

Using Drama Activities in Vocabulary Acquisition

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Abstract

Many different pedagogical methodologies are applied in the field of English as a foreign language. One of the less-used strategies in Saudi Arabia is teaching and learning vocabulary through drama. This study represents an attempt to investigate the effectiveness of English drama activities for the vocabulary acquisition of second/foreign language learners and how English teachers can use drama in the L2 classroom. Five types of drama activities for learning vocabulary are used in this research: mime, storytelling, role play, simulation, and improvisation. This study was conducted on two preparatory-year classes. Each class was divided into six classes of 36 students. The students were homogenous in terms of gender and level of English language proficiency. The results show that drama helped the learners engage in learning new vocabulary in non-constructed learning environment, and facilitated vocabulary acquisition effectively and accurately in various contexts.

Keywords: drama activities, language learning, Saudi Arabia, teaching vocabulary, vocabulary acquisition

1. Introduction

The teaching of English language has taken its place among other academic disciplines over the last few decades. Many studies have been conducted to discover the most effective methods and approaches to teach English effectively. Consequently, various strategies and techniques have been applied to provide effective practical methods of language teaching. Although there are many aspects of language to be taken into consideration when teaching English as a foreign language, teaching vocabulary skills is among the most important. However, vocabulary acquisition poses a crucial challenge in the teaching and learning of foreign languages (L2), a point upon which many language educators agree (Harmer, 1991). Vocabulary is defined as the basic units that learners need to recognise and learn in order to build their ability to produce the language. (Richards, 2005). According to many studies, learning vocabulary is not an easy procedure; a great deal of effort must be invested in the teaching-learning process. Recent research indicates that the difficulty of teaching vocabulary stems from the fact that many teachers are not aware of the best or most suitable strategies to meet their students' needs; another contributing factor is insufficient emphasis on teaching vocabulary compared with other language skills, such as grammar structures and syntactic patterns. Thus, learner consciousness of the importance of vocabulary learning must be raised (Berne & Blachowicz, 2008).

The dual focus of this study is to use drama activities in vocabulary instruction and to test the level of learners' acquisition of specific L2 vocabulary. It was conducted with female Preparatory Year students at Taiba University to investigate the effectiveness of using drama in facilitating the acquisition of vocabulary.

2. Background

Learning vocabulary is an essential skill to be learnt and mastered in any language. Nation (2011) claimed that language use and vocabulary knowledge exhibit a complementary relationship: language use increases vocabulary knowledge, and knowledge of vocabulary enables language use. To be able to master English skills, EFL students must learn the vocabulary of the language (i.e., a repertoire of words with their meanings) in order to support the improvement of their other skills (Linse, 2005). However, there are many obstacles that learners may encounter

when learning new words. Among these are some difficulties posed by parts of speech, collocations, definitions, etc. Richards (1976) highlighted essential aspects of learning vocabulary, which he said entails “a great deal about its general frequency of use, syntactic and situational limitations on its use, the underlying form and the forms that can be derived from it, the network of its semantic features, and the various meanings associated with the item” (p. 77).

Moreover, Morin and Goebel (2001) suggested that teaching vocabulary should consist of teaching specific words with the aim of equipping learners with necessary strategies to expand and deepen their vocabulary knowledge as well as to facilitate effective vocabulary acquisition through appropriate learning input. However, even after years of language learning in classes, many learners still cannot build the confidence necessary to use the language outside the classroom. Students’ output is limited to fulfilling their role and producing accurate grammar in a very structured environment. In other words, learners do not usually master the skills of producing language utterances freely outside the classroom.

