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# EFFECTIVENESS OF THEATRICAL EXPERIENCE ON ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ENGLISH AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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## Abstract

This paper concerns the strategic use of academic theatre in learning skills of oral communication in second language in secondary classes of Kerala. The objectives of the paper were to examine the effects of conventional methods in oral communication skills, to find out the effect of theatrical experience method in teaching oral communication skills and to compare the effectiveness of theatrical experience method and conventional method. The study was Quasi-Experimental in design involving Pre-test, Post-test Non equivalent Groups Design. The output of the study showed that theatrical experience method helped considerably to acquire oral communication skills.

## Introduction

The demotivating presence of extra linguistic obstacles, such as shyness, inhibitions, lack of exposure to actual contexts or lack of immediate need, is one elementary issue that every second language learner and teacher face in classrooms. This is largely due to the fact that second language teaching and learning often lack the real life stimulus and need that enable learners to master a language quickly. It is at this point that the idea of using theatrical activities in the classroom emerges as a possible enabling strategy because drama provides children with the much needed real-life stimulus in manipulating language in its nuanced functions. However, the validity of incorporating theatrical activity into studies cannot be reduced to this elementary use. Both empirical data and former studies show that children learn well and effectively when learning is connected to 'play'. Peter Slade, in his first book *Child Drama* (1954) has conclusively found that there is a natural relationship between child and drama. This is true about learning process in general, but particularly so in the context of language learning. The act of 'mimesis' has always been instrumental in a child's acquisition of language. This connection between knowing and dramatizing is a question with larger bearing. Even though, 'intelligence quotient' involves many factors, language skills constitute an important, perhaps the most important, component of the power of 'intelligence'. Critical and divergent thinking, a human potential that enhances and is enhanced by language learning, is a vital element of intelligibility. The study of Sema (2009) on "Enhancing Fluent and Flexible Thinking through the Creative Drama Process" provides insights into this area of investigation. Finally, the need for a strategy to learn second language in its actually usable variant also prompts to enquire the scope of theatre in classroom. The study of second language distanced and abstracted from its real living contexts runs the risk of learning an artificial and inappropriate variety of 'foreign' or even an 'alien' language. Investigations have shown that use of theatrical mode helps to assimilate appropriate variants – in proper register, style and Received Pronunciation.

## **Background of the study**

In school within the subject of English it is vital that the pupils are given many opportunities to speak and practice how to communicate verbally and express themselves in English. Students should be able to actively take part in discussions on familiar subjects and with the help of different strategies communicate effectively in English. It is quite hard to get all pupils to take an active part in discussions and conversations in English, a foreign language. Many pupils are very quiet in class while practicing oral communication keeping one of the objectives of teaching English, unattainable. The great challenge for an English teacher is to motivate and encourage all pupils to be orally active in the English as second language classroom.

## **Significance of the study**

Educational theatre is the best teaching and learning strategy in social constructive paradigm. As the centre of all art forms theatre can reconstruct classroom activities into a constructive form of self developing tool. By manipulating dramatic improvisation, students could be led to an 'authentic experience' a so called deep knowing, of essential truths of human condition. Rather being the subject of pedagogy, drama-in -education became a sophisticated form of pedagogy itself.

Theatre is actually a parallel way of life. Even though theatre is one of the main strategies in social constructivism it is not used effectively as the conventional strategies in the constructivist Second language classrooms in Kerala. The pre-service and in-service training given for the teachers of Kerala do not emphasis the scope and effect of theatre. The practising teachers are reluctant to use theatre as a prominent strategy as they are concerned with the time consumption and due to the non-awareness of its wide reach.

Theatre is a feature of all civilization and has long been used as an educative tool, however reviews show that not many studies are conducted in India on using Theatre strategies in education. All the studies show the strategy has a positive impact on learning school subjects, in contrast studies in Indian context are only very few and those on the effect of Theatrical experience method on English language teaching and learning were rarely reported. Hence the investigator selected the effectiveness of theatrical experience on oral communication skills in English, hoping that it would be more helpful for the students, in mastering the foreign tongue.

## **Objectives**

### **The objectives of the study are:-**

- To find out the effect of theatrical experience method on oral communication skills in English among secondary school students.
- To find out the effect of conventional method on oral communication skills in English among secondary school students.
- To compare effectiveness of theatrical experience method and conventional method on oral communication skills.

## **Hypotheses**

The study is undertaken by formulating the following major Hypothesis:-

There will not be any significant difference in the effectiveness of theatrical experience method and conventional method on oral communication skills in English.

## **Methodology**

Methodology deals with the precise description of method, sample used for the study, tools and statistical techniques used.

### **Design of the study**

The present study has been conducted by employing the Quasi-Experimental design. The design used in the study was the Pre-test Post-test Non equivalent Groups Design.

The experimental group was provided with learning experiences incorporating Theatre element and the control group, with conventional method of teaching.

