دراسات فنية
مخبر الفنون والدراسات الثقافية
جامعة أبو بكر بلقايد تلمسان
Algerian Scientific Journal Platform

Volume 12 N°: 01 (2025) p 359/380

Exploring the Implementation of Drama as a Communicative Approach to Promote EFL Speaking Skills: Case of Three Algerian Secondary Schools

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Received: 28/03/2025 Accepted: 05/11/2025

Abstract

This study sheds light on the implementation of drama in teaching speaking English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at the Algerian Secondary School Level (SSL). It aims at exploring its implementation to teach speaking, revealing EFL teachers' perceptions towards its incorporation and unveiling the possible challenges that may be encountered when employing it. To collect data, two research instruments were implemented, including an interview and a questionnaire. The findings revealed that teachers' inclusion of drama activities (DAs) is highly limited. Besides, EFL teachers have different perceptions towards its incorporation, and most of them encounter a set of opposing obstacles when applying them. The results of the current research, including implications, recommendations, and suggestions for further studies, are provided.

Article info

Received 28/03/2025

Accepted 05/11/2025

Keyword:

- ✓ *Drama Activities:*
- ✓ *Speaking English:*
- ✓ *Secondary School*

1. *Introduction*

Speaking English can be a significant challenge for EFL learners worldwide, and this challenge does not concern learners' categories or geographical regions only. Algerian secondary school pupils majoring in foreign languages share a set of difficulties when it comes to speaking and expressing themselves in English, including limited oral participation in class, lack of self-confidence, reluctance, anxiety, nervousness, shyness, and hesitation. This challenge to speak English may be attributed to the lack of practice speaking due to the way learners have been taught. To cope with this problem, researchers and educators continuously look for new teaching paradigms, techniques, and activities in an attempt to help EFL learners overcome their speaking deficiencies. Recently, there has been a growing interest into shifting from teacher-centeredness into learner centeredness, paving the way for active-interactive and communicative approaches in EFL classrooms to take place.

One of these innovative strategies, drama has occurred as a powerful pedagogical catalyst that promotes language development interactively, in accordance with promoting the 21st century skills simultaneously. Globally, the usefulness of drama-based instruction in fostering learners' speaking skills was proved by previous research in the field, stressing its effectiveness in improving students' linguistic, cognitive, and socio-emotional abilities, due to the communicative and interactive environment it creates (Nguyen, 2023; Komul, 2023). Within this line of thought, Heliyon (2024) has conducted a systematic review through which the researcher confirmed the strong impact of drama on both language outcomes and teacher development across different EFL contexts. In the Algerian context,

Benaïred and Benali Reguieg (2024) found that drama-based techniques helped secondary school pupils to improve their fluency level, especially through the use of embodied role plays that promoted meaningful interaction. In spite of this, drama in the Algerian EFL context is not considered as an active area of research. Besides, drama-based instruction seems under-utilized in the Algerian secondary schools. Therefore, this study was undertaken to explore its actual utilization in three Algerian secondary schools, revealing pupils' and teachers' perceptions towards its incorporation, in addition to unveiling the challenges that may be faced.

In light of the above, this research addresses the following key questions:

Questions One

To what extent do EFL teachers incorporate drama to teach speaking at the secondary school level?

Question Two

What are Algerian secondary school EFL teachers' perceptions towards the implementation of drama to teach speaking?

Question Three

What are Algerian secondary school EFL teachers' perceptions towards the implementation of drama to teach speaking?

2. *Literature Review*

A literature review is presented where the researchers define drama in education, categorize its types, and highlight its benefits for EFL learners' progress.

2.1 Definition of Drama

Defining the term "Drama" is quite problematic, as its meaning differs from one context to another. The Cambridge dictionary defines it as a play in a theatre, on television, or radio. It is acting in general, which can take the form of plays, an event, or real-life situations, especially the unexpected ones in which there is worry or excitement, and usually actions to be played, especially the serious ones. It can be written to be performed by actors, "the writing of plays," or the art of showing plays. Furthermore, in Oxford dictionaries, it is defined as the activity of acting. Typically, this involves performing a role, which can be either scripted or improvised, to tell a story or convey certain emotions or ideas. It includes verbal language, such as speeches or scripts, to be translated into words and action, through characters or nonverbal language using gestures and body language.

However, in the context of teaching and learning foreign languages, it refers to the activities and strategies used for a variety of purposes, primarily with a focus and emphasis on promoting students' communicative skills by engaging students in role plays, performances, storytelling, and improvisation.

It enables learners to understand different people, communicate with others, and assimilate and acquire knowledge through interaction. Every communication with a peer or in a situation provides the learner with an opportunity to understand what is happening in the real world using the target language. As stated by Holden (1982),

> *Drama is applied to any activity that asks the student to portray a) himself in an imaginary situation or b) another person in an imaginary situation. In other words, drama is concerned with the world of" let's pretend"; it asks the learner to project himself imaginatively into another situation, outside the classroom, or into the skin and persona of another person.* (p.1)

All the teaching tools that involve, to some extent, acting are called drama, including role plays, simulations, mime, etc. (Barnes, 1986) defined drama as "A wide range of oral activities that have an element of creativity present" (p. 317). Basically, drama activities are techniques that teachers can use to provide their students with an opportunity to communicate with their peers using the target language. They are communicative activities that offer students a pleasant feeling of using English to speak and communicate with their classmates. As argued by Heathcote (cited in Bowel, 2013, p. 3), "Educational drama is a pedagogy that utilizes play-like techniques to prompt students' communicative, interpersonal, cognitive, thinking, and speaking skills." Additionally, drama in education is usually defined as an act of doing or 'learning by doing' (Barnes, 1986).

2.2 Types of Drama Activities in EFL Classes

Educational drama in EFL classes deals with a range of activities and techniques, with varying outlines and degrees of spontaneity. Techniques such as role playing, improvisation, simulation, mime, dramatization, and storytelling in educational drama are worth being introduced.

The role-play requires learners to take different roles in pairs or groups, based on real-life situations or fictional scenarios. It promotes students' conversational skills and improves their cultural awareness.