Nation and Chung (2009) suggested that “attention to input, output and linguistic features, plus practice, are necessary for effective vocabulary acquisition” (p. 12). Thus, many studies refer to communicative language teaching (CLT) as an effective approach that helps language learners to use a language dynamically and spontaneously outside class. For example, Richards (2005) defined CLT as a set of principles pertaining to the goals of language teaching that entail how learners may learn a language, the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom, and the variety of classroom activities that best facilitate learning. As Richards put it, “Drama is best defined by Shakespeare, ‘Life is a stage, and all people are actors.’ It becomes a vital component of English language training; it not only develops language skills but it also enables learners to achieve meaningful learning acquisition” (as cited in Köylüoğlu, 2010, p. 10). Accordingly, many studies show that one of the most useful techniques in language teaching is using drama. Ong (2011) described drama as having an “interactive and visual nature that engages all kinds of learners tactile, kinaesthetic, auditory, and visual. As an alternative pedagogy method, drama has communicative and fun properties that help learners acquire new knowledge by scaffolding previous learning through nonthreatening experiences” (p. 24).

Moreover, the use of drama activities in teaching English is considered a technique that enables learners to develop the ability to manipulate the language skilfully. Dodson (2002) mentioned that using drama increases motivation and self-esteem while accomplishing the aims of CLT. Drama in the language classroom provides essential opportunities for students to negotiate their own meanings using the target language. It also increases their ability to use the language in different contexts and activities that suit their needs and learning styles. Chauhan (2004) claimed that the use of drama techniques to teach English provides learners with many opportunities for authentic communication that can develop learners’ confidence as they communicate using the target language (English) outside the classroom. Zyoud (2010) claimed that drama and role-playing activities are very useful classroom techniques that encourage learners to participate dynamically in the learning process. Furthermore, Desiatova (2009) stated that drama activities have clear advantages for language learning. Using drama encourages learners to talk and gives them the opportunity to communicate with each other. Moreover, learners with limited language proficiency can compensate by using non-verbal communication, such as body movements and facial expressions. According to Park and Won (2003), after applying a treatment of six hours of English drama classes, the results showed that students’ overall communicative competence improved, particularly in grammar and vocabulary. According to Abraham (2018), drama can be used as creative and efficient technique to learn the target language while giving L2 learners the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings.

Maley and Duff (2005) mentioned several advantages supporting the use of drama. They pointed out the role played by drama use in integrating the skills of the language: listening carefully is a vital feature, and spontaneous verbal expression is integral to most drama activities. Moreover, many such activities require reading and writing, both as part of the input and the output. Additionally, drama integrates verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication that integrate mind and body and restore the balance between the physical and intellectual aspects of learning. Furthermore, it deals with both cognitive and affective domains, which means that it considers the importance of feeling as well as thinking. In addition, drama-based language-learning activities focus on the interaction among students while using the target language. Such activities increase self-awareness, self-esteem, and confidence, thereby improving learners’ motivation to use the target language. Moreover, using drama in the classroom encourages creativity and imagination, which positively enhances student dynamics and the classroom atmosphere. Uysal and Yavuz (2018) also state that besides teaching the different skills of any language, drama can be used to teach the culture of that language. The researchers also mention the role of the teacher as a guide, facilitator and counselor while using drama in the language classes.

In addition, some studies (Maley & Duff, 2001; Phillips, 2003) have proposed a role for drama activities in promoting interesting ways of motivating language learners and teachers. Through drama, learners can play, move, act, and learn at the same time. Moghaddam (2018) also states that EFL learners can use drama as an effective way to improve their language and communication skills.

However, although using drama activities in language teaching is a strategy that seems to work well in language classes, it should nevertheless be investigated to assess its effectiveness in teaching English in general and vocabulary in particular. This study is an attempt to shed light on whether drama activities represent beneficial and effective techniques to be used to facilitate the spontaneous learning and acquisition of vocabulary.

2.1 Teaching Vocabulary through Drama

According to many studies, both learners and teachers need to employ what they know and invest in their abilities and skills to reach their goals in the teaching-learning process. According to Eskelinen (2010), EFL teachers should vary their strategies in order to facilitate teaching and deliver new vocabulary items to their learners, who should apply and use what they have learnt in different contexts or real-life situations. Lewis (1993) claimed that teaching vocabulary should be at the centre of language teaching because “language consists of grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalised grammar.” Also, Biemiller (2001) asserted that school curricula should encourage rich oral language experiences for students and allow them to scaffold their language through practice and by providing feedback on their performance. As previously mentioned, there are various strategies and techniques which can be utilised to teach and learn new words. The application of these diverse strategies might assist learners in establishing and stabilising vocabulary in their memories to facilitate language use.