### **Sample of the study**

The sample of the study consisted of 40 students in experimental group and 40 students in the control group. The sample for both Experimental and Control groups were two intact class divisions of standard IX students drawn from Government Ganapath Boys High School, Chalappuram, Kozhikode district, Kerala State.

### **Tools used for the study**

The following tools were used to collect data for the study.

#### **1) Oral communication test in English**

The investigator constructed an oral communication test in English and used for Pre-test and Post-test.

#### **2) Lesson Transcript on English for the theatre experience method**

The investigator prepared lesson transcripts on English for the strategy of theatre.

#### **3) Lesson transcript on English following conventional method**

The investigator prepared lesson transcripts on English following conventional method of teaching

### **Statistical Techniques Used for Analysis**

The following statistical techniques were used to analyse the data.

- Descriptive analysis like Mean, Median, Standard Deviation etc.
- T-test
- ANCOVA

### **Analysis of data**

As a part of Preliminary Analysis, descriptive analysis of mean, median, mode, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis for the pre-test and post-test scores were examined separately for experimental and control groups.

As major analysis of the study comparison of mean pretest scores of experimental and control groups, comparison of mean pre-test and post-test scores of experimental group, comparison of mean pre-test and post-test scores of control group as well as comparison of mean

posttest scores of experimental and control groups were carried out. Further, Analysis of Covariance was carried out.

**Table 1**

Results of Test of Significance of Difference in Mean Post-test Scores of Oral Communication Skills (Component wise) between Experimental and Control groups

Variables	Experimental group			Control group			t
	N <sub>1</sub>	M <sub>1</sub>	SD <sub>1</sub>	N <sub>2</sub>	M <sub>2</sub>	SD <sub>2</sub>	
Vocabulary	40	2.95	0.88	40	2.30	0.85	3.36**
Pronunciation	40	3.05	0.85	40	2.43	0.71	3.58**
Presentation	40	3.48	0.64	40	2.20	0.72	8.35**
Fluency	40	2.98	0.83	40	2.08	0.80	4.94**
Accuracy	40	2.75	0.87	40	2.00	0.78	4.05**

\*\* p<.01

Table 1 shows that all the calculated t values for Oral Communication Skills (Component wise) are greater than the tabled value 2.64 for df 78 at 0.01 level of significance. Hence there is statistically significant difference between mean post test scores of experimental and control groups for Oral Communication Skills (Component wise). This revealed that Theatrical Experience is more effective than conventional method in improving Oral Communication Skills (Component wise) among secondary school students.

- Comparison of Mean Gain Scores of Oral communication Skills (Total) between Experimental and Control groups

The mean gain scores of Oral Communication Skills (Total) between experimental and control groups were found and subjected to test of significant difference between means. The data and results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

Results of Test of Significance of Difference in Mean Gain Scores of Oral Communication Skills (Total) between Experimental and Control groups

Variables	Experimental Group			Control Group			t
	N <sub>1</sub>	M <sub>1</sub>	SD <sub>1</sub>	N <sub>2</sub>	M <sub>2</sub>	SD <sub>2</sub>	
Oral Communication Skills (Total)	40	3.85	1.21	40	0.15	0.36	18.53**

\*\* P<.01

The calculated t value is greater than the tabled value 2.64 for df 78 at 0.01 level of significance. Hence there is statistically significant difference between mean gain scores of experimental and control groups for Oral Communication Skills (Total). This implied that Theatrical Experience is more effective than conventional teaching in improving Oral Communication Skills (Total) among secondary school students.

Statistically significant difference was not found in pre-test scores of experimental and control groups. Statistically significant difference were found in mean post-test scores as well as mean

gain scores of experimental and control groups. Hence Theatrical Experience is more effective than conventional method of teaching in improving Oral Communication Skills (Component wise and Total) among secondary school students.

The result of ANCOVA carried out by incorporating instructional strategy as independent variable, Oral Communication Skills (Component wise and Total) as dependent variables and pre-test scores as covariates also substantiated this result

### **Findings and Interpretations**

The study revealed that theatrical experience will improve the oral communication skills in English among secondary learners. The statistical analysis proved that the learners improve their vocabulary, pronunciation, presentation, fluency and accuracy when exposed to theatrical experience. The result of the analysis also showed that theatrical experience as a learning strategy has a significant effect on oral communication skills among secondary learners when compared with the effect of existing method.

### **Educational Implications**

Theatre strategy need to be effectively incorporated into the teaching framework of English as a second language. Curriculum and text books for English may be designed with this new orientation, including textual materials and activity suggestions in a contextualized manner. Theatre clubs in schools can provide varied platform for effective use of theatrical experience method, thereby enhancing the oral communication skills in English. Proper consultations and training sessions for teachers and teacher trainees at required levels can be conducted in order for the effective conceiving and implementation of these theatre strategies in grade appropriate framework. This will positively help to reduce inhibitions and develop language skills in its lively forms with a variety of structures, vocabulary, fluency, presentation, accuracy and appropriateness of pronunciation and register.

### **Reference**

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