Improvisation refers to an unscripted performance in which students act out roles by creating dialogues on the spot. Improvising is completely free, depending only on the participants' abilities, moods, feelings, and decisions. Since it is acting without a script, it is the most challenging drama technique where students use their ideas and imagination, and cooperate.

According to Maley and Duff (2005), improvisation is *"an unscripted, unrehearsed, spontaneous set of actions in response to minimal directions from a teacher, usually including statements of which one is, where one is, and what one is doing there*" (p.10). Accordingly, this drama-based activity encourages students' spontaneity and creativity, and helps them build confidence in speaking the language being taught.

Simulation is a type of role-playing in which students preserve their characteristics and participate in real-life situations, such as job interviews or news reports. In other words, according to Holden (1982), "It is playing in an imaginary situation*"* (p.11). On that account, it is a performance that encourages the authentic language use.

Mime is an educational drama activity that provides opportunities to use body language and facial expressions as a tool to convey meanings instead of the use of words. According to Longman dictionary, "*mime*" means using movements and gestures to express what you want to say without using words. John Dougil, cited in Dundar (2013, p. 1425), defines mime as "a non-verbal representation of an idea or story through gesture, bodily movement and expression"

Mime emphasizes the paralinguistic features of communication. It may seem strange to advocate mime as an aid to language teaching when it does not use language. However, it generates and elicits language before, during, and after the activity "non-verbal representation of an idea or story through gesture, bodily movement and expression" (ibid). For instance, the teacher may ask a student to act out verbs, emotions, and vocabulary terms using his/her body language, calling the rest of the students to guess what the word is.

Dramatization (Acting a scripted play) refers to acting out a scene or sketch by learners in front of their classmates and the teacher by rehearsing and performing a short play or a scripted dialogue. The sketches can be either original or written by learners. It promotes students' pronunciation and fluency.

Story-telling refers to reading stories or plays out loud with a clear and expressive voice, using the correct intonation, and then a follow-up discussion is implemented.

2.3 Benefits of Using Drama in EFL Classes

Drama-based instruction is deemed to be a powerful tool that facilitates language learning in a lively, interactive, supportive, and immersive atmosphere. It decreases anxiety by liberating psychological, physical, and emotional tension. It also helps in building confidence among students and teachers, improving students' speaking and communicative skills, as it helps in strengthening students' memory. In this context, Maley and Duff (2005) set out the key benefits of educational drama in foreign language classes:

- Drama integrates the acquisition of language skills in a natural way.
- It synthesizes verbal and nonverbal aspects of communication (physical and intellectual aspects of learning).
- It promotes both cognitive and learning skills.
- It brings the classroom interaction to life through an intensive focus on meaning.
- It offers unequalled opportunities for catering to learner differences.
- It fosters self-awareness, awareness of others, self-esteem, and confidence.
- It enhances motivation in learning a foreign language.
- It offers a shift of the responsibility for learning from the teacher to the learners.
- It encourages an open, exploratory style of learning, where creativity and imagination are given scope to develop, promoting risk-taking, which is an essential element in effective language learning.
- It makes the classroom atmosphere more dynamic and engaging.
- It provides an enjoyable learning experience.
- It is a low-resource activity; all you need is a room full of human beings.

2.4 Previous Research on Drama Activities in the EFL Classroom

Reviewing previous research pertaining to the implementation of drama in EFL Classrooms revealed that extensive literature has been published on the matter (Dougill et al). Nevertheless, most researchers have focused on primary and university learners, where secondary school learners were not widely adopted as a sample to work with.

Many experimental investigations were conducted to probe the impact of incorporating drama activities on learners' English language speaking proficiency over the past years. By way of example, Jarayseh (2010) scrutinized the influence of using drama in teaching speaking skills on EFL learners' speaking proficiency and fluency level, assessing its effect on their social life and academic journey, in an endeavor to devote greater consideration to the use of drama in teaching English. The research was conducted with 57 students from the 7th and 8th grades from Herman Gmeiner and Talitha Kumi Schools in Beit Jala. The experimental group of the involved students participated in practicums of drama practices using EFL for twelve weeks. The obtained findings indicated that using drama in EFL classes makes learners more enthusiastic and active contributors in their learning journey, rather than being

passive recipients waiting for information to be poured into their heads. It was also noticed that it enhances students' self-esteem, motivation, and oral communicative skills.

Within the same line of thought, in a study conducted by Váchová (2012), she examined the benefits of using drama in EFL classrooms, focusing on adult students' attitudes towards these activities. The research was applied in a one-week summer conversation course. The course comprises a series of lesson plans that incorporate drama activities. It led to the conclusion that using drama activities can have a highly beneficial impact on the learning process and are generally well-accepted by adult students. However, the very limited number of participants involved in the experiment may induce further research to be done.

3. *Research Methodology*

This section outlines the methodology employed in the current study and introduces the research design, the data collection instruments, the participants, and the procedures undertaken to collect data.

3.1 *Research Design*

The researchers opted for the mixed-methods approach because it compensates for the deficiencies and drawbacks of single methods. Furthermore, it was used for the purpose of collecting reliable and valid data. Essentially, the mixed-methods approach provides deep, credible, and reliable data. Two data collection instruments were used in the present study: an interview designed with EFL teachers and a questionnaire for second year pupils of foreign languages at the secondary school level in three selected schools from three different provinces, namely El-Tarf, El-Oued, and Algiers.

3.1 Research Instruments

The researchers employed two data collection tools, an interview and a questionnaire. The first instrument of research was an interview with teachers, composed of a set of open-ended questions, and aimed to explore their implementation of drama in teaching the speaking skill, their perception of its incorporation, and the possible challenges they may face when applying these activities in their teaching settings. The second data collection instrument is a student questionnaire, designed for second year foreign language pupils at the same three selected secondary schools. The investigators used the questionnaire as a complementary data collection tool to the interview, and this allows obtaining quantitative data to strengthen the qualitative data obtained from the teachers' interview.