According to the principles of CLT, it is important to encourage learners to employ their skills by using the language orally and interactively both in and out of the classroom. Thus, language learners should first practice situations related to real life that incorporate new vocabulary they want to learn and then further implement that new vocabulary in other situations.

Using drama in teaching vocabulary is a strategy that is reported to be useful and effective. Having students express their thoughts and feelings by “acting and doing” while learning new vocabulary has the potential to motivate them to understand and remember the meanings of the words and expressions more effectively than rote memorisation. Using vocabulary in this way can also sharpen students’ linguistic abilities. Furthermore, using drama encourages learners to work in pairs or groups, which motivates learners to expand their knowledge and experience while using language structures effectively.

2.2 Types of Drama Activities Used in the Study

This study attempts to investigate the effectiveness of five types of drama activities for learning vocabulary: mime, storytelling, role play, simulation, and improvisation.

Mime is defined as “the use of gesture, body posture, and facial expression in order to communicate ideas, feelings, and relationships with little or no accompanying sounds or speech” (Cottrell, 1984, p. 134). According to Zyoud (2010), mime is an aspect of drama activities that improves the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language. Mime also helps improving learners’ sense of imagination and observation, and it can also provide them with a great feeling of enjoyment and make them very enthusiastic (Hayes, 1984, p. 28). “Mime can help to fix language in the minds of the students,” asserted Dougill (1987), who went on to present a mime-based activity that demonstrated “how vocabulary items can be revised and reinforced” (p. 15).

The second activity type explored in this study is storytelling. This is an activity in which learners can create stories individually or in small groups and then share them with the whole class. “Learning English through stories can lay the foundations for secondary school in terms of learning basic language functions and structures, vocabulary, and language-learning skills” (Brewster et al., 1992, p. 2). According to Tugrul Mart, storytelling combined with total physical response not only can motivate learners but also facilitates their learning of English vocabulary, sentence patterns, and comprehension (Tugrul Mart, 2012).

Role play is another activity examined in this study. It is described as one of the most utilised activities applied in EFL courses. It allows EFL learners to practice English language actively and dynamically. Keneth (2008) claimed that role play can be defined as a type of student behaviour in a certain context. Tompkins (2001) defined role play as “one of the classroom teaching techniques that encourage students to participate actively in the process of learning English. Thereby, foreign language students practice the target language in context similar to real-life situations where stress and shyness are removed” (p. 1). Blatner (2009) stated that role play can assist learners to be more interested and involved in learning by applying prior knowledge in shape of action, valuating alternatives, solving

problems, and finding solutions. Learners manage to develop a varied range of abilities, such as initiative, self-confidence, group work, and communication in general. Role play could also be an important technique in teaching vocabulary because it provides students with more opportunities to practice new vocabulary items in different social contexts and in different social roles. In addition, it allows students to achieve a higher level of motivation and put themselves in another person's shoes, which expands their imaginations.

The fourth active and practical drama activity we consider is simulation. Simulations in language learning can be referred to as "communication" simulations since they are designed in order to construct communicative realities (Bambrough, 1994, p. 16). The main goal of a simulation is to draw students into the representation of a real-life structure. A simulation involves unexpected events in which "real communication," not played or acted dialogue, can happen. In simulations, "a providing environment must be simulated. In order to fulfil the needed condition of being a simulated environment, there must be no contact between the participants and the world outside the classroom" (Jones, 1982, p. 5). This activity can potentially promote students' fluency and enliven their sense of belonging to the class as a whole.

