Exploring the Perspectives of ELT Pre-Service Teachers on Integrating Drama Activities into English Language Teaching and their Experiences in Drama in ELT Course

İngilizce Öğretmenliği Aday Öğretmenlerinin Drama Aktivitelerini İngiliz Dili Eğitimine Entegre Etme Konusundaki Görüşlerinin ve İngilizce Öğretiminde Drama Dersi'ndeki Deneyimlerinin Araştırılması

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Abstract: This study explores the perceptions and experiences of pre-service English language teachers regarding the integration of drama into English Language Teaching (ELT). Framed within a qualitative research design grounded in the principles of Grounded Theory, the study employed open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured focus group interviews with 32 participants enrolled in a *Drama in ELT* course at a foundation university in Türkiye. Data were analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding techniques. Findings revealed three major thematic dimensions: emotional transformation, professional competence, and personal engagement. Participants reported a significant shift from initial anxiety to increased self-confidence and enjoyment, highlighting drama's impact on emotional and interpersonal development. The course also enhanced participants' pedagogical knowledge, equipping them with creative teaching strategies, improved classroom management skills, and the ability to implement learner-centered methods. Moreover, drama was perceived as a dynamic, motivating, and authentic instructional tool that fosters communicative competence, creativity, and cultural awareness. Despite a few concerns regarding age appropriateness, the overall perception emphasized drama's adaptability and relevance across diverse teaching contexts. The study concludes that drama should be regarded as a foundational method in teacher education programs, supporting the integration of emotional, cognitive, and linguistic dimensions in ELT. Implications for curriculum design and teacher training are also discussed.

Keywords: Drama-Based Language Teaching, Pre-Service English Language Teachers, Teacher Education and Professional Development

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Öz: Bu çalışma, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi bağlamında dramaya dayalı etkinliklerin entegrasyonuna ilişkin İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının algı ve deneyimlerini incelemektedir. Nitel araştırma desenine ve Temellendirilmiş Kuram yaklaşımına dayanan bu çalışmada, Türkiye'deki bir vakıf üniversitesinde "İngilizce Öğretiminde Drama" dersini alan 32 öğretmen adayıyla açık uçlu anketler ve yarı yapılandırılmış odak grup görüşmeleri yapılmıştır. Veriler, açık, eksenel ve seçici kodlama teknikleriyle analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular üç ana tematik boyutu ortaya koymuştur: duygusal dönüşüm, mesleki yeterlik ve kişisel katılım. Katılımcılar, başlangıçtaki kaygılarının zamanla özgüvene ve keyifli bir öğrenme sürecine dönüştüğünü belirtmiş; bu durum, dramaya dayalı öğretimin duygusal ve kişilerarası gelişim üzerindeki etkisini göstermiştir. Ayrıca dersin, pedagojik bilgi birikimlerini geliştirdiği; yaratıcı öğretim stratejileri, sınıf yönetimi becerileri ve öğrenci merkezli yöntemlerin uygulanmasında katkı sağladığı vurgulanmıştır. Drama, iletişimsel yeterlilik, yaratıcılık ve kültürel farkındalık kazandıran dinamik, motive edici ve özgün bir öğretim aracı olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Yaş gruplarına uygunlukla ilgili bazı çekinceler belirtilse de genel görüş, dramanın farklı öğretim bağlamlarında uyarlanabilir ve işlevsel olduğu yönündedir. Çalışma, öğretmen yetiştirme programlarında dramanın temel bir yöntem olarak benimsenmesi gerektiğini önermektedir. Bu doğrultuda, öğretim programı tasarımı ve öğretmen eğitimi için çeşitli çıkarımlar sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Drama Temelli Dil Öğretimi, İngilizce Öğretmen Adayları, Öğretmen Eğitimi ve Mesleki Gelişim

1.INTRODUCTION

Drama is a valuable method in English language teaching, promoting real-life communication, active learning, and student motivation. It enhances learners' confidence, creativity, and empathy, making