3.1.1 Teachers' Interview

An interview was conducted to obtain data for the exploration of the participants' responses, behaviours, opinions, values, feelings, and knowledge. It is considered a suitable tool as it allows for examining and discussing relevant topics in depth. In this context, Schostak (2006) states that 'an interview is an extended conversation between partners that aims at having an 'in-depth information' about a certain topic or subject, and through which a phenomenon could be interpreted in terms of the meaning that the interviewees bring to it" (p. 54). Interviews are appropriate for the exploration of questions more extensively and for the collection of qualitative data. As argued by (Dörnyei 2007), "qualitative data are most often collected by researchers through interviews and questionnaires" (p. 132). Flexibility is the main advantage of using interviews. In case interviewees do not understand a question, interviewers can easily explain and clarify things. Furthermore, an interesting answer can be followed by

further prompts and an in-depth explanation.

A semi-structured interview was used to ask the same open-ended questions to all the interviewees. This approach facilitates faster interviews that can be more easily analyzed and compared using a basic checklist. Interviews were conducted with EFL teachers and covered all research questions. In this context, Rubin (2005) acknowledges that the interview allows "depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee's responses" (p.88). The interview consisted of eight open-ended questions addressed to English teachers working at the three selected secondary schools. The choice of the teachers was done randomly.

3.1.2 Pupils' Questionnaire

The questionnaire is perhaps the most widely used instrument for collecting data in research work in a short time. According to (Dörnyei, 2003), "the popularity of questionnaires is because they are easy to construct, extremely versatile, and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily process-able" (p.1). The questionnaire used sought to gather quantitative data. As explained by (Saldaña, 2011), "sometimes numbers can add insight, texture and context to the repository of a qualitative data report" (p. 61). In this study, the researchers used a questionnaire to collect additional data, compensating for information that could not be obtained through teachers' interviews. In addition, it was designed to diagnose the students' evaluation of their speaking skills and the use of drama in English language learning.

The questionnaire used in this study was divided into four sections, composed of 17 questions. It started with an introductory statement to provide pupils with an idea about the topic and its research aim. The first section was devoted to learners' background information, and it included two open-ended (fill-in-the-blank) questions and one closed-ended (yes/no) question. The second section was about pupils' English speaking skills, and it contained five closed-ended questions: four multiple-choice questions and one in the form of a Likert scale question. The third section was about the implementation of drama in EFL classes, and it consisted of five closed-ended questions: two yes /no questions, three multiple-choice questions, and one in the form of a Likert scale question. The fourth and the last section was about students' perceptions towards drama activities, which included three closed-ended questions:

One in the form of a Likert scale, two yes /no questions, besides allowing the questioned pupil to give general suggestions, additions, remarks, or comments to be added. No technical or difficult words were used to avoid misunderstanding and false interpretations.

3.2 Participants

Participants of this exploration were teachers of English and second year secondary school pupils of FLS (Foreign Language Stream) studying at three selected secondary schools, including Merzoug El Cherif secondary school in El-Tarf, Aoun Ali secondary school in El-Oued, and Abban Ramdhan secondary school in Algiers, during the academic year 2023-2024. The researchers have chosen to work with second year Foreign Language pupils because they are first-year students majoring in the Foreign Language Stream; this makes them more interested in enhancing their speaking skills in EFL than students majoring in scientific branches. Besides, their age allows them to participate more effectively in drama activities, due to their enthusiasm, open-mindedness, and level of English compared to younger pupils in middle schools. Furthermore, they have more free time compared to the Foreign Language pupils who are preparing themselves for the baccalaureate exam. That is to say, English was taught only

in the middle and secondary schools. The randomly selected representative sample of English teachers included nine permanent teachers, of whom seven were female and two were male. The second assigned sample of this exploration, which consisted of three groups from each secondary school, was also selected randomly and comprised 35 (38.88%) males and 55 (61.11%) females, at an age range of 16 to 19 years old. Approximately, all the pupils share the same educational background because each pupil has studied English as a foreign language for at least five years.

4. *Procedures*

This study was conducted during the academic year 2023-2024, with teachers of English and second year secondary school Foreign Language Pupils at three selected Algerian Secondary Schools. Both the teachers' interview and the pupils' questionnaire were conducted in English.

4.1 Teachers' Interview

The interview was conducted in the schools at a suitable time that suited the interviewees (EFL teachers), who represented 75% of the whole population of the three selected Algerian Secondary Schools. The interview took place in their schools, so that stress reduction and teachers' relaxation could lead to a more open and honest revelation of their thoughts and perceptions. Interviews lasted between 15 and 30 minutes and were conducted one-to-one. Before conducting the interviews, teachers were informed that their confidentiality would be retained and were provided with an explanation of the research topic, research aim, and the format of the interview. All interviews were audibly recorded and transcribed for later analysis.

4.2 Pupils' Questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed to 90 second year Foreign Language Pupils, who represented 100% of the whole population due to the existence of one class of foreign languages at each of the three selected secondary schools. It took us three sessions to distribute the questionnaires in the classrooms, where all pupils were present. Besides the presence of the teacher, our presence was essential to ensure that everything was comprehensible to avoid any false interpretation of the questions. All of the pupils had enough time to read and answer the questions. Importantly, the questionnaires were distributed and completed at the end of the English lesson in the third trimester, which coincided with the End of the learners' period of instruction for the academic year. The anonymity of the questionnaire allowed pupils to feel comfortable giving their opinions when answering the questions. This helped the study in terms of collecting valid and reliable data because the pupils answered according to their experiences and real-life situations that best reflected their opinions.

5. *Results and Discussion*

Data analysis is divided into two phases. The first one is directed to analyze the interview conducted with nine EFL secondary school teachers. The second one is devoted to analyzing the questionnaire distributed to 90 second year foreign language pupils at the three Algerian secondary schools.

