



Integrating Drama With Language and Content to Enhance Students' English Oral Production Skills

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the effect of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and drama on developing 7th graders' English oral production skills. The sample of the study was (80) 7th graders (divided into two equal groups) from D/Balah preparatory school in Gaza Strip. The researcher used an oral production skills test as the tool of the study. The findings revealed that the suggested program based on CLIL and Drama was effective to improve 7th graders' oral production skills.

Keywords: Content and language integrated learning; Strategy; EFL; Oral production skills.

1. Introduction

Oral production skills play a basic role and they are considered as key to success in all fields. English language skills are indispensable tools for daily communication with most of the outside world. [Sabina \(2018\)](#), states that speaking as an oral production skill is the most important skill. Yet, many learners find it as a frustrating skill to be learnt. People spend great deal of their time interacting with more people in many daily life situations and, each of these situations requires a different register to be used according to the formality of the moment. We use these registers to speak for many reasons.

As English for Palestine curriculum aims to enable Palestinian students to enhance their productive skills ability of foreign language instruction. This new method of learning focuses on the learner to use the language in situations more than the language to be memorized.

Oral production skills which is formed in speaking skills is a human aspect where people can express their own ideas, experiences, feelings and emotions through an interactive process with the community members. It is a mutual linguistic phenomena with all the communities regardless their language or culture.

1.1. Teaching Speaking Skill As An Oral Production Skill

Speaking is an important skill amongst the main four skills of English ([Gillis, 2013](#); [Nunan, 1999](#); [Sadiku, 2015](#); [Segura, 2012](#)). State that to be successful in learning a language is measured according to the ability to conduct a conversation in the (target) language. Thus, speaking is probably a priority for learners of English. Speaking is basic due to its help to students to grasp EFL speaking skills. Furthermore, if the right speaking activities are taught in the classroom, speaking can raise general learners' motivation and make the English language classroom a fun and dynamic place to be. In addition, speaking can support other language skills. Oral interaction is considered as an essential factor in shaping the learner's developing language. Speaking skills are important for career success, but certainly not limited to one's professional aspirations. Speaking skills can enhance one's personal life and thereby bring about the well-rounded growth that we should all seek.

In Palestine, English for Palestine curriculum includes the four skills of English language. [ELC Palestinian National Authority \(2015\)](#) considers speaking as an important skill amongst these four skills as the ultimate goal for Palestinian learners is enable them to communicate successfully.

1.2. Teaching Oral Production Skills through Drama

[Harmer \(2007\)](#), suggests telling stories as an effective activity to enhance speaking skills for learners, he argues that spending a lot of our time telling other people stories and anecdotes about what happened to us and other people could be effective to develop speaking. He also suggests information-gaps to be one of the activities that could be used for this activity.

[Ulas \(2008\)](#), explains the benefit of learning speaking through drama as follows:

- A student grasp meaningful content better.
- Learning is shown as a result to the interaction between the student and his environment.
- The more sensory organs a student uses, the greater the retention of the lessons.
- A student learns best by doing.
- Effective participation is essential in learning emotional conduct.
- Learning becomes easier and more permanent as there is more than one stimulus.

Fabio (2015), and Goodwin (2001), confirm that drama is a particularly effective tool for teaching speaking especially pronunciation because it has different communicative competences such as: discourse intonation, pragmatic awareness and nonverbal communication. In addition, drama activities foster pupils' socialization, critical thinking, problem solving and improve oral communication skills, by exploring different language styles and registers.

Apparently, the oral production skills which is formed in speaking can be more effective when it is indulged and correlated with an effective interactive method which is drama.

1.3. Dramatizing the Content and Language

Pozo (2016), in his research states that using drama as a teaching tool in a CLIL lesson while speaking skills were included fosters motivation to enhance students' interest in the taught subject. This integration of different skills using history, music and drama provides learners with the great chance to combine meaningful content within a story of ESL. He adds that drama in a CLIL environment helps developing understanding of human relationships. He proves that drama and CLIL helps developing understanding of human relationships in different subjects. It also helps in ESL acquisition and makes students feel a sense of empowerment when facing acting and the teacher becomes more a facilitator than a conductor. They find it fun and easy to step on the shoes of characters of stories.

1.4. The Statement of the Problem

Based on the researchers' experience, there is a bad need to get students to learn to speak confidently and accurately. Additionally, students can learn English speaking through some strategies, but the most effective maybe CLIL, as they learn content through English language. Yet, CLIL in this way needs some vivid elements to be added and drama can help in making CLIL more effective and understandable. Thus, in this study, the researcher suggests CLIL and drama as a new integrated strategy to help learners to use language through an interesting way.

1.5. The Study Objectives

The current research is mainly conducted with the aim to achieve the following objectives:

- to enable Palestinian learners to speak English in a motivating context where they can express themselves and speak confidently.
- to equip teachers of a new strategy in teaching English speaking skills.
- to arouse the awareness of the curriculum designers to add some topics in English for Palestine based on CLIL and Drama.

1.6. The Research Question

1. Are there statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the total average score of the post application of the-test between the experimental group and the control group?

1.7. Methods and Procedures

The study followed the quasi-experimental approach. Two groups were assigned as the participants of the study; the experimental group, and the control group. The experiment lasted for 4 weeks.

The sample of the study consisted of (80) students distributed into two groups; one experimental group consists of (41) students and one control group includes (39) students. The groups were chosen randomly from D/Balah Prep. Boys' School in Gaza Strip, Palestine. The students in both groups were equivalent economically, culturally, socially and in their general achievement. Students aged 15 years.

A pre-post achievement test was conducted by the researcher to measure the students' achievement in speaking skills.

The test aimed at measuring the effect of a suggested program based on integrating drama in the content and language improving on the students' speaking skills. It was built according to the criteria of the test specification.