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language use more spontaneous, memorable, and meaningful through real-world engagement (Desialova, 2009). Furthermore, drama in language education creates a dynamic and creative environment that increases students' motivation, confidence, and communication skills. It promotes authentic language use, fluency, accurate pronunciation, and learner-centered, multisensory engagement. Moreover, drama can be incorporated into literary texts, and the plays applied in the classroom can be adapted into the teaching program through the use of literary materials. Integrating literary texts into English Language Teaching (ELT) offers learners a meaningful context in which previously acquired grammar, vocabulary, and expressions can be reinforced, while also facilitating the discovery of new language elements. This contextualized exposure enhances reading comprehension and fosters critical engagement with diverse perspectives. Engaging with literature also broadens students' worldviews, encouraging empathy, cultural awareness, and open-mindedness. When learners connect with texts on a personal and emotional level, their motivation and interest in language learning increase, promoting both cognitive growth and personal development. Ultimately, the integration of literature into ELT supports the shift from teacher-led instruction to learner autonomy, empowering students to take ownership of their learning journey. According to Hall (2005), incorporating literary texts into the language classroom supports the psycholinguistic dimension of language learning by enhancing learners' focus on linguistic form, discourse processing, vocabulary development, and reading proficiency.

Drama's historical roots trace back to the early twentieth century (Bolton, 1993) and have since evolved into an influential pedagogical strategy within teaching and learning environments (Wessels, 1987). Johnson and O'Neill (1984, p. 42) characterize drama as a "unique tool," and its significant role in language education has been extensively emphasized by numerous scholars (Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978; Johnson & O'Neill, 1984; Courtney, 1990). Drama has become an established alternative instructional methodology employed by educators and teacher trainers (Griggs, 2001). In recent years, drama has increasingly been integrated into curricula across various subject areas, becoming particularly prevalent in foreign language education (Fleming, 2018). Its adoption in language teaching has gained substantial importance due to its diverse educational benefits. These benefits include the enhancement of prospective teachers' language competencies, the promotion of effective communicative practices, the modeling of contextually appropriate behaviors and expressions, and the encouragement of critical thinking and expansive responses during language acquisition processes (Liu, 2002). Drama in education encompasses a wide range of terminologies, such as *drama activities*, *creative drama*, *drama techniques*, *educational drama*, *story drama*, *process drama*, *creative dramatics*, *children's drama*, and *children's theatre* (Heathcote, 1984; Bolton, 1986; Booth, 1991; O'Toole, 1992; O'Neill, 1995; Yaşar, 2006; Iamsaard & Kerdpol, 2015). Although there is no universally agreed-upon definition or terminology for drama (Yaşar, 2006; Mages, 2008), the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) in Türkiye officially recognizes and adopts the term *drama in education* (YÖK, 2018), which is also employed in the current study. As it is offered as an elective course within the YÖK-approved ELT curriculum, *drama in education* holds significant pedagogical value and can be effectively utilized in teacher training programs. Therefore, its integration into this study is considered both appropriate and aligned with institutional standards.

Drama provides pre-service teachers with the opportunity to become actively involved in the learning process by placing learners at the center of teaching and learning. Contemporary approaches to English language teaching increasingly emphasize the development of learners' psycholinguistic and communicative competencies. Many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students experience anxiety when required to speak in formal settings; however, this can be alleviated through supportive classroom environments that gradually build their confidence. By fostering peer interaction and progressively involving learners in larger group activities, educators can ease the transition into public speaking. As noted by Astuti (2016), opportunities to present information, respond to questions, and engage in group dialogues contribute significantly to developing learners' communicative fluency and self-assurance.