The fifth method herein investigated, and which is often used to deal with shy students, is improvisation. According to Adu and Adu (2014), improvisation is defined as the practice of acting, singing, talking, creating artworks, or reacting in the moment and in response to an immediate situation or inner feelings. However, in some occasions, language teachers may realise that a certain piece of instructional media may not be available in a lesson, thus improvisation can be presented in such cases. Creative improvisations occur in a collective participatory atmosphere as opposed to an individualised teaching and learning context (Lidia & Sara, 2010).

3. Methodology

In order to assess the effectiveness of using drama activities for learning vocabulary for students at Taibah University, this study is conducted on two Preparatory Year classes. Each class is divided into six groups of 36 students each. The number of vocabulary items in the experimental and control groups were equal, 30 items of vocabulary for each group. All students were at an intermediate level of English language proficiency. In order to test the effectiveness of using drama in this particular context, all new vocabulary items were selected based on the coursebook, and they were included in the curriculum as active vocabulary items.

In order to analyse the data collected in this study, the *t*-test sample was used to compare the values of the means. In fact, different samples were from populations may have different mean values. Therefore, the two samples were separate and having different sets of individual subjects. The individual measures for both groups were found not to be linked with, or related to each other.

The researcher conducted a post-test to compare the values of the means of the control group and the experimental group. Moreover, a post-class questionnaire was administered consisting of 15 questions with answers on a 5 point Likert scale, with number 1 referring to *strongly disagree*, 2 *disagree*, 3 *neutral*, 4 *agree*, and 5 *strongly agree*. The questionnaire was distributed to the experimental group to elicit the participants' responses and test their attitudes towards the use of drama activities for learning vocabulary.

3.1 Duration of the Study

The study employed the method of using drama for learning vocabulary over a duration of six weeks. The two classes were provided with the requisite vocabulary items. The control group (class A) was given the vocabulary items using other learning methods, such as using the context to find the meaning of the new words and defining the new vocabulary by using dictionaries, while the experimental group (class B) tried to create their own situations using the vocabulary items provided. The teacher divided the students into groups, provided them with the new vocabulary items, and then asked them to carry out the activity presented in the class, which could be chosen by either the teacher or the group itself, to present the new words. After the determined time allotment (10–15 minutes), students were asked to present the vocabulary items using mime, role play, simulations, or improvisations. Each group presented its work in front of the whole class.

3.2 Participants of the Study

The study includes two classes of full-time students. Each class has 36 non-English-major students studying in the Preparatory Year at Taibah University. They are all at an intermediate level of English. The students study English language for academic purposes for 16 hours per week. The sample is selected purposively. The participants of each class are divided into six groups in order to test vocabulary learning individually in each group.

3.3 Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following research questions.

1. How effective are drama activities for learning vocabulary?
2. What are EFL students' attitudes towards the use of drama activities for learning vocabulary?

3.4 Significance of the Study

The study aims to explore the effectiveness of using drama activities for learning vocabulary. It purposively tests whether using drama is a successful method of learning vocabulary or not, as well as the impact of this strategy on students' learning. However, EFL teachers can apply the findings obtained by the study in order to design activities for their classes. Future research may benefit from the results of this method by conducting further studies into the usefulness of drama in TEFL.

3.5 Limitations of the Study

The following are limitations of the present study.

1. The time allotted to the study is six weeks. More findings could have been obtained if the experimental group had spent more time using the drama activities for learning vocabulary.
2. The participants of the study are students in the Preparatory Year at Taibah University, so the results of the study may not be generalisable to other EFL student populations.

4. Data Analysis

To answer the research questions, the study applied the strategy of providing the students with the new required vocabulary items, and each group started using one of the abovementioned activity types in order to introduce the items provided.

After applying the drama activities, which include mime, storytelling, role play, simulation and improvisation activities for six weeks during the first semester, the participants (experimental group) are given a post -test. The test consists of 25 items. Fifteen (15) items are multiple-choice. Each item has four options, while the other 10 items are fill-in-the-blank items requiring students to supply the appropriate words.