5.1 Teachers' Interview Analysis: The analysis dealt with four sections.

- **The first section: Teachers' Evaluation of their Second year Foreign Language Pupils' Level in Speaking**

Questioned on their pupils‟ speaking skill level, the interviewees gave various answers. Three teachers out of the nine interviewees said that their EFL pupils‟ speaking skill level is somehow medium. One of them said that: *"Some of my pupils speak fluently, whereas others do not know how to speak at all".* The six remaining teachers agreed that their EFL pupils' speaking skill level is low, as argued by one of the interviewees, *"...the majority do not speak at all".* One of the interviewed teachers who has 18

years of experience in teaching EFL at the secondary level responded by saying, *"It is lagging".*

- **The second section: The Frequency of the Implementation of Drama in Secondary School Classes**

In order to answer the first research question, the third and fourth questions were asked to the interviewed teachers. The third question asked to the interviewees was about the frequency with which teachers use drama for the sake of teaching speaking. It appears that all of the surveyed teachers acknowledged that the application of drama to teach speaking in EFL classes is highly limited. Three out of the interviewed teachers reported that their low usage of drama refers to their respect of the curriculum, which does not contain drama at all. That is what was stated by one of the interviewees, *"...I wish I could. Drama is not included in the curriculum; secondary school manuals are devoid of any drama".*

The answers to the fourth question as regards the type of drama activity used in EFL secondary school classes were varied; four out of the nine interviewed teachers reported that none of these activities is used. One of these interviewees replied by saying,

> *"If I had my way, I would have opted for acting the Himmler of the lower fifth by Terence Rattigan and Macbeth by William Shakespeare. They refer to real-life situations".*

One teacher mentioned that he used drama activities to incorporate storytelling and mime into his sessions. Although dialogues are not a type of drama activity, the remaining four teachers responded by stating that they used dialogues with their pupils, as argued by one of them:
"Generally, we use dialogues, but this is according to the theme of the unit".

- **The third section: Teachers' Perceptions towards Drama Incorporation to Teach Speaking at the Secondary Level**

The fifth, sixth, and seventh questions were devoted to answering the second research question. The comments provided by the interviewees regarding their perceptions of the use of drama as a

The Tools to teach speaking were the same for six teachers who agreed with the statement provided. They said
that drama's implementation in EFL classrooms has a significant positive impact on pupils' speaking skills. However, three teachers had different opinions and disagreed with the statement. One of them argued that:
"I am seeing that there is no impact of implementing drama activities in EFL classrooms, because pupils are not interested in it, so they want only to learn how to have good marks in exams".

The last two opposing teachers had drawn attention to the cultural barriers and differences, claiming that:
"This is applied in countries that grant too much attention to drama as the soul of any foreign language".

Questioned about their recommendation of drama's incorporation to teach speaking, the interviewees gave various answers. Six teachers agreed that they would recommend it. One of them said,
"Drama is a way of giving free rein to the pupil's imaginations. Its recommendation goes without saying".

However, three teachers out of the nine interviewees refused its recommendation. They see that learners' personality differences, needs, and interests will impede and hinder the collaboration and cooperation of such activities.

- **The fourth section: Factors that Affect the Use of Drama**

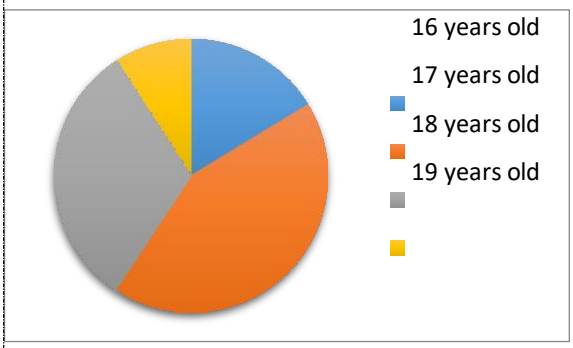
Teachers' responses to the final question of the interview regarding the challenges and difficulties of the implementation of drama in EFL secondary school classrooms were very varied. Three teachers out of nine agreed on the *"lack of pupils' stock of vocabulary*" as stated by one of the interviewees. In other words, pupils' accuracy is the main challenge for them. Two teachers believed that cultural barriers and differences may impede learners from participating in such activities; one interviewee said,
"When the theme is new, some issues may be highlighted; above all, we are dealing with pupils who are not open to the external world". Furthermore, one teacher stressed the fact that pupils' interests and motivation are of great importance as regards the implementation of drama. Moreover, another teacher shed light on other factors by saying, *"The huge number of pupils who are at mixed levels is an obstacle*".
For the last two interviewees, the incorporation of drama is foremost restrained by the syllabus restrictions and time limitations.

5.2 Pupils' Questionnaire Analysis

The questionnaire was analysed through four sections.

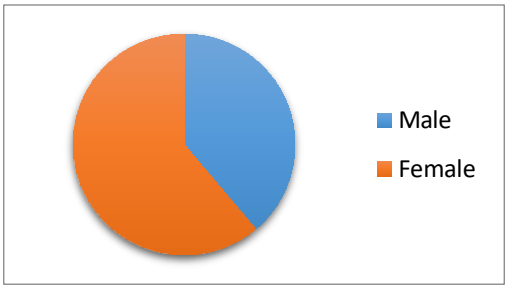
- **Section one: background information**

Fig.1. Pupils' Age



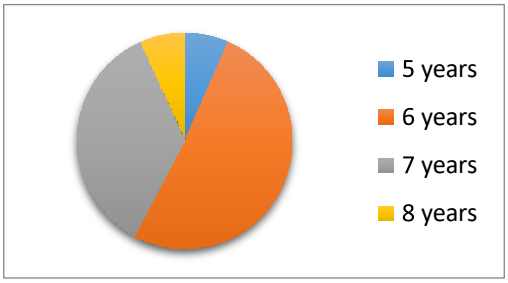
Based on the results presented in Figure 01, diversity in the participants' ages can be easily noticed, ranging between 16 and 19 years old. It can be noticed that the majority of the participants are 17 years old, who represent 42.22% of the whole sample, besides 28 pupils who are 18 years old, representing 31.11% of the sample. The rest 16% of the sample is represented by the young pupils with a young age of 16 years old, and 8.88% of the whole refers to the 19-year-old pupils. This can indicate that most of the participants are relatively young, with different ages, which may reveal that some of them started their primary education earlier, whereas others experienced failure previously.

Fig.2. Pupils' Gender



A glance at this figure allows one to notice that female pupils exceed males. Out of 90 participants, 55 females represent 61.11% of the whole sample, whereas males number was 35, representing 38.88% of the whole sample. This figure adds nothing to the study except knowing participants' genders.