1.8. The Suggested Program

It aims to improve 7th graders' oral production skills. The researcher reviewed the literature of how to connect between the content and language with drama and then he designed the program accordingly. He designed two drama-based-reading texts included in the grade 7 textbook.

Three reading lessons of (40) minutes are taught every week. After that, students are to study three speaking lessons, 40 minutes for each, depending on the reading passages they have learnt recently. The program started on 15 Jan., 2020 and ended on 15 Feb., 2020.

The researcher used formative assessment included in the program to scaffold students' learning. Students were assessed continuously using different assessment techniques and activities.

2. Results of the Study

To review, the question of the study which is :Are there any statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ between ninth grade students' Are there statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the total average score of the post-test between the experimental group and the control group?

To answer this question, a pre-post test of speaking skills was administrated. The mean scores and standard deviations of the students' scores on the speaking pre-test and post-test were calculated, along with estimates mean scores and standard deviations of the post-test scores as shown in [table 1](#):

Table-1. Means and standard deviation of students' speaking skills oral test in the post-test

Scope	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. value	sig. level
Question 1 answer	experimental	41	16.3	1.6	7.53	0.00	sig
	control	93	10.9	2.3			

Depending on the analysis of the results of the achievement test the table shows the mean of the experimental group which is 16.3 and the control group is 10.9 and this shows that the experimental group students got higher marks than the control one. In addition, calculated T. is 7.53 and the Significance value is 0.00. Thus, these results confirm that the suggested program based on CLIL and drama is effective and gave positive results.

3. Discussion and Conclusion

Reviewing the question of the study which examines statistically significant differences among ninth grade students' speaking skills that are attributed to the new used strategy (CLIL and drama). The statistical analysis of the data indicated that there was a significant difference on the achievement of the students' speaking skills at the level of ($\alpha = 0.05$) favouring the experimental group. Apparently, the study results show higher marks of the experimental group than their peers at the control group in the speaking skills which are (describe a sequence of events based on visual input; express personal feelings, emotions, etc.; respond to direct questions, instructions, suggestions, offers, visual input, etc.; and respond to factual, referential and inferential questions. The mean score of the experimental group was 16.3 out of 20 which indicates much progress in the achievement of the students during the intervention. It is worth to say that the teacher who used the suggested program based on CLIL and drama used the scale of the rubrics of the speaking skills (fluency and coherence; vocabulary; structure and pronunciation).

The program CLIL and drama showed improvement in the students' speaking skills achievement. This may be attributed to different reasons; students were motivated to participate during the implementation of the program as it was interesting to present the lesson in a dramatized way. [Pozo \(2016\)](#), confirmed in his study that teaching history through drama is more effective than a textbook-based teaching. In [Muszynska and Glazka \(2017\)](#), study, they maintained that drama improves various skills and attitudes for students who study a certain topic via CLIL approach. The results also provided the teachers with outlines of how to use drama-based-process- and product-centred educational objectives. In the same concern, the findings showed that teaching through drama and CLIL can develop students' critical and creative thinking and enhance their participation in a shared learning experience.

Moreover, [Hillyard \(2010\)](#), and [Hillyard \(2015\)](#), developed a link to connect between Drama characteristics and five CLIL components. This connection was beneficial for several learning purposes. Lantix, Learntix, Contix, learning outcomes and engagement were used as the connecting components of CLIL. This connection between Drama and CLIL includes aspects which are interesting and motivating forces to be used in the class. In addition, they are holistic and fully engages the learner. CLIL and drama can be characterized as a context and problem focused method. Also, it can develop analytical thinking skills and stimulate creativity and arouse the learners' motivation through promoting his autonomy. In the same context, this approach can develop the linguistic functions and the cross curricular aspects. Hillyard concludes that mixing drama and CLIL is a promising solution for the difficulties that are faced in the language classroom.

Apparently, introducing different topics through CLIL and drama fosters motivation for students and gives students an opportunity to be more engaged in the learning process. Teachers were more motivated and enthusiastic to help students learn. In a study for [Aykaç et al. \(2019\)](#), they found that drama enhances teachers' attitudes towards teaching and gets them more motivated.

In the suggested program based on CLIL and drama, there are some activities that give students a chance to express their own story or create their own drama. [Thornbury \(2018\)](#), and maintains that drama in the English language classroom ticks all the right boxes, particularly if it's re-told, created and performed by learners. Students of Gaza and the West Bank (Palestine) show enthusiasm when they compose and then perform a story or listen to it. it could be said that, drama is participatory as it includes a group of learners who learn, compose and perform a play. Additionally, it is interactive as drama includes a communicative to-and-fro which replicates real-life interaction. Moreover, this performance is oral. It activates the learners' speaking skills. Their level of pronunciation, and both accuracy and fluency are to be promoted and improved accordingly. It's important to say that drama is expressive. Clearly, it gets students think of an imagined world with the thoughts, experiences, feelings, fears and hopes [Thornbury \(2013\)](#).

The suggested program based on CLIL and drama gives students the ability to learn English, get knowledge, improve the thinking skills and develop the teamwork competency. Obviously in this program, the activities include (work in pairs or groups) and this could get students more indulged in the collaborative work with their peers. The

learners of the experimental group in this study responded enthusiastically to the synergy between CLIL and embodied drama pedagogy. They showed high levels of engagement with their teacher.

Recommendations

In the light of the study results, the researchers recommends that:

- curriculum designers and stakeholders in Palestine should dramatize the topics in the English curriculum in an interesting and motivating way,
- teachers should use active learning strategies that are based on drama with their students as they enhance their speaking skills,
- teachers should use speaking skills rubric criteria to assess students' speaking skills,
- and researchers should investigate CLIL and drama on developing other English skills.

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