4.1 Data Collection

The post-test is conducted with the experimental group and the control group to address the first research question of the study, which tests the effectiveness of drama activities on students' acquisition of vocabulary. The results will be used to discover if there is a difference between their averages and whether or not the difference is statistically significant. Also, every participant in the experimental group completes the post-class questionnaire designed by the researchers in order to investigate the effectiveness of using drama activities for learning vocabulary. The data are analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Also, descriptive statistics for analysing the mean scores of the participants' responses are applied.

4.2 Results and Discussion

The SPSS statistical system is used for computation in the analysis of the data. Initially, the data gathered through the post-test were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis (Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Post-Test for the Two Groups

Group	Control Group	Experimental Group
M	23	29.53
SD	3.42	2.56

Table 2. Participants' Responses to the Questionnaire Regarding the Use of Drama Activities for Learning Vocabulary

No.	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I would like to have drama activities as a part of learning vocabulary.	32	2	1	1	0
	Mean	88.8	5.6	2.8	2.8	0
2	There are many advantages to using drama for learning vocabulary.	33	1	0	2	0
	Mean	91.6	2.8	0	5.6	0
3	There are many disadvantages to using drama for learning vocabulary.	0	1	3	2	30
	Mean	0	2.8	8.3	5.6	83.3
4	I like learning vocabulary in traditional ways.	1	1	2	5	27
	Mean	2.8	2.8	5.6	13.8	75
5	Using drama in teaching vocabulary is an enjoyable technique.	33	1	0	2	0
	Mean	91.6	2.8	0	5.6	0
6	Using drama is a good way to learn vocabulary with my classmates.	27	3	3	1	2
	Mean	75	8.3	8.3	2.8	5.6
7	Using drama activities expands knowledge of English vocabulary.	31	1	1	1	2
	Mean	86	2.8	2.8	2.8	5.6
8	It is easy to learn vocabulary using drama activities.	2	3	5	3	23
	Mean	5.6	8.3	13.9	8.3	63.9
9	Using drama in class helps me retain newly learned English vocabulary.	25	4	1	5	1
	Mean	69.4	11	2.8	13.9	2.8
10	Using drama activities increases my communication skills.	31	1	2	1	1
	Mean	86	2.8	5.6	2.8	2.8
11	Using mime activities is a good way to learn vocabulary.	28	7	0	1	0
	Mean	77.8	19.4	0	2.8	0
12	Storytelling activities are a good way to learn vocabulary.	18	11	4	1	2
	Mean	50	30.6	11	2.8	5.6
13	Role-play activities are a good way to learn vocabulary.	22	10	2	1	1
	Mean	61.1	27.7	5.6	2.8	2.8
14	Simulation activities are a good way to learn vocabulary.	27	4	1	2	2
	Mean	75	11	2.8	5.6	5.6
15	Improvisation activities are a good way to learn vocabulary	21	6	3	5	1
	Mean	58.3	16.6	8.3	13.9	2.8
Total	Total Mean	61.3%	10.4%	5.2%	6.1%	17%

As displayed in Table 1, the mean of the post-test of the cumulative experimental group ($M=29.53$) was higher than that of the control group ($M=23$), which indicates that a moderate difference has been found between the arithmetic means of the groups' post-test scores in favour of the experimental group. On the other hand, the mean of the post-test of the control group was less than that of the experimental group, which indicates lower performance in using vocabulary by the students who were not taught vocabulary using drama. Thus, that teaching vocabulary to EFL learners through drama activities is an effective technique has been supported by the results of the study. Therefore, the findings of the present research indicate that teaching vocabulary to EFL learners through drama activities may be more effective than traditional vocabulary-learning techniques such as word matching, parts of speech, definitions, synonyms, or antonyms (Nahmod, 2017). According to Helderbrand (2003), drama may help learners to pronounce and learn new vocabulary items when it used in a well-structured environment. Also, Žero (2014) stated "that drama provides an unforgettable learning experience as it encourages cooperative learning, provides a sense of belonging and devotedness, improves self-esteem and enthusiasm by learners, and pushes learners to use their emotions". (P.12)

To address the second research question, which tests students' attitudes towards the use of drama activities for learning vocabulary, the participants' responses to the questionnaire were calculated for the means and then interpreted to reveal the participants' attitudes toward the use of drama activities for learning vocabulary.