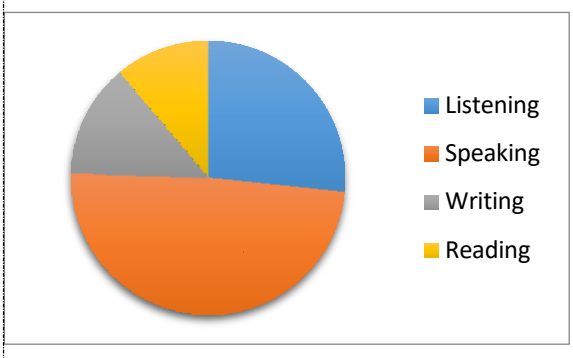
Fig.3. The participants' years of studying English as a foreign language



According to the presented results in the third figure, the participants of the study have different years of experience in studying English as a foreign language. Very few pupils, six ones representing 6.66% of the whole population, have an experience of five years, whereas 46 pupils, representing 51.11% of the whole sample, have studied EFL for six years. Besides, 32 pupils representing 35.55% of the sample have studied EFL for seven years, and six others representing 6.66% of the sample have studied EFL for height years. Participants' years of studying EFL may be taken into consideration when evaluating their speaking skill level.

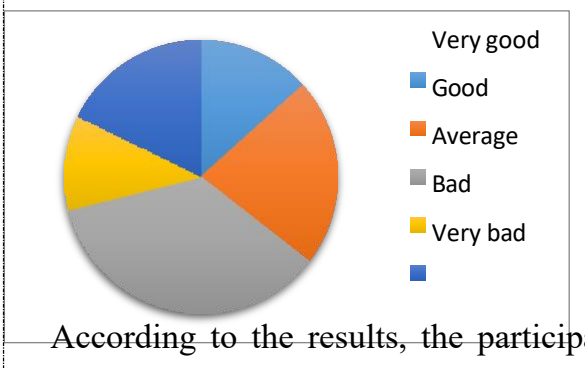
- **Section two: Speaking skill at the secondary level EFL classrooms.**

Fig. 4. The skill that should be given more importance in EFL teaching



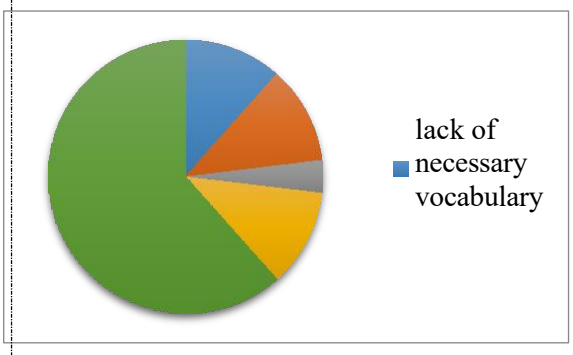
The collected data presented in the figure above shows that the majority of the pupils, including 44 pupils who represent 48.88% of the whole sample, think of speaking as the skill that should be given more importance compared to the other. Then, it is followed by listening, which was chosen by 24 pupils (26.66%) of the sample. Writing and reading were not important; writing was selected by 12 pupils (13.33%) of the sample, and reading was preferred by 10 of them, i.e.11.11% of the whole sample.

Fig. 5. Pupils' evaluation of their speaking skill level



According to the results, the participants evaluate their speaking skill levels. The majority of the pupils, including 32 pupils out of 90 and representing 35.55% of the whole sample, view that they have average speaking abilities. Very few pupils (12) find that their speaking abilities are very good, representing 13.33% of the sample, and 20 others, who represent 22.22%, find that their speaking skill level is good. The rest of the pupils confirm that their speaking skill level is not good, and assume that it should be evaluated as "bad" or "very bad". Ten pupils representing 11.11% of the sample view it as bad, whereas 16 others representing 17.7% classify it as very bad. These evaluations may remain insufficient, as those pupils spent five to six years studying the language.

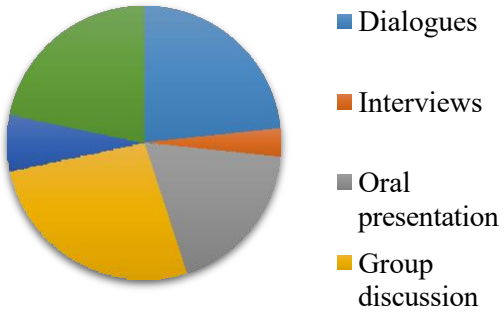
Fig. 6. EFL pupils' speaking problems



In this question, the researchers targeted pupils who previously evaluated their speaking skill level as being bad or very bad, to investigate their speaking problems. The sixth figure

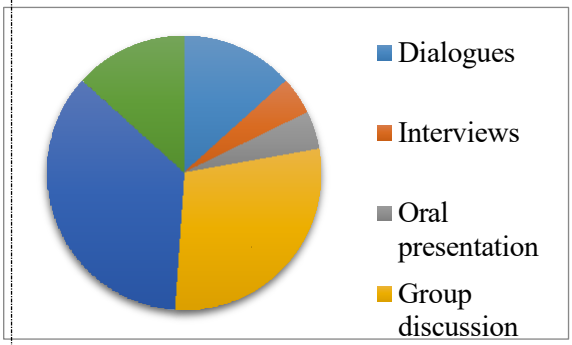
reveals 26 participants' selections from a set of speaking problems. The majority of pupils, who represent 62% of the sample, face all the proposed difficulties, including a lack of necessary vocabulary, fear of negative feedback, a lack of motivation to speak, and a lack of self-confidence. The remaining participants selected one or more of the previously mentioned problems, with the option to choose more than one. Lack of necessary vocabulary was highly selected by them (11%). Most EFL pupils suffer from this problem, which does not enable them to speak fluently in front of others and puts them in embarrassing situations. The fear of committing mistakes and receiving negative feedback was robustly opted for by the participants, with percentages of 11% and 12%, to be considered as their speaking problems. This indicates that many pupils are reluctant to speak because of others' negative judgments or due to their over-controlling of their oral production. Very few pupils declared their lack of motivation to speak; those pupils might not have previously selected speaking as the skill that should be given more importance compared to the other. Their reluctance to speak may be a reflection of their calmness and sedate personality. No pupil selected the lack of self-confidence; they may not be courageous enough to declare such a lack.

