data. It shows that the number of students with a higher level of speaking performance increased. We found that some students spoke clearer and more fluently during the final performance. For instance, during the practice session, student P4 spoke with flat intonation, evident mother tongue, and many mispronounced words. Meanwhile, in the final drama performance, he expressed his lines with better intonation, less noticeable mother tongue, and decreased mispronounced words. To show more details on the students' speaking performance in the practice session and final performance, we presented some samples of students' observation data in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2. Students' Oral Presentation in the Practice Session

No	Name	Proficiency level	Oral presentation in practice activity	Mispronounced words
1	P1	Elementary	Inappropriate pace and intonation. Evident mother tongue, many mispronounced words	Perfectly, truth, explode, expected, excuse me, face, compliment, pierced, surprised, Funny, beautiful, now, that hurt, love, someday, ok, begin, stealing, shiny, bright.
2	P2			Apologize, know, happened
3	P4			Chill out, useless, devil, daughter, apologize, excuse me, wait, about, Girl, creature, time, want, briefly, done, pleasure, out, ambush, wait, marriage, dare, realize, night
4	P3	Intermediate	Natural, smooth, clear pronunciation. Sometimes make inappropriate pace, intonation, stress, and rhythm.	Marriage
5	P5			Years, murder
6	P6	Upper-intermediate	Natural, smooth, clear pronunciation, appropriate pace, intonation, stress, and rythm. No grammatical error but there's repetition	-
7	P7			-

Table 3. Students' Oral Presentation in Final Drama Performance

No	Name	Proficiency level in drama performance	Oral presentations in drama performances	Mispronounced words or grammatical errors
1	P1	Elementary	No evident pause, loud voices but sometimes not clear, and sometimes make inappropriate intonation because the mother tongue is very evident. Missed pronunciation but better than practice activity and still understandable	Funny, face, beautiful, now, that hurt, love, explode, someday, ok, begin, stealing, excuse me, shiny, bright, truth.
2	P2			Third person
3	P4	Intermediate	No evident pauses, or loud voices but sometimes make inappropriate intonation, mother tongue is noticeable sometimes. Missed pronunciation but better than Pre-Activity and still understandable	Mispronounced words: Girl, crature, time, want, briefly, done, pleasure, out, ambush, wait, marriage, dare, realize, night. Grammatical errors: Where are you want to go
4	P5			Evident pauses and hesitation, repetition but still can going comprehensibly and sounds natural. Sometimes made appropriate pace, intonation, stress and rythm. Anxiety clearly shown sometimes, there are some mispronounced words.
5	P3	Upper-intermediate	Natural, smooth, clear pronunciation, appropriate pace, intonation, stress and rythm, less anxiety shown	Marriage
6	P6			-
7	P7			-

The data above showed that P3 and P4's speaking proficiency leveled up. Moreover, P1, P2, P3, and P4's fluency and clarity improved since they made no evident pauses and produced a more audible voice. This finding is in line with Davies (1990) who mentioned that drama activities promote students' fluency.

In addition, the students' statements in the questionnaire supported the finding on students' speaking improvement. Eighty-one percent of 27 students stated that they acknowledged their improvements in terms of intonation and pronunciation as they performed on the stage. It could happen due to their familiarity with the dialogues and scenes as they practiced persistently.

"I felt better when I performed on the stage because I practiced a lot and had become familiar with the dialogues and scenes." – P7

P7's statement indicated that practicing the drama repeatedly led to familiarity, which gave a positive influence on her performance, such as fluency and clarity. This finding is following Thornbury (2005) who stated that familiarity with the topic could contribute to students' fluency.

In terms of pronunciation, the observation data revealed that some students' pronunciation improved. For instance, P4 mispronounced "*chill out*," "*useless*," "*devil*," "*daughter*," "*apologize*," "*excuse me*," and "*about*" in the practice session. However, he pronounced the words appropriately in the final performance. It indicated that he had better pronunciation after practicing a lot. Moreover, data from the questionnaires showed that 95% of 27 students agreed that familiar words were easier to pronounce. In short, persistent practice led to familiarity, which resulted in improvement in some Speaking aspects. This finding resonates with Schenker (2017) who reported that students' pronunciation improved through drama performance.

Producing and performing drama also gave a positive influence on students' vocabulary acquisition. All interviewees mentioned in the interview that they had some new vocabulary as they engaged in the drama activities.

