

## **Influence of Improvised Dramatic Approach on English Learning**

**Hsiu Ju Lin**

Chaoyang University of Technology

### **Abstract**

This study conducted a one-year experiment to investigate whether process-centered drama-based or improvised dramatic approach (IDA) enhances learners' oral competence in large EFL conversation class in Taiwan. The actual language growth of (control-group) learners who have stopped receiving such teaching approaches and were treated with more traditional teaching approaches instead were also investigated. The study began by examining learners' initial level of oral English competence at the beginning of the one-year conversation course, it then applied the present study's teaching approaches to both groups of learners during the first half period of the study. Halfway through the study, while test-group learners still received the present study's teaching approach, a more traditional English teaching approach was applied to control-group learners. At the end of the research, it examined the differences in the teaching/learning effect of both groups of learners by again comparing their current level of oral English competence, to see whether the present study's teaching approach was actually facilitating English teaching/learning. The findings suggest that IDA does have a positive influence on the enhancement of students' oral English learning outcomes.

Key words: process-centered, IDA, EFL

## BACKGROUND

Having applied a product-oriented drama activity to some EFL conversation classes at one university of technology in Central Taiwan, the author has had some observations. First, generally speaking, during the performance, great amount of well-structured English sentences were spoken fluently by the performing students. Second, the audience (the rest of the class who were not performing on the stage) seemed to show great enthusiasm. In addition, it could be seen that a relatively large amount of creative props were made by most of the performance groups. The above phenomena seemed to show a certain degree of learning motivation on the students' part. In examining a drama activity's effect in enhancing learners' willingness and confidence in speaking English, the results derived from Lin's (2002) study have indicated that, after the activity's application, in comparison to the same statements, "You practice English in your daily life," and "You are able to speak English in front of people," there is an obvious increase in learners' self-ratings, which led to the conclusion that—to a certain degree—the drama activity has its effect in enhancing learners' willingness and confidence in speaking English.

While the results of those preliminary studies (Lin, 2002; Lin, 2003; Lin 2004) have been found to be relatively positive regarding (a) subjects' attitude towards English learning, and (b) certain aspects of English learning outcomes, particularly in the area of the increase of English speaking- and listening-opportunities after one semester of drama activities' treatment in English conversation class, they did show some weaknesses as well; the results (Lin, 2002) have revealed that the drama activity does not seem to be considered by many subjects to be very effective in enhancing their listening ability (when listening to other groups' performances). The qualitative study of Phase-One Study (Lin, 2002) showed that the drama activity enhances subjects' listening ability mainly when they are listening to the dialogues of the same<sup>8</sup> group. The fact could also be partly evidenced by the results of the post-test in Lin's previous study (2002), wherein some relatively simple questions were not successfully answered by many subjects due to their failure in understanding the scorers. For instance, of a total of 155 subjects, 35 (about 20%) failed to answer the question, "What's your height?" And 34 (about 20%) failed to answer the question, "Is Taichung in the north or south of Taiwan?"

As Lin's (2002, 2003) previous studies have suggested optimistic results regarding product-centered drama activities' power in enhancing learners' learning motivation and confidence, and in increasing speaking-opportunities, the incorporation of process-centered (or improvised) drama activities into the curriculum

---

<sup>8</sup> As mentioned under Results and Discussion of Phase-One Study in Chapter 4 of Lin's (2002) study, according to the subjects, in order to be able to jump in at the right point to speak their lines, they had to understand first what their partners were expressing, hence forcing them to listen to others more carefully each time during the practice.

might be worth considering in achieving better learning outcomes, since improvised drama activities seem to have the characteristic of being able to foster learners' spontaneity. In light of the above findings and considerations, this study intended to—incorporating improvised dramatic approach (IDA hereafter) into the conversation course—conduct a longer observation to investigate (a) the actual language growth of those subjects who were given the present study's teaching approach for two consecutive semesters, and (b) the actual language growth of those subjects who were not given a drama-based teaching approach for the second semester.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to:

- (1) Derive from the present version of drama-based teaching approach a role model of appropriate application procedures for adapted IDA which enhances the speaking ability of college learners in large EFL conversation classrooms; and
- (2) Investigate learners' actual language growth.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

For thousands of years, drama has existed in various art forms spread through community life. In the ESL classroom the use of creative drama techniques such as role-playing, pantomime, or skits has proven extremely beneficial in the acquisition of all language skills (Maley and Duff, 1993; Verriour, 1985). A review of the literature shows that drama activities contribute considerably to enhancing learners' communicative competence (see, for example, Griffiee 1986; Holden, 1982; Lin, 2005; Lin, 2003; Lin, 2002; Lindsay, 1974; Maley and Duff, 1982; Moss, 1971; Schewe and Shaw, 1993; Somers, 2001; Via, 1987; Wessels, 1987). Drama activities' lively actions and highly contextualized characteristics not only attract students' attention and give students great joy during the process, but also engage students in real dialogue and help students to explore aspects of real language use which generate meaningful communication and in turn facilitate language acquisition. According to Ernst-Slavit and Wenger (1998), in addition to the intimate connection between drama and reading, writing as well as listening skills, a primary value of drama is the opportunity it affords for oral communication. In addition, Heath (1993) has pointed out:

Both language learning theorists and practitioners of teaching English as a second language or dialect have argued that role playing moves language learners beyond their usual performance in ordinary classroom presentations.