According to the results presented in Table 2 above, the means for the responses of the participants regarding the use of drama activities for learning vocabulary are high. These results reveal that the participants have a positive attitude toward learning vocabulary using drama activities. A majority of respondents (71.7%) "strongly agree" and "agree" that using drama activities for learning vocabulary is a positive thing, whereas 23.1% of respondents "strongly disagree" and "disagree," indicating that the use of drama activities for learning vocabulary is not positive for them in this particular context. However, there are few negative statements in the survey regarding the use of drama activities for learning vocabulary. The respondents were disagreeing with certain statements, such as "It is easy to learn vocabulary using drama." Thus, it can evidently be said that the respondents have some negative attitudes toward drama activities.

In addition, in the responses to the first statement, 94.4% of the respondents agree that they favour the inclusion of drama activities as part of learning vocabulary, while 2.8% of the respondents disagree. This reveals the learners' positive attitude towards using drama activities for learning vocabulary. The responses to the second statement show that 94.4% of the respondents agree that there are many advantages to using drama for learning vocabulary. The percentage of the respondents who disagree with the statement is just 5.6%. This might indicate that the use of drama activities has many other advantages besides learning vocabulary. For the third statement, there are 88.9% who disagree with the statement, "There are many disadvantages to using drama for learning vocabulary," while only 2.8% are in favour of that statement. This seems to be due to the learners' desire to use such activities in their learning, thus strengthening the previous statement. Moving to the fourth statement, "I like learning vocabulary in traditional ways," the responses reveal that most (88.8%) of the participants of the study do not agree, while only 5.6% agree. The results for the following statement, "Using drama in teaching vocabulary is an enjoyable technique," show that 94.4% of the participants affirm it, while 5.6% do not. Regarding the sixth item, "Using drama is a good way to learn vocabulary with my classmates," most of the participants find it a good approach: 83.3% agree, whereas 8.4% disagree. For the seventh statement, "Using drama activities expands the knowledge of English vocabulary," 88.8% agree, while 8.4% disagree. "It is difficult to learn vocabulary using drama activities," is the following statement. It is obvious that the participants are against that, and indeed, 72.2% of them disagree, while only 13.9% agree. The responses to the ninth statement, "Using drama in the class helps me retain newly learned English vocabulary," reveal that most of them agree. There are 80.4% in favour of the statement, while 16.7% are not. "Using drama activities increases my communication skills" is the 10th statement. The responses indicate that most (88.8%) participants agree, while 5.6% disagree. For the 11th statement, "Using mime activity is a good way to learn vocabulary," the respondents who agree comprise 96.8%, while 2.8% of the respondents disagree. This result reveals that the respondents enjoy using mime activities. This might be due to the flexibility of this activity type and how it enables the learners to express their thoughts spontaneously and naturally in general and to use the vocabulary in particular. For the following statement, "Storytelling activities are a good way to learn vocabulary," 80.6% of the respondents find it to be a good method and agree with this statement, while 8.4% of respondents do not agree. This result shows that most of the learners enjoy storytelling activities. They might be a good way for them to show their abilities in writing short stories, or it could be a challenging activity that learners like to use in the class that allows for the recall of vocabulary at the same time. For the 13th statement, "Role-play activities are a good way to learn vocabulary," 88.8% of the responses agree, whereas 5.6% of them do not. Role play is an activity type that learners