Fig. 7. The Adopted Teaching Activities by EFL Teachers



The seventh figure represents EFL teachers' adopted teaching activities, showing what teachers mostly adopt in their teaching process. The results indicate that teachers do not use the same teaching activities in their speaking instruction. A glance at the figure depicts that dialogues and group discussions are the most adopted activities by EFL teachers. Oral presentations were also selected by 18% of the participants to illustrate their adoption of EFL teaching. The rest of the proposed activities, including interviews and drama activities, were not strongly opted for by the participants, with low percentages of 03% and 07% of the participants. The remaining participants, who represent 22% of the sample, confirmed that their EFL teachers utilized all the proposed teaching activities in their EFL classrooms.

Fig. 8. EFL Pupils Teaching Activities' Preferences

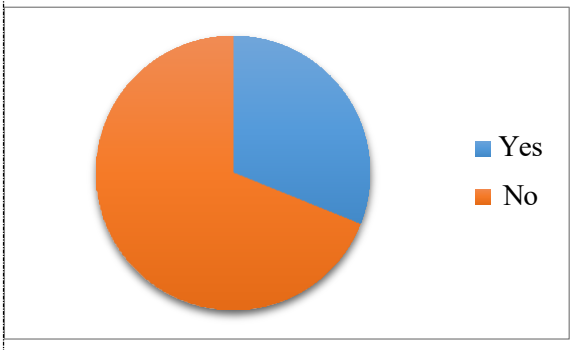


The eighth figure illustrates EFL pupils' teaching activities. The results display that EFL pupils strongly prefer to study English through drama activities and group discussions. This preference may refer to the social aspects of these activities and may be considered more preferable for sociable pupils who like to talk, exchange ideas, and communicate with others. Drama is not adopted in EFL classes, although it is the most desirable teaching activity among all the rest for the research participants (36%), and group discussion was selected by 29% of the pupils. Besides, dialogues were seen as the next strongly opted teaching activity with a percentage of 13%. Many pupils prefer to study English through conversation dialogues because they allow them to directly interact with others and experience real-life situations as they happen in drama activities. Interviews and oral presentations were not strongly selected as the other activities. Only 04% and 05% of the participating pupils prefer to study with; they may not prioritize them due to their strict criteria. This may indicate that EFL pupils do not prefer individual or serious activities; they like to learn speaking collectively. This is likely to enhance their fluency, confidence, and communicative competence through meaningful interaction and collaborative use of the target language.

The remaining research participants (13%) believed that all the presented activities should be adopted in EFL classrooms. They might view that each activity has its pros and cons, and the pupil should benefit from the linguistic and cognitive gains of each. This varied adaptation may enhance learners' engagement, and support diverse learning styles through meaningful, engaging and interactive EFL learning contexts.

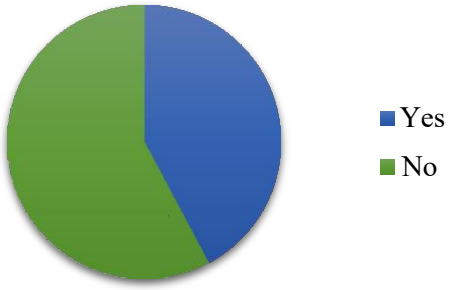
- **Section three: The implementation of drama in EFL Classes**

Fig. 9. The existence of drama activities in the participants' textbook



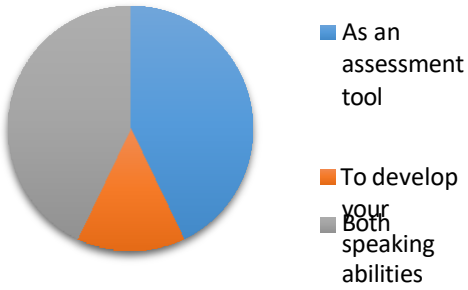
From the figure shown above, very few pupils (28) are aware of the existence of drama activities in their teaching textbook, whereas the majority (62) are unconscious of their existence.

Fig. 10. Participants' participation in drama activities



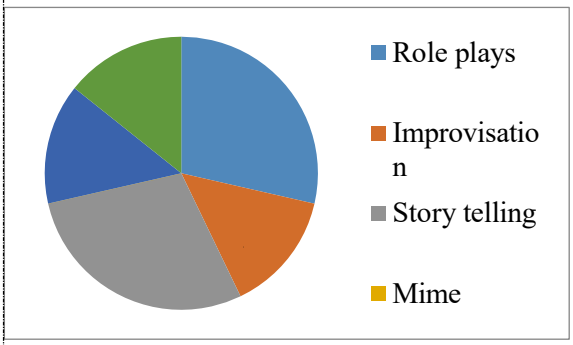
The results provided in the table above elucidate that (38) pupils out of (90) participants, representing (42.22%) of the whole sample, participated in drama activities in their EFL classrooms. The remaining participants (52), who represent 57.77% of the sample, have never participated in such activities in their EFL classrooms. It can be noticed that the majority of participants are not used to participating in drama activities in their EFL classrooms.

Fig.11. The teachers' purposes of incorporating drama in their EFL classrooms



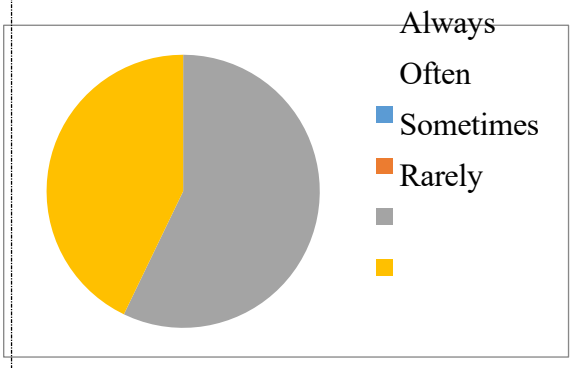
Based on the results presented in the above figure, EFL teachers at the secondary level use drama activities for different purposes. This question was directed to 14 pupils who previously confirmed the implementation of drama in their EFL classrooms. Two pupils (14%) declared that drama is incorporated in their EFL classes to develop pupils' speaking abilities, i.e., enhancing their grammar, vocabulary, fluency, accuracy, and communicative competences. However, six out of 14 pupils (43%) asserted that drama is implemented in their EFL classrooms as an assessment tool to evaluate pupils‟ speaking skills. Besides, six pupils out of the research participants (43%) proclaim that drama is used in their EFL classrooms for both purposes, i.e. to enhance pupils‟ speaking skills and to evaluate them at the same time.