(p. 177)

Polsky (1989) has claimed that improvisational drama can be experienced almost anywhere—in the classroom, at home, or on stage—and by anyone, from children to senior adults. It was mentioned that players in improvisational drama need not be concerned with expensive props or elaborate costumes and stage settings. From “mere” space alone, a marvelous and diverse world of familiar and fantasy activity can be constructed and shared. According to Polsky, improvisation means the spontaneous response to new and unexpected situations under structured circumstances, a way of “letting yourself go” with self-control. He has maintained that as one becomes increasingly aware of one’s body as a vitally expressive instrument, inner confidence is fostered. He has noticed that quite frequently in schools, “drilling and grilling” of facts is stressed in place of creative exploration of the meaning of those facts regarding the learners’ world. By using their dramatic imaginations to explore open-ended problems, learners are stimulated to perceive new ways of connecting with unrelated materials learned in the past and begin to experience and live with creative changes. He argued that change is growth, and growth is learning and that retention of knowledge takes place more readily in a creative atmosphere. It was mentioned that “facts and concepts become more permanently fixed in the minds when the experience is a visceral one involving the emotions, when they can actively express feelings and get ‘inside’ the particular subject they are studying” (p. 231-232). It was pointed out that acting out words in an enjoyable atmosphere helps to enlarge both listening and speaking vocabularies. The focus of mind necessary for looking and listening helps young people to be alert and to perceive the importance of getting the right words ready for expressing themselves.

In discussing the effect of creative drama English teaching on creativity and learning achievements for the students in the extensive education division of a university of technology, Chen (2009) has found that Creative drama English teaching significantly promoted student’s creativity and advanced students’ English, especially in the facets of “Fluency” and “Listening”. Creativeness has been found to be of great importance also by numerous studies (Chang, 2007a; Chen 2006; Hong, 2007; Huang; 2007; Mages, 2008; Yeh, 2006). Phillips (1999) believes that training in improvisation is the best way for EFL students to acquire the ability to interact spontaneously in real-life communication settings. As has been mentioned by Shimizu (1993), improvisation is in fact a folk tradition at any age and in any country. It can be seen in our daily verbal behaviors. Improvisation is any kind of spontaneous (dramatic) performance tried “here and now and new” in a particular context, using our daily skills of perception, movement and speech, whether verbal or nonverbal, whether based upon certain material or not, and either roughly or not prepared at all. According to Shimizu, the process of communication is more significant than the product, it should be much more creative, unpredictable, spontaneous, and less formal.

As opposed to the skill oriented, text- and audience-centered work of the Speech and Drama specialists flourishing in England during the 20s, 30s and 40s, Slade concluded that the pleasure of a child in the so-called “dramatic” make-believe has not much to do with any appreciating audience, absence of which along with the addition of the element of Spontaneity are the most important in Slade’s drama (Slade, 1954).

## **DEFINITIONS OF PROCESS-CENTERED DRAMA-BASED ENGLISH TEACHING**

In the application of the drama-based teaching approach in the present study, process-centered elements were incorporated into the curriculum. Dramatic activities were planned and practiced *by* learners and tutors usually as part of, or associated with, the timetable (therefore typically intra-curricular), learners placed greater emphasis on the creative process and spontaneity; being non-exhibitional and process-centered, creative dramatics suggests the informality of classroom drama as opposed to the rehearsed play; spontaneity is seen as the hall-mark of this kind of dramatic activity. It could be described as a drama or role-play activity that is created by the participants being guided by a leader to imagine, enact, and reflect upon human experiences as depicted in the teaching material. The purpose is to deepen understanding and strengthen the performers rather than to perfect a product (McCaslin, 2000). Short episodes are enacted in front of the class by small groups in turn, with much freedom for interpretation.

## **METHOD**

This study intended to investigate the application of IDA teaching activities by exploring its use and effects as well as its contribution to English learning. A total of 84 students of different majors at one university of technology in Central Taiwan participated in the study for the length of one academic year (two semesters). The participants were all under the author’s instruction. Following is a description of the procedures of the study:

- (1) The students were randomly assigned into control-group and test-group, respectively.
- (2) A pre-test was conducted to both of the groups at the beginning of the course to examine their current level of oral English competence.
- (3) During the first period (the first semester) of the study, the present study’s teaching approach was applied to both groups of learners. From the beginning of

the second half (the second semester) of the study, while test-group learners still received the present study's teaching approach, control-group learners were instructed under a more traditional English teaching approach (Audio-lingual method combined with grammar-translation method).

- (4) At the end of the study, a post-test was conducted to both of the groups to elicit information about their current level of English competence.

The reason for the test-group learners to receive the present study's teaching approach during the second half (the second semester) of the study, while control-group learners were instructed under a more traditional English teaching approach was due to the author's consideration that the results of a longer period of experiment of the present study's teaching approach might be more reliable. The author adopted the design of two different instructional methodologies for the second half of the study in order to make comparisons between the two groups' learning outcomes. It was so designed so that control-group students' perceptions could also be investigated after the change of the teaching approach had been applied to them, the findings of which, however, were not included in the current study due to length limitations.

### **The Course and Classroom Activities**

The Instructional material adopted for this study was "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" by J. K. Rowling (Published 1997 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc). During each semester, two written examinations related to the introduced materials of the textbook were administered to ensure the subjects' minimal learning of basic structures. These written examinations were basically achievement tests which were not related to the pre- and post-test of the study aiming at measuring the students' advancement in speaking.