"Since I became a scriptwriter, I explored things related to drama and stories for references. I acquire some new vocabularies from doing it." – P7

"I gained new vocabulary and learned to express myself as I speak. As an example, I just knew that phrase 'cutie pie' is used in flirting. I thought 'cutie pie' referred to a cute cake." – P4

P7 and P4's statements unveiled that doing drama was beneficial for their vocabulary acquisition. This finding is in line with Alshraideh and Alahmadi (2020) who mentioned that doing drama is beneficial for students' vocabulary acquisition

- Enhance students' interpersonal skills

Being engaged in drama activities required them to have more interaction with peers. The participants admitted that social presence during practice sessions had strengthened their bond. They felt more emotionally connected after performing the drama. For instance, P7 and P3 said in the interview that the members of their group felt like a family.

"I feel more affection towards my group members, for instance, I could see P4 and P1 as my little brothers now. Since I get closer with them, they feel like my family." – P7

"I feel like they are my family now." – P3

This finding explained that the students built community and interpersonal relationships as they engaged in a drama project with their peers. It is in line with Schenker (2017) who mentioned that drama allows students to connect.

All of the interviewed students also stated that they discussed many things with their groups during the practice sessions. The students' communicative competence was also enhanced because they had to share thoughts, ideas, and feedback.

"I learned more on how to give and accept feedback, even though some feedbacks were hard to be accepted." – P2

P2 said that she learned more about acceptance, which indicated that she tried to negotiate herself with the feedback from her peers. Similarly, P5 added that the activities during the project performance made them learn more about appreciating others.

“I learned more values from doing drama. I learned how to appreciate my friends when we were going to make the practice schedule, how to motivate the unconfident ones, and how to complete each other on the stage.” – P5

P5 tried to be more appreciative and supportive during the practice session, which was essential to develop her interpersonal skills. Likewise, P6 stated that through drama activities, she understood more about her peers’ personalities.

“I acknowledge more of my friends’ personalities and characters. I could see it during the drama activity and I figured out how to handle and treat them.” – P6

P6 unveiled that she learned to read her peers and deal with them. It explained that she tried to adjust herself in interacting with her peers.

P2, P5, and P6’s statements were following Stinson and Wall (2003) about the interpersonal skill that developed in drama. They mentioned that drama led students to develop their ability in offering and accepting suggestions, as well as collaborating with others to achieve a shared goal.

Challenges

Having challenges in doing dramatic activities was inevitable. The participants in this study mentioned some challenges in performing drama in the interview. P5 mentioned that her group had a short time to memorize all of the drama scripts, which affected their performances.

“My group only had one week to memorize the whole drama script. So, from the middle until the end of the performance, we made many improvisations. It was difficult to memorize lots of dialogues in a short time.” – P5

The first challenge that we noted from P5’s statement was the short time of preparing the drama. This finding resonates with Nanda and Susanto (2021) who said that having a short time to prepare a drama was an obstacle in conducting the drama itself.

Secondly, P5’s statement above also mentioned that memorizing the lines was challenging for her and her peers. This finding validates Schenker’s (2017) statement that memorizing lines was a challenge in performing drama.

The obstacle led them to make some improvisation during the play. However, as she improvised, she made some evident pauses and hesitation, as well as repetition while performing (see Table 2) due to her anxiety. She admitted that trying to memorize the dialogues and the correct pronunciation as she performed made her nervous.

“I was nervous because I tried so hard to remember my lines and the pronunciation.” – P5

Realizing the fact that she could not memorize everything made her nervous. Similarly, P2 also said that she was nervous when she forgot her lines.

“When I forgot the words for my dialogues, I was nervous.” – P2

Both P5 and P2’s statements indicated that forgetting their dialogues could make them nervous and hesitate in performing their play. This finding revealed the third challenge of performing drama in this study; a speaker’s affective factors could determine someone’s fluency. It is in line with Thornbury (2005) who mentioned that anxiety could give a negative effect on one’s speaking performance.

Discussion

The results showed that certain activities in collaborative drama activity such as peer tutoring and peer assessment contributed a lot to the enhancement of participants speaking English and acting skills. It should be acknowledged that memorizing lines of dialogue in a foreign language was challenging for some students. English was not their mother tongue and they had low exposure to the language.

Some students frequently mispronounced sounds of [f, v, dʒ, θ, ʃ, tʃ, and ʒ] (see Table 2). We believe that it has something to do with their strong Sundanese language background. The sounds [f, v, dʒ, θ, ʃ, tʃ, and ʒ] are absent in Sundanese, which made them difficult to pronounce words with those sounds and led to mispronunciation (Raharjo, 2010). Meanwhile, as English department students, they were expected to be able to pronounce those sounds, regardless of their ethnic (Fauzi, 2014).