Fig. 12. The implemented drama activities in the participants' EFL classrooms.



Regarding the drama activities implemented in the participants' EFL classes, role-playing and storytelling were the most frequently selected teaching activities, with a percentage of 29%, which explained their presence in the EFL classes through acting, telling, or hearing stories in the target language within their EFL classrooms. Improvisation, dramatizing novels, and simulation were not strongly opted for by the participants, with a percentage of 14%. They may be considered to be difficult for EFL secondary school pupils. None of the pupils has selected mime. This may refer to their misunderstanding of the nature of this activity as a drama-based instruction tool.

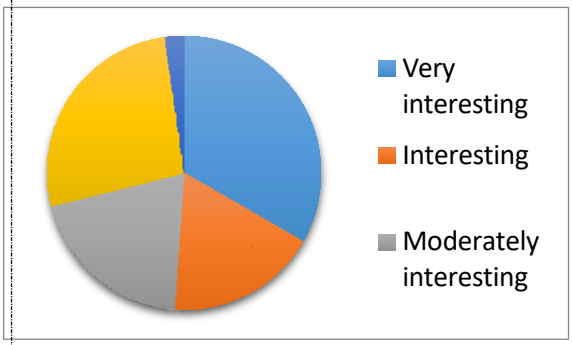
Fig. 13. Drama's implementation frequency in EFL classrooms



Regarding the frequency of implementing drama in EFL classrooms, eight out of 14 pupils asserted that it is sometimes applied in their classes, whereas four others declared that it is "rarely" incorporated. Thus, none of their teachers uses drama with a high frequency.

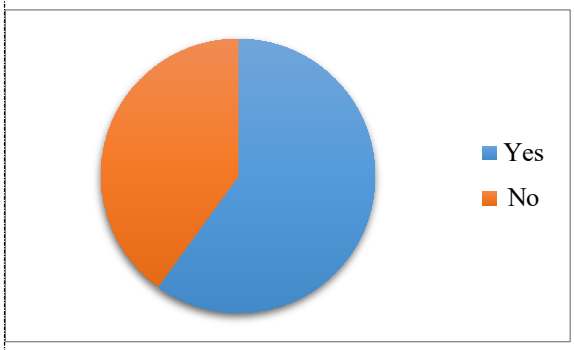
- **Section four: Students' perceptions towards drama activities**

Fig.14. Participants' interests towards drama's implementation in EFL classes.



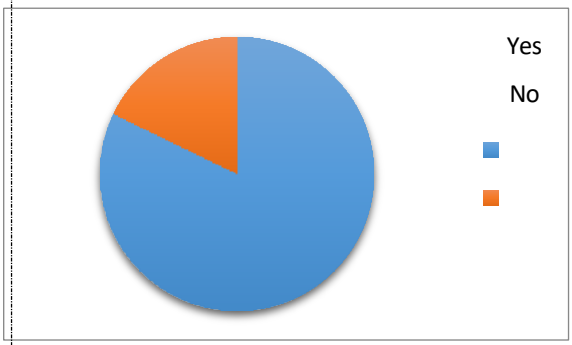
This figure shows the research participants' interests in the implementation of drama in their EFL classrooms. Thirty out of 90 pupils, representing 33.33% of the sample, found drama a very interesting technique to be incorporated in EFL teaching, and 18 pupils, representing 20% of the participants, deemed it to be moderately interesting. Besides, (16) others representing (17.77%) of the sample viewed it as significant and engaging, while the rest did not enjoy its‟ implementation. Two pupils representing (2.22%) of the sample saw it as very boring, and 24 others representing (26.66%) of the sample classified it as boring.

Fig. 15. Participants' enjoyment when participating in drama activities.



This figure revealed the participants' enjoyment from drama's incorporation in EFL classrooms. It was discovered that the of the participants (60%) enjoyed its implementation. The rest of the participants, who represent 40% of the sample, did not enjoy its implementation.

Fig. 16. Participants' perceptions of drama's helpfulness in enhancing pupils' speaking skills.



The majority of The participants viewed drama-based instruction as a helpful technique to enhance their speaking skills. However, very few of them, including 17% disagreed with that.

6. Data Interpretation

6.1 The Implementation of Drama Activities

The first research question of the present study was set to explore the frequency of using drama activities in teaching speaking. Based on teachers' responses in the conducted interviews and pupils' answers in the questionnaires, it can be inferred that there is a limited inclusion of drama to teach the speaking skill. The researchers recognized that only a minority, one out of the nine interviewed EFL teachers, implemented it. The findings revealed that four out of the nine interviewees had a misunderstanding and confusion about the nature of drama in EFL classrooms. This was noticed in the teacher's uncertainty and hesitation when talking about the concept of drama.

6.2 Teachers' Perceptions Regarding the Incorporation of Drama in EFL Classes

The findings indicated that teachers had different perceptions towards its incorporation. Most of the interviewed teachers acknowledged that drama is a valuable teaching technique, considering the significant leverage that may be brought using it. However, the rest of the interviewees expressed negative perceptions towards it. They defended their positions based on the challenges encountered, including pupils' diverse interests and cultural barriers, which confirmed the lack of knowledge and a shallow understanding of drama-based instruction and its benefits in the EFL classroom.

6.3 The Possible Impediments of Using Drama in EFL Classes

In regard to the hurdles and obstacles encountered when incorporating drama in EFL classrooms, the interviewed teachers listed the most common challenges opposed as follows:

- Language proficiency gaps, including lack of pupils' vocabulary storage, and fluency.
- Pupils' multileveled proficiency in English.
- Cultural and social barriers.
- Pupils' possible resistance and anxiety
- The overcrowded classrooms.
- Time limitations.
- Curriculum constraints.

7. Recommendations

Drawing upon the obtained results of the current study, a set of recommendations are afforded to the Ministry of National Education, EFL secondary school teachers and foreign language secondary school pupils in the pursuit of improving the quality of teaching and learning EFL speaking at the secondary school level.