During the first half period of the study, both groups of students were divided into several sub-groups of 4 to 5 persons of mixed levels of English competence, and were treated with the same teaching approach (IDA). At first it was necessary for the teacher/researcher to introduce various scenes or situations and to sketch the background simply, and to indicate certain character roles. Students were encouraged to give free rein to their imaginations. Later on, role playing was called for; the students of this study took turns to come to the front of the classroom and, under the guidance/help of the teacher/researcher, role-played different scenes from the teaching material. More emphasis was placed on the role itself and its characteristics than on the other dramatic conventions involved (e.g., the preparation of costume, props, and script-memorization on the students' part, etc. were not the focus in this study's practice). Care was exercised to allow some time for discussion and evaluation once

the role playing was completed. Some of the scenes<sup>9</sup> adopted for use in class are as cited from chapter one (p. 7 and p. 9) of the instructional material.

After a few minutes' discussion among group members, some students were called on to the front of the classroom to role play a certain paragraph on the page. Possible lines (taking the scene from page 7 of the instructional material for instance) generated by the students (playing the roles of Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, respectively) may be as follows:

Mr. Dursley: Dear, how is your sister? We haven't seen her for a long time, right?

Mrs. Dursley: (looking shocked) Hush! Don't speak so loudly. The neighbors may overhear.

Mr. Dursley: (lowering his voice) I'm sorry.

Mrs. Dursley: We don't want our neighbors to know that I have a sister who is a witch, do we?

Mr. Dursley: You're right. That would scare people away from us.

Mrs. Dursley: Anyway, I haven't seen her for many years already.

Mr. Dursley: You're not curious about how they are doing?

Mrs. Dursley: It's better off this way. You know how I feel about her and her useless husband. I'd rather not to have a sister like that.

It's very normal that students encountered many difficulties in producing grammatically correct sentences, those were the times when the teacher/researcher came into play, making suggestions or helping them in completing whatever sentences they had started.

During the second half period of the study, while test-group learners still received IDA treatment, control-group learners were instructed under more traditional English teaching approach (Audio-lingual method combined with grammar-translation method).

### **Validity/Reliability/Scoring of Pre- and Post-Test (Oral Interview)**

An oral interview with the same questions for both of the groups was used for the pre- and post-test of this study. Since the students of this study were, generally speaking, of relatively low English competence (Lin, 2002, p. 219), it was necessary to design a test that suited their level. The questions for the pre- and post-test were

---

9 For instance: (1). "The Dursleys had everything they wanted, but they also had a secret, and their greatest fear was that somebody would discover it. They didn't think they could bear it if anyone found out about the Potters. Mrs. Potter was Mrs. Dursley's sister, but they hadn't met for several years; in fact, Mrs. Dursley pretended she didn't have a sister, because her sister and her good-for nothing husband were as unDursleyish as it was possible to be" (p. 7) . (2). "Mr. Dursley stopped dead. Fear flooded him. He looked back at the whisperers as if he wanted to say something to them, but thought better of it. He dashed back across the road, hurried up to his office, snapped at his secretary not to disturb him, seized his telephone and had almost finished dialing his home number when he changed his mind. He put the receiver back down and stroked his moustache, thinking ... no, he was being stupid" (p. 9).

designed according to Madsen's (1983) techniques in testing and have been reviewed by two experts in the field of English teaching. It would have been difficult to judge the difference of students' learning outcome between the beginning and end of the study if different sets of questions were adopted. In order to obtain a more objective result, the students participating in this study were not provided with any information about the tests beforehand. Following is a description regarding the validity and reliability of these two tests, which proceeds in the order of (a) construction and administration, and (b) scoring.

(a). Construction and administration

Two testers/scorers conducted a face-to-face interview in a relaxed, quiet and informal setting. In order to standardize the test for the candidates, a guided oral interview was used. A wide variety of elicitation techniques were utilized. Either/or questions, yes/no questions, and information questions were included. In addition, items (2, 6 and 11) that provide information that needs qualifying, revising or correcting, as well as encouraging students to carry on the conversation were used. The candidates were given as many "fresh starts" (separate items) as possible. Care was taken to avoid spending too much time on one particular function or topic. Candidates were given only the tasks and topics that would be expected to cause them no difficulty in their own language. The initial stages of the interview were made within the capacities of all reasonable candidates (Hughes, 1990:106), for example, straightforward requests for personal details, remarks about the weather, and so on, were used.

(b). Scoring

For the purpose of obtaining valid and reliable scoring, objectified scoring was adopted, since in the area of speaking, the criteria of oral communicative competence are less well defined, and the vast majority of language teachers do not have the sophisticated training needed to provide consistent, accurate holistic grading of speech (Madsen, 1983:170). Adopting part of the American FSI (Foreign Service Institute) procedure, the two testers/scorers concerned in each interview were required to rate candidates on a six-point scale (See Appendix 1: part 1) for each of the following aspects: accent, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension. These ratings were then weighted and totaled (See Appendix 1: part 2) and divided by ten. Care was taken that irrelevant features of performance were ignored, and any logically appropriate and comprehensible response was acceptable. Since speaking tests are always productive, partial credit was allowed for partially correct responses (Madsen, 1983:171).