However, the findings pointed out that the students could pronounce the words with better pronunciation in the final performance. For instance, P1 mispronounced ‘*perfectly*’ in the rehearsals as ‘*perpekly*.’ However, he pronounced it correctly in the final performance. It showed his improvement in pronouncing [f] sound. Similarly, P2 and P4 mispronounced ‘*apologize*’ as ‘*apologaij*’ in the rehearsals, but they pronounced it correctly in the final performance. It was an evidence of their improvements in pronouncing [z] sound. We could conclude that the persistent practice, peer assessment, and peer tutoring that they have got during the practice session of drama-based learning contributed greatly in their pronunciation improvements. Not only pronunciation, the students’ pace and intonation were also better in the final drama performance than in the practice sessions (see Table 2 and 3). In other words, conducting a drama-based activity was helpful to help Sundanese students in developing their English Speaking skills (see Gill, 2013).

From the data analysis, we found out that drama activity promoted students’ motivation, speaking skills (e.g., pronunciation, clarity, and flow of speech), vocabulary mastery, and interpersonal skills. In terms of students’ motivation, we found that drama could increase their motivation since they were heavily involved in the entire dramatic activity. It is relevant to Schenker’s (2017) statement that involving students could be motivating, which is a benefit of doing drama activities.

The results also presented that peer tutoring contributed greatly to the participants' speaking and acting skills. For speaking, the peer tutoring contributed to their ability in pronouncing English words correctly. It was surely beneficial for the lower-level students. They said that having peers as their tutors were very helpful during the first round of rehearsal. Particularly when they practiced reading lines and memorized their characters' lines because they assessed each other and gave feedback on their performances. This finding is relevant to Nanda and Susanto (2021) who found out that students' pronunciations improved through collaborative drama activity.

Having peers to practice students' speaking skills brought about the best effort during rehearsal sessions, as to motivate them, which caused them to connect and establish a learning community. It also revealed that they had built strong emotional bondage among them during the first round and the second round of rehearsal sessions, which engaged students in affective states (Anderson & Loughlin, 2014). Moreover, it also enhanced participants' confidence. Data from questionnaires showed that their peer's confidence affected them positively, which confirmed that participants gained more confidence through collaborative drama activity (Gill, 2013).

Implementing collaborative drama activity gave some benefits for both students and lecturers since it enhanced students' motivation. Being involved in collaborative drama activity helped participants to enhance their speaking skills and vocabulary mastery. The results of the participants' speaking assessment level in the first round of rehearsal and final drama performance.

In terms of speaking skills, we found some factors that contributed greatly to students' improvement: practicing a lot, drilling with friends during the practice sessions, having partners to speak in English, and students' intrinsic motivation to be able to give the best performance. This finding is relevant to Thornbury (2005), he stated that cognitive factors (e.g., familiarity with the topic, familiarity with the interlocutors), affective factors (e.g., feeling towards the topic and self-consciousness), and performance factors (e.g., mode, and degree of collaboration) are the speech conditions that could contribute to students' speaking fluency.

By all the findings and theories, we summarize some factors that influence students' speaking ability in this study:

1. Practice frequency
2. Peers' drilling
3. Having partners to speak in English
4. Speakers' knowledge
5. Motivation
6. Affective factors

We also found out that the students not only developed productive skills such as speaking, but they also developed interpersonal skills. They stated that they learned more about appreciating others, how to give and receive feedback, and self-positioning. This finding was in line with Stinson and Wall (2003) who mentioned that cooperation as well as offering and accepting feedback supportively

are some skills that could be enhanced through drama. We also figured out that those developed interpersonal skills strengthen the bond among the students, which also increased students' motivation to go to class.

Conclusions

We found out that doing drama could influence both students' cognitive and affective sides. For instance, the students performed better Speaking skills in the final drama performance than in practice and regular classroom activities. It was due to their persistence in practicing their Speaking and acting skills, which also resulted in a less noticeable Sundanese accent during the final performance. In terms of cognitive aspects, the students demonstrated better pronunciation, clarity, fluency, and vocabulary enhancement. In terms of the affective aspect, drama allowed students to be more motivated. The drama also provided room for them to develop empathy and communicate their thoughts, which resulted in their development of interpersonal skills. It is recommended to apply drama-based pedagogy in EFL classrooms since it offers various benefits for the students. However, teachers might not have sufficient time to conduct drama activities if they only depend on formal teaching hours.

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