7.1 Recommendations for the Ministry of National Education

- It is recommended by policymakers, including curriculum designers and inspectors, to reshape and update the English curriculum, considering the integration of DAs into the EFL syllabus to promote pupils' communicative competence and engagement in learning EFL.
- It is also recommended to continuously organize teacher training for EFL teachers in the pre-service and in-service stages to influence the inclusion of DAs in EFL classes, raising their awareness of their value, and guiding them to implement them appropriately.
- The issue of the crowded classes ought to be resolved.

7.2 Recommendations for EFL teachers at the secondary level

- Teachers are advised to engage in continuous professional development and training opportunities in which drama techniques are included.
- Allocating regular time within the EFL syllabus for drama-based activities.
- There should be an active effort made by teachers to use different types of drama activities with a variety of topics to enhance students' motivation and willingness to participate.
- Encouraging peer-sharing among teachers to mutually benefit from successful practices of DAs.

7.3 Recommendations for EFL pupils

- Pupils should be open to take risks and be open-minded in class, to perform roles from different situations and cultures.
- Cooperation is vital in developing pupils' speaking skill; they should work together in discussing, negotiating, rehearsing, and performing DAs.

8. Suggestions for Further Research

Research on DAs in the Algerian EFL context is to some extent scarce. This makes drama a rich research landscape, especially given the implementation constraints opposed, including motivation, speaking anxiety, and lack of communicative competence. Consequently, it is recommended to conduct further research investigations on the following topics which are relevant, original, trendy, and research-worthy:

- Using Improvisation to develop EFL Students' Spontaneous Communication.
- The Role of Drama in Promoting Students' Intercultural Awareness Among Algerian EFL Learners.
- Fostering 21st Century Skills through Drama Based Activities: A Focus on the Four Cs, Communication, Collaboration, Creativity and Critical Thinking.
- Drama-based Activities as a tool to Support Content and Language Learning in the Algerian English as a Medium of Instruction Contexts.

9. Conclusion

In a nutshell, the three research questions were addressed and discussed based on the study's results. The participating teachers rarely implement drama activities in their EFL classes, holding different perceptions towards it.

Most of the teachers deem it a powerful teaching tool that can yield a tremendous influence on students' EFL speaking skills' progress, while others seem reluctant to its use, claiming that pupils have different interests and cultural resistance towards similar activities. The obtained results came with a set of multiple constraints faced by teachers while using this teaching technique, depending on their own teaching experiences. In the pursuit of raising awareness about the affordances of incorporating drama into EFL classrooms, a set of recommendations and pedagogical implications were provided.

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9. APPENDICES

9.1 Appendix (A): The Teachers' Interview

Q1.How long have you been teaching English as a foreign language at the secondary level?

Q2. According to your personal experience as a teacher of English, how do you see your pupils‟ speaking skill level?

Q3. To what extent do you apply drama activities to teach speaking in your EFL classroom?

Q4. What are the drama activities do you frequently use in your EFL classroom?

Q5. Much literature in the field of teaching English as a foreign language have proven that implementing drama activities in the EFL classrooms has a significant positive impact on pupils' speaking skills. What is your comment on that?

Q6. How do you find drama as an EFL teaching pedagogy at the secondary level?

Q7. Would you recommend its incorporation to teach the speaking skill to other teachers? Why or why not?

Q8. What are the possible difficulties that may encounter teachers while incorporating drama in their EFL classrooms?

Thank you for your collaboration

9.2 Appendix (B): The Pupils' Questionnaire

Dear pupils,

We are conducting research for the accomplishment of a Master's Degree in General Didactics and English Language Teaching (GDELT). You are kindly asked to answer this questionnaire for our research, which is an exploration on "The implementation of drama in EFL classes to teach speaking at the Algerian secondary schools". We ensure that your confidentiality will be retained and that the provided information will be used only to fulfill the objectives of the present research.

Please,

*Circle the number or the letter of the corresponding answer.

*Full answers are required in the space provided for them.

*Try to give as accurate answers as possible to the questions.

Section one: Background information

Q1- Your age is… ..... years old.

Q2- You are:

a- Male b-Female

Q3-For how many years have you been studying English as a foreign language (EFL)?

….....years?

Section Two: Speaking skill in the secondary level's EFL classrooms

Q4- In your opinion, which of the following skills should be given more importance in EFL teaching?

a. Listening c. Writing b. Speaking d. Reading

Q 5- How do you find your speaking skill level?

a. Very good b. Good

c. Average d. Bad

e. Very bad

Q6- If your previous answer was "d" or "e", which of the following speaking constraints do you encounter?

(You can choose more than one option)

a. Lack of necessary vocabulary b. Fear of committing mistakes

c. Lack of motivation to speak d. Fear of negative feedback

e. Lack of self confidence f. All

g. others……

Q 7-What activities do your teacher of English use to teach you speaking?

(you can choose more than one option)

a. Dialogues b. Interviews

c. Presentations d. Group discussions

. Drama activities for. All

g. Others ……

Q 8- Which activity do you prefer?

a. Dialogues b. Interviews

c. Presentations d. Group discussions

. Drama activities for. All

g. Others……

Section three: The implementation of drama in EFL Classes

Q 9- Does your textbook include drama activities?

a. Yes b. No

Q 10- Have you ever been a part of any drama activity?

a. Yes b. No

→ If your previous answer was "No", skip directly to question number 14.

Q 11-For what purpose did your EFL teacher incorporate drama in his/her classroom?

a. As an assessment tool

b. To develop your speaking abilities c. Both

Q12- Which of the following activities are implemented in your classroom?

(You can select more than one activity)

a. Role plays b. Improvisation

c. Storytelling c. Mime
e. Simulations f. Dramatizing novels
g. All
h. Others …….....

Q 13-How often was drama implemented in your classroom?

a. Always b. Often
c. Sometimes d. Rarely
e. Never

Section four: Students' perceptions towards drama activities

Q 14-How would you describe drama activities?

a. Very interesting b. Interesting
c. Moderately interesting d. Boring
e. Very boring

Q 15- Do you enjoy participating in these activities?

a. Yes b. No

Q 16-Do you consider drama a helpful technique to enhance your speaking skills?

a. Yes b. No

Q 17- Please, feel free to add any comments or suggestions you see relevant to the aim of the questionnaire.

……
……

Thank you for your cooperation