For training of scorers, descriptions of the above criterial levels were clearly written and the two testers/scorers were trained to use them. Recordings of past interviews were played to clearly represent different criterial levels. The two testers/scorers assessed each student (of both the test- and control-group) together,



taking turns asking the questions. Care was taken to avoid the situation that the testers/scorers were seen to make notes on the students' performance during the interview. Scoring was done immediately<sup>10</sup>. The mean of the two sets of score derived was the final score for each student. A recording of each session was made to assist in the solution of possible occurrence of disagreement between the scorers. A third scorer was invited to interview the student for whom the score difference between the two scorers was higher than 20%. In such cases, the final score for the student was the mean derived from the three sets of score.

### Data Collection

A pre-test was conducted at the beginning of the course, while a post-test was conducted at the end of the study. Both of the tests were oral interviews administered by two scorers. Data of other tests (e.g., written mid-term and final examinations of both of the semesters) or means of evaluation (e.g., record of class attendance) were also collected. Since mid-term and final examinations of both of the semesters were related to the introduced materials of the textbook to ensure subjects' minimal learning of basic structures, they had no particular relationship with the pre- and post-tests.

### Subjects

A total of 84 freshmen of different majors in the four-year college program taking a general English course participated in the study, and were randomly assigned to two classes (control-group and test-group). Each class met two hours a week over the semester starting in September, 2009. The demographic data revealed that about three-fifths (60.5%) of the group were male. Students had studied the language for an average of 6 years in junior and vocational high school. All in all, the participants seemed to be a fairly typical group of technological college students beginning their first year of language study. The distribution of the students participating in the study is shown in Table 1:

Table 1

*Students Participating in Study (Control-Group)*

Department	Control-Group	Department	Test-Group
Finance	10	Film	10
Information Management	11	Insurance	12
Architecture	11	Accounting	9
Environmental Protection	10	Business Management	11

<sup>10</sup> As Madsen (1983:173) has put it, "The scoring of a speaking test is more accurate when it is done during the exam."

Source of information: present study

### **Data Analysis**

The study chose reliability analysis, descriptive analysis, and *t*-test as statistic methods for data processing and analysis.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results of Descriptive Analysis**

The statistics of test-score distribution shown from the comparison between students' pre- and post-tests indicate that, generally speaking, both groups of students have made progress. Following are the twenty questions of the pre- and post-tests. The test results of both groups are shown in Tables 2 to 3. As can be seen from the comparison of the mean between the pre- and post-tests, the test-group gets lower grades for items 2 (I suppose that most people in Taiwan speak Mandarin as well as Taiwanese.), 6 (Is Taichung in the north or the south of Taiwan?), 10 (Would you like to study for a master's degree after you graduate from college?), 12 (When did you enter this university, and why?), 15 (What are the advantages of living in a house?), and 17 (Did your family suffer from the 921 earthquake?). The results for items 6 and 15 are statistically significant, suggesting that test-group students did not make progress especially for items that required them to provide real world knowledge or analysis of a certain situation. The result of students' failure in answering item 2 could be due to the reason that generally it is difficult for students to answer or give a reply to sentences that are out of context. On the other hand, the control-group gets lower grades only in one question (question 2). One possible reason could be that, control-group participants are of relatively higher level of English competence (which could be evidenced from the comparison of means between the two groups in the pre-test). Due to the fact that a real teaching context did not allow the author to have two groups of learners of equivalent oral English competence, *t*-test was used to compute language growth for each of the group, respectively.

### **Questions for Pre- and Post-Tests**

1. What languages do you speak?
2. I suppose that most people in Taiwan speak Mandarin as well as Taiwanese.
3. Where do you come from?
4. Do your parents still live there?
5. You're the only member of your family in Wufeng?
6. Is Taichung in the north or the south of Taiwan?
7. How long have you been studying English?

8. Would you tell me some of your hobbies?
9. What do you major in?
10. Would you like to study for a master's degree after you graduate from college?
11. It's certainly hot outside today!
12. When did you enter this university, and why?
13. Do you like to study here? Why?
14. Do you live in a house or an apartment?
15. What are the advantages of living in a house?
16. Would you tell me a little about your high school?
17. Did your family suffer from the 921 earthquake?
18. What's your height?
19. Would you tell me a little about your best friend?
20. Would you take a piece of paper to the teacher in the next room?

Table 2

*Results of Pre-Test's Descriptive Analysis*

Item No	Mean		Std.		Variances	
	Control- Group	Test- Group	Control- Group	Test- Group	Control- Group	Test- Group
1	2.90	1.14	1.30	1.55	1.68	2.40
2	0.10	0.05	0.30	0.21	0.09	0.04
3	4.28	2.68	1.06	1.89	1.13	3.57
4	1.33	0.41	1.62	0.79	2.64	0.62
5	1.20	0.80	1.36	0.90	1.86	0.82
6	0.35	0.30	0.95	0.73	0.90	0.54
7	2.68	1.39	1.31	1.35	1.71	1.82
8	2.83	0.48	1.82	1.25	3.33	1.56
9	0.73	0.23	1.50	0.91	2.26	0.83
10	0.35	0.18	0.62	0.66	0.39	0.43
11	1.33	0.45	1.93	1.13	3.71	1.28
12	0.55	0.09	1.24	0.47	1.54	0.22
13	2.28	1.07	1.93	1.72	3.74	2.95
14	2.18	0.45	2.21	1.21	4.87	1.46
15	0.00	0.18	0.00	0.76	0.00	0.57
16	2.13	0.52	1.74	1.15	3.04	1.33
17	0.53	0.14	1.09	0.77	1.18	0.59
18	0.35	0.05	0.95	0.30	0.90	0.09
19	2.05	0.50	2.11	1.28	4.46	1.65
20	0.05	0.02	0.22	0.15	0.05	0.02