are supposed to use while learning the English language. It should be used to allow them to practice the language with their colleagues comfortably and freely and without feeling embarrassed. Thus, they might find it a beneficial way to acquire vocabulary. For the 14th statement, "Simulation activities are a good way to learn vocabulary," the result shows that 86% agree, but 11.2% do not. The preference shown for simulation activities could be due to the learners' interests and needs. They might find it an effective way to communicate with each other and practice the vocabulary effectively. The result for the last statement, "Improvisation activities are a good way to learn vocabulary," reveals that 74.9% agree, while 16.7% disagree. This kind of activity could be efficient and effective if the instructor pays attention to the learner's needs and learning styles. The positive point about this activity type is that the learners can create their own ideas and express their thoughts and feelings within a cooperative atmosphere. Brumfit (1991), Richards (1987), and Maley and Duff (2001) all agree that activities based on drama are beneficial for students as they help them to develop their communication skills in general and encourage them to communicate in the English language. Also, Holden (1981) and Maley and Duff (2005) define drama as situational and instructional settings which enable students to represent themselves or others while using emotional content to practice the language expressively and understand it. The findings of a great deal of research have revealed the value of using drama approaches in the development of competence and confidence in language acquisition (Jung, 2008).

Furthermore, regarding the comments that students added to the questionnaire, there were a good number of interesting and remarkable ideas and thoughts. Many students wrote that using drama activities for learning vocabulary was an interesting and enjoyable experience. One of the students wrote that "it is a welcome break from the usual routine of the language class." Also, there was a student who wrote, "After this experience, I believe that drama activities are beneficial because they help, at least me, learn vocabulary while using them in such enthusiastic activities, so they are positive to me in the classroom." Another two students further agreed on this comments, "I think drama activities are absolute necessity in learning English. They are valuable and help us think creatively." Another five students agreed on this opinion, which could be concluded by the following statement, "This experience provides language practice in the various skills speaking, writing, listening, and reading. The activities encourage us to interact and communicate confidently with each other." In addition, some students wrote that this technique should be applied in schools to involve the whole class when learning new words. On the other hand, three students wrote that they sometimes felt shy about performing in front of others but that it was good for them to try.

5. Conclusion

This study was conducted in order to test the significance of the role of using drama for vocabulary acquisition by (intermediate level) students learning the English language (L2) as a core module in the Preparatory Year at Taibah University. Although we studied the possibilities of applying drama methods to L2 vocabulary learning, we need to closely consider the validity and reliability of the results before we generalise the findings of this study. The findings did show advantages for the experimental groups, indicating that using drama methods to teach vocabulary proved to be very efficient for L2 vocabulary acquisition. However, if follow-up studies verify our results (and exclude a novelty effect in this specific context), what explanations could be provided for the effectiveness of this strategy? As mentioned earlier in the background section, using drama in vocabulary learning is an area in which studies are well represented but, unfortunately, poorly implemented. Nation and Chung (2009) stated that "L2 vocabulary acquisition research suggests that learning new words in a second language requires a variety of types of exposure to L2 forms and opportunities for production and practice, including input, output, attention to form and practice, both in contexts where learning is intentional and in others where incidental learning may take place" (p. 524). Moreover, Aldavero (2008) stated that drama helps students to learn new vocabulary and expressions properly in their authentic environment and that drama activities help students, especially those with limited vocabulary, to communicate in the foreign language. Drama provides a relaxed and informal method to learn English. Thus, drama builds learner's confidence in their ability to speak English (Zyoud, 2010). Consequently, drama activities provide learners with an enthusiastic and beneficial means to learn vocabulary. Also, Nation (2011) stated that "teachers do not think that vocabulary learning needs to be planned, and if it does, the course book will take care of that. Usually, the course book does not" (p. 14). To conclude, using drama activities to learn vocabulary has a significant impact on the acquisition of vocabulary in this specific context. Also, the responses from learners seem to indicate that drama activities facilitate both emotional and physical engagement in the classroom. Thus, this study suggests that drama activities are flexible learning methods that can make a positive contribution to the acquisition of second or foreign language vocabulary acquisition by L2 learners.

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