Source of information: present research

Table 3

*Results of Post-Test's Descriptive Analysis*

Item No	Class	Mean		Std.		Variances	
		Control- Group	Test- Group	Control- Group	Test- Group	Control- Group	Test- Group
1		3.63	1.45	1.50	1.90	2.24	3.60
2		0.08	0.02	0.27	0.15	0.07	0.02
3		4.83	3.41	0.50	1.77	0.25	3.13
4		2.18	0.98	1.84	1.09	3.38	1.19
5		1.23	0.98	1.10	0.95	1.20	0.91
6		1.08	0.00	1.37	0.00	1.87	0.00
7		3.00	2.20	1.68	1.39	2.82	1.93
8		2.95	1.27	1.57	1.68	2.46	2.81
9		1.75	0.43	2.24	0.95	5.01	0.90
10		0.55	0.11	0.75	0.39	0.56	0.15
11		1.83	0.55	2.21	1.27	4.87	1.60
12		0.65	0.00	1.33	0.00	1.77	0.00
13		3.03	1.77	1.58	1.70	2.49	2.88
14		2.55	1.00	2.02	1.66	4.10	2.74
15		0.25	0.07	1.01	0.45	1.01	0.20
16		2.90	1.07	1.53	1.50	2.35	2.25
17		0.50	0.02	1.18	0.15	1.38	0.02
18		0.58	0.39	1.17	0.99	1.38	0.99
19		2.98	0.84	1.49	1.33	2.23	1.76
20		0.03	0.02	0.16	0.15	0.03	0.02

Source of information: present research

**Results of t-test**

According to the *t*-tests' results, in comparison to the control-group, the test-group has more items (items 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 18) that show a statistically significant difference, suggesting that the test-group made progress in more items of the post-test questions than the control-group (items 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 16 and 19). Tables 4 and 5 show the results. The four items that show a statistically significant difference in both of the groups are items 3 (referring to the question: Where do you come from?), 4 (Do your parents still live there?), 6 (Is Taichung in the

north or the south of Taiwan?) and 16 (Would you tell me a little about your high school?). The three items that show statistically significant difference only in control-group are items 1 (What languages do you speak?), 9 (What do you major in?), and 19 (Would you tell me a little about your best friend?). The four items that show statistically significant difference only in test-groups are items 7 (How long have you been studying English?), 8 (Would you tell me some of your hobbies?), 13 (Do you like to study here? Why?), 14 (Do you live in a house or an apartment?), 15 (What are the advantages of living in a house?) and 18 (What's your height?).

A comparison of the results suggest that in addition to yes/no questions, test-group students seem to make progress also in most of the open-ended questions that require more elaboration in answering, such as questions 8, 13, and 15. Even though control-group students also made progress in two (questions 16 and 19) of the open-ended questions, it seems that questions such as talking about one's high school and best friend are not of the same kind as those of eliciting information regarding the reasons why they want to study at current university, or analysis of dis/advantages of living in a house/an apartment, with the former being less challenging and more straightforward. It seems that neither of the groups showed significant progress in responding to items that require revising, correcting, or carrying on of the conversation (e.g., item 2: I suppose that most people in Taiwan speak Mandarin as well as Taiwanese; item 11: It's certainly hot outside today!).

### **Other Comparisons between the Test-group and the Control-group**

Some other tests or means of evaluations were used to compare the differences between the test-group and the control-group, e.g., mid-term examination of the first and second semester (mef and mes), final-examination of the first and second semester (fef and fes), total grade of the first and second semester (tgf and tgs), students' total count of speaking during the first and second semester (tcsf and tcss), and students' total count of absences during the first and second semester (tcaf and tcas). As can be seen, both of the groups show an increase in the mid-term examination grade (27.41 to 30.07 for the test-group, 45.05 to 47.73 for the control-group), and in the final-examination grade (19.09 to 29.73 for the test-group, and 31.40 to 38.29 for the control-group). Both of the groups show a decrease in the total grade comparison (34.1 to 30.60 for the test-group, 45.33 to 38.90 for the control-group) between the two semesters. Both of the groups show an increase in the total count of absence (0.32 to 1.55 for the test-group, 0.65 to 1.88 for the control-group). However, the test-group's students show an increase in total count (10.89 to 11.75) of speaking, while control-group's students show a decrease (12.80 to 7.53). The results seem to indicate that under the administration of IDA, students had more speaking opportunities. Table 6 shows the results.

Table 4

*Control-Group's Pre- and Post-Tests' t-Test*

	Mean	Std.	Standard Error of Mean	95% confidence level		t	Degree of Freedom	Sig.
				Down	Up			
PRET1 - POT1	-0.73	1.80	0.28	-1.30	-0.15	-2.55	39	0.01**
PRET2 - POT2	0.03	0.42	0.07	-0.11	0.16	0.37	39	0.71
PRET3 - POT3	-0.55	1.08	0.17	-0.90	-0.20	-3.21	39	0.00***
PRET4 - POT4	-0.85	2.18	0.34	-1.55	-0.15	-2.47	39	0.02**
PRET5 - POT5	-0.03	1.56	0.25	-0.52	0.47	-0.10	39	0.92
PRET6 - POT6	-0.73	1.09	0.17	-1.07	-0.38	-4.22	39	0.00***
PRET7 - POT7	-0.33	1.86	0.29	-0.92	0.27	-1.11	39	0.28
PRET8 - POT8	-0.13	1.84	0.29	-0.71	0.46	-0.43	39	0.67
PRET9 - POT9	-1.03	2.08	0.33	-1.69	-0.36	-3.11	39	0.00**
PRET10 - POT10	-0.20	0.99	0.16	-0.52	0.12	-1.27	39	0.21
PRET11 - POT11	-0.50	2.50	0.40	-1.30	0.30	-1.26	39	0.21
PRET12 - POT12	-0.10	1.81	0.29	-0.68	0.48	-0.35	39	0.73
PRET13 - POT13	-0.75	2.23	0.35	-1.46	-0.04	-2.13	39	0.04
PRET14 - POT14	-0.38	2.52	0.40	-1.18	0.43	-0.94	39	0.35
PRET15 - POT15	-0.25	1.01	0.16	-0.57	0.07	-1.57	39	0.12
PRET16 - POT16	-0.78	1.70	0.27	-1.32	-0.23	-2.88	39	0.01**
PRET17 - POT17	0.03	1.05	0.17	-0.31	0.36	0.15	39	0.88
PRET18 - POT18	-0.23	1.33	0.21	-0.65	0.20	-1.07	39	0.29
PRET19 - POT19	-0.93	1.97	0.31	-1.55	-0.30	-2.98	39	0.01**
PRET20 - POT20	0.03	0.28	0.04	-0.06	0.11	0.57	39	0.57
PRETO - POTO	-8.38	10.44	1.65	-11.71	-5.04	-5.07	39	0.00***

\*P<0.1 \*\*P<0.05 \*\*\*P<0.01 Source of information: present research

Table 5

*Test-Group's Pre- and Post-Tests' t-Test*

	Mean	Std.	Standard Error of Mean	95% confidence level		t	Degree of Freedom	Sig.
				Down	Up			
PRET1 - POT1	-0.32	2.04	0.31	-0.94	0.30	-1.03	43	0.31
PRET2 - POT2	0.02	0.26	0.04	-0.06	0.10	0.57	43	0.57
PRET3 - POT3	-0.73	1.69	0.25	-1.24	-0.21	-2.86	43	0.01**
PRET4 - POT4	-0.57	1.28	0.19	-0.96	-0.18	-2.94	43	0.01**
PRET5 - POT5	-0.18	1.21	0.18	-0.55	0.18	-1.00	43	0.32
PRET6 - POT6	0.30	0.73	0.11	0.07	0.52	2.67	43	0.01**
PRET7 - POT7	-0.82	1.76	0.26	-1.35	-0.28	-3.09	43	0.00***
PRET8 - POT8	-0.80	1.65	0.25	-1.30	-0.29	-3.20	43	0.00***
PRET9 - POT9	-0.20	1.36	0.20	-0.62	0.21	-1.00	43	0.32
PRET10 - POT10	0.07	0.79	0.12	-0.17	0.31	0.57	43	0.57
PRET11 - POT11	-0.09	1.27	0.19	-0.48	0.30	-0.47	43	0.64
PRET12 - POT12	0.09	0.47	0.07	-0.05	0.23	1.27	43	0.21
PRET13 - POT13	-0.70	2.14	0.32	-1.36	-0.05	-2.18	43	0.03**
PRET14 - POT14	-0.55	1.65	0.25	-1.05	-0.04	-2.19	43	0.03**
PRET15 - POT15	0.11	0.89	0.13	-0.16	0.39	0.84	43	0.40*
PRET16 - POT16	-0.55	1.45	0.22	-0.99	-0.10	-2.49	43	0.02**
PRET17 - POT17	0.11	0.78	0.12	-0.12	0.35	0.96	43	0.34
PRET18 - POT18	-0.34	1.06	0.16	-0.66	-0.02	-2.14	43	0.04*
PRET19 - POT19	-0.34	1.43	0.22	-0.78	0.09	-1.58	43	0.12
PRET20 - POT20	0.00	0.22	0.03	-0.07	0.07	0.00	43	1.00
PRETO - POTO	-5.48	8.05	1.21	-7.92	-3.03	-4.51	43	0.00***

\*P<0.1 \*\*P<0.05 \*\*\*P<0.01 Source of information: present research

Table 6  
*Comparison of Other Areas of Evaluation*

Items	Mean		Std.		Variances	
	Control-Group	Test-Group	Control-Group	Test-Group	Control-Group	Test-Group
Mef	45.05	27.41	12.22	13.19	149.38	174.06
Fef	31.40	19.09	11.39	10.71	129.78	114.69
Tgf	45.33	34.1	12.34	13.1	152.34	171.62
Tcsf	12.80	10.89	9.16	10.13	83.86	102.66
Tcaf	0.65	0.32	0.86	0.74	0.75	0.55
Mes	47.73	30.07	15.86	15.10	251.69	228.11
Fes	38.29	29.73	17.05	12.14	290.83	147.28
Tgs	38.90	30.60	14.92	12.78	222.60	163.38
Tcss	7.53	11.75	2.56	6.75	6.56	45.54
Tcas	1.88	1.55	1.73	1.85	2.98	3.42

Source of information: present research

## CONCLUSIONS

A general look at the results derived from the adopted statistic methods reveals that both groups of learners made a certain degree of progress in oral competence. However, IDA did have a positive influence on students' learning outcome. In addition to the provision of more speaking opportunities, test-group students (who were of lower oral competence in comparison to control-group students at the beginning of the study) made progress in more items than control-group students—under a longer treatment of the current study's teaching approach. With the instructor introducing various scenes or situations and sketching the background simply, and indicating certain character roles, learners were encouraged to give free rein to their imaginations. Even though role playing was called for, more emphasis was placed on the role itself and its characteristics than on the other dramatic conventions involved. Through the present study, we may have gained some insights into how the “length” factor comes into play in influencing learning outcome, which



may be offered for future reference regarding related teaching methodology.

It may be understandable that in an EFL context where there is scarcely the need for using English for survival, it is relatively difficult to greatly enhance students' speaking ability in an academic year's (about 8 months) time, no matter what kind of teaching methodology is adopted. What the above drama activity has achieved, in the area of speaking, may be mainly in the aspect of producing opportunities for students to speak English and to witness the fact that they are indeed capable of speaking English. The present version of the drama-based teaching approach seems to be able to present a possibility for an application procedures/model which enhances speaking ability for learners in large EFL conversation classrooms. The author believes that, while a handful of practitioners in the field have attempted with some success to break new ground, further research is needed regarding more varieties of methodological procedure of drama-based English teaching/learning activities to put it into a sound educational context.

## LIMITATIONS

Due to the nature of this study being a quantitative one, it is relatively difficult for the author to derive—from the data—a clear answer as to what aspects the subjects have made progress in, e.g., in the aspect of fluency, accuracy or use of grammar, which therefore may be a possible direction for future research.

## REFERENCES

- Ernst-Slavit, G., & Wenger, K. J. (1998). Using creative drama in the elementary ESL classroom. *TESOL Journal*, 30-33.
- Griffie, D. T. (1986). Listen and act: from simple actions to classroom drama. *English Teaching Forum*, 18-23.
- Heath, S. B. (1993). Inner city life through drama: Imagining the language classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 27(2), 177-192.
- Holden, S. (1982). *Drama in Language Teaching*. Harlow, Essex: Longman.
- Hughes, A. (1990). *Testing for Language Teachers*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lin, H. J. (2005). A teacher-student interaction model in a drama activity. *Chaoyang Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*. 3(1), 1-30.
- Lin, H. J. (2004). A Preliminary Study of Drama Activities in Large Non-English Major EFL Classrooms: Application Procedures. *Studies in English Language and Literature*, 13, 45-52.
- Lin, H. J. (2003). A preliminary study of drama activities in large non-English major

- EFL classrooms: A report of students' views. *Chaoyang Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(2), 81-116.
- Lin, H. J. (2002). *A Study of the Use of Drama Activities in Large Non-English Major EFL Classrooms*. Taichung: Shin-Jien Publishing, Co. Ltd.
- Lindsay, P. (1974). The use of drama in TEFL. *English Language Teaching Journal* 29(1): 55-59.
- Madsen, H. S. (1983). *Techniques in Testing*. Oxford University Press.
- Mages, W. K. (2008). Does creative drama promote language development in early childhood? A Review of the methods and measures employed in the empirical literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(1): 124-152.
- Maley, A., & Duff, A. (1982). *Drama Techniques in Language Learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- McCaslin, N. (2000). *Creative Drama in the Classroom and Beyond* (7th ed.). Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
- Moss, W. E. (1971). The play's the thing. *English Language Teaching*, 161-164.
- Phillips, B. D. (1999). *Improvisational language structures*. Proceedings of the Sixteenth Conference on English Teaching and Learning. (pp. 551-565). Taipei: The Crane Publishing Co.
- Polsky, M. E. (1989). *Let's improvise* (2nd ed.). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Schewe, M. & Shaw, P. (Eds.). (1993). *Towards Drama as Method in the Foreign Language Classroom*. Frankfurt, Germany: Lang.
- Shimizu, T. (1993). Initial experiences with improvised drama in English teaching: Working against the historical neglect of fluency in language learning in Japan. In M. Schewe and P. Shaw (Eds.), *Towards Drama as Method in the Foreign Language Classroom*, (pp. 139-169). Frankfurt, Germany: Lang.
- Slade, P. (1954). *Child Drama*. London: University of London Press.
- Somers, J. W. (2001). *A Workshop on Drama in Language Learning*. Kaohsiung: Fun Theatre.
- Verriour, P. (1985). Face to face: Negotiating meaning through drama. *Theory Into Practice*, 24, 181-186.
- Via, R. A. (1987). "The magic if" of theatre: enhancing language learning through drama. In W. M. Rivers (Eds.), *Interactive Language Teaching*, (pp.110-123). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wessels, C. (1987). *Drama*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 洪慧瑄 (Hong, H. X.) (民 96)。創作性戲劇教學對國小五年級學童口語流暢力影響之行動研究 (未出版之碩士論文)。國立臺灣師範大學創造力發展碩士在職專班，台北市。
- 陳龍安 (Chen, L. A.) (民 95)。創造思考教學的理論與實際。台北：心理。
- 黃尤妹 (Huang, Y. S.) (民 96)。戲劇教學對幼稚園學童創造思考效應之研究

- (未出版之碩士論文)。國立台北教育大學幼兒教育研究所，台北市。
- 張曉華 (Chang, H. H.) (民 96a)。創意戲劇的說故事語言教學方法。「第二屆英語文教育和戲劇國際研討會」發表之論文。台灣：台南科技大學。
- 葉玉珠 (Yeh, Y. C.) (民 95)。創造力教學—過去、現在與未來。台北：心理。

## **Appendix 1**

### **Proficiency Descriptions**

#### Part 1.

##### Accent

1. Pronunciation frequently unintelligible.
2. Frequent gross errors and a very heavy accent make understanding difficult, require frequent repetition.
3. “Foreign accent” requires concentrated listening, and mispronunciations lead to occasional misunderstanding and apparent errors in grammar or vocabulary.
4. Marked “Foreign accent” and occasional mispronunciations which do not interfere with understanding.
5. No conspicuous mispronunciations, but would not be taken for a native speaker.
6. Native pronunciation, with no trace of “foreign accent.”

##### Grammar

1. Grammar almost entirely inaccurate phrases.
2. Constant errors showing control of very few major patterns and frequently preventing communication.
3. Frequent errors showing some major patterns uncontrolled and causing occasional irritation and misunderstanding.
4. Occasional errors showing imperfect control of some patterns but no weakness that causes misunderstanding.
5. Few errors, with no patterns of failure.
6. No more than two errors during the interview.

##### Vocabulary

1. Vocabulary inadequate for even the simplest conversation.
2. Vocabulary limited to basic personal and survival areas (time, food, transportation, family, etc.)
3. Choice of words sometimes inaccurate, limitations of vocabulary prevent discussion of some common professional and social topics.
4. Professional vocabulary adequate to discuss special interests; general vocabulary permits discussion of any non-technical subject with some circumlocutions.
5. Professional vocabulary adequate to discuss special interests; general vocabulary permit discussion of any non-technical subject with some circumlocutions.
6. Vocabulary apparently as accurate and extensive as that of an educated native speaker.

Fluency

1. Speech is so halting and fragmentary that conversation is virtually impossible.
2. Speech is very slow and uneven except for short or routine sentences.
3. Speech is frequently hesitant and jerky; sentences may be left uncompleted.
4. Speech is occasionally hesitant, with some unevenness caused by rephrasing and grouping for words.
5. Speech is effortless and smooth, but perceptibly non-native in speech and evenness.
6. Speech on all professional and general topics as effortless and smooth as a native speaker's.

Comprehension

1. Understands too little for the simplest type of conversation.
2. Understands only slow, very simple speech on common social and touristic topics; requires constant repetition and rephrasing.
3. Understands careful, somewhat simplified speech when engaged in a dialogue, but may require considerable repetition and rephrasing.
4. Understands quite well normal educated speech when engaged in a dialogue, but requires occasional repetition or rephrasing.
5. Understands everything in normal educated conversation except for very colloquial or low-frequency items, or exceptionally rapid or slurred speech.
6. Understands everything in both formal and colloquial speech to be expected of an educated native speaker.

Part 2.

Weighting Table

	1	2	3	4	5	6	(A)
Accent	0	1	2	2	3	4	_____
Grammar	6	12	18	24	30	36	_____
Vocabulary	4	8	12	16	20	24	_____
Fluency	2	4	6	8	10	12	_____
Comprehension	4	8	12	15	19	23	_____
							_____
						Total	_____

(Adams and Frith 1979:35-8)

### Criteria levels

1. 5 points for complete answers with appropriate usage/expressions and correct use of grammar.
2. 4 points for complete answers with slightly grammatical error.
3. 4 points for complete answers with opposite use of “yes” or “no” at the beginning of the answer.
4. 3 points for incomplete answers with clear meaning.
5. 3 points for mostly correct answers with wrong usage of the subject.
6. 2 points for incomplete answers with only correct usage of the tense.
7. 2 points for complete answers with inappropriate usage of the verbs.
8. 1 point for generally comprehensible meaning with wrong usage of tense and subjects.
9. 1 point for answers with only the words “yes” or “no”.
10. Zero for totally wrong/incomprehensible answers. Zero for answers with only the words “yes” or “no” given after a long pause

## 即席式戲劇教學活動對英語學習之影響

### 摘要

本研究於目前台灣非主修英語之大班制英語教學情境中，實施以著重「過程」導向之即席式戲劇教學活動，經由一年之研究以檢測此教學法是否在提昇學習者口語能力上有其效用。本研究係在一年之學習流程中，於期中變動調整教學方法，進而比對不同組群中在學習成效上之差異。本研究的方法乃於英語會話課程開始之初先檢測兩組學生群的英文口說程度，然後於本研究前半段期間之課程進行中將上述教學法實施於全數(兩組)之學生。至後半段研究期間，檢驗組之學生仍將持續接受本研究之教學法，而控制組之學生將回歸傳統之教學法受教。本研究於課程結束時，再次檢驗、比較兩組學生目前的英文口說程度，以便瞭解此一戲劇教學法經由長時程之實施是否確實有助於英語教學。本研究之結果發現，「過程」導向之即席式戲劇教學活動在提昇學習者口語能力上有其效用。

關鍵詞：過程導向 即席式戲劇教學活動 英語為外國語