Integrating drama texts—particularly those drawn from literature—into the language classroom fosters a learner-centered approach that actively engages students in interpreting, responding, and interacting,

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rather than passively absorbing information (Fleming, 2006). According to Alexander and Murphy (1998), drawing on the American Psychological Association's learner-centered psychological principles, meaningful learning is shaped by social dynamics, personal motivation, and reflective thinking. Emotional states, beliefs, and individual goals play a key role in driving motivation, while effective learners are those who can evaluate their cognitive processes and set attainable objectives. These principles highlight the critical importance of both teacher–student and peer-to-peer interaction in cultivating an active, creative, and reflective learning environment. Considering the recognized benefits of drama in the foreign language learning process and its integration into the ELT curriculum—particularly within recent educational regulations—it becomes essential to evaluate the existing drama courses offered in ELT programs. Consequently, this study aims to explore pre-service ELT teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding the utilization of drama in English language teaching.

1.1.The Purpose of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to explore the perspectives of EFL student teachers regarding the integration of drama activities into English language teaching. Specifically, the research seeks to examine how these future educators perceive the pedagogical value of drama-based methods and how their experiences with drama in ELT contexts have influenced their attitudes, teaching approaches, and professional development. By focusing on both their conceptual understanding and practical engagement, the study aims to provide insights into the potential of drama as an effective and motivating instructional tool in language education.

1.2. The Importance of the Study

The importance of this study lies in its exploration of EFL student teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding the integration of drama activities into ELT. Given the increasing emphasis on communicative competence and learner-centered methodologies in language education, drama activities represent a promising pedagogical approach that can enhance the linguistic, affective, and social dimensions of language learning. By examining student teachers' views and practical experiences, this research provides valuable insights into the feasibility, effectiveness, and perceived challenges of employing drama-based techniques in ELT contexts. Furthermore, the findings can inform teacher education programs by highlighting areas for curriculum enhancement, thereby contributing to the professional development of future language teachers and fostering innovative instructional strategies. Consequently, the study holds significant potential to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and classroom practice, ultimately enriching the quality of English language instruction.

2. METHOD

2.1. The Research Model

In this study, a qualitative research design based on the Grounded Theory methodology was adopted. Grounded Theory involves generating a general and abstract theoretical understanding of a process by closely examining participants' perspectives and experiences (Green et al., 2007). The primary objective of employing Grounded Theory in this research was to construct a substantive theory directly from qualitative data gathered in the field. In alignment with this methodological approach, the study utilized content analysis to achieve an interpretative understanding of the meanings participants attributed to the phenomenon under investigation. Specifically, the research examined EFL student teachers' views and experiences regarding a drama course offered in the English Language Teaching Department, as well as their perceptions of the integration of drama into language teaching practices.

The analysis commenced with open coding, a procedure that involved the initial segmentation and labeling of data collected from open-ended questions and in-depth interviews. From this initial stage, a preliminary set of codes emerged. Subsequently, axial coding was employed to reorganize and refine these initial codes. This intermediate step facilitated the identification of relationships among codes, leading to the categorization and development of central themes and subthemes. The analytic process concluded with selective coding, during which the codes, subthemes, and overarching themes were revisited for further refinement. Similar elements were merged, and coherent relationships were established. Ultimately, the selective coding process yielded a structured set of categories and subcategories that collectively articulate the theoretical insights derived from participants' views and experiences with drama activities in English language teaching.

In accordance with the literature and the aim of the study, the research questions are as follows:

1) What are the perspectives of pre-service ELT teachers on the integration of drama activities into English language teaching?

2) What do pre-service ELT teachers think about their applications in Drama in ELT Course?

2.2. Participants of the Study

The sample of the study consisted of 32 second-year students who took the *Drama in English Language Teaching* course as an elective. All of the students who took the course participated in the study. They were enrolled in the English Language Teaching Department of a foundation university in İstanbul, Türkiye. In the study, the first set of data, consisting of responses to open-ended questions, was collected from all participants. Subsequently, the second set of data, obtained through semi-structured interview questions, was collected from 10 volunteer students. The ages of the participants ranged between 19 and 25 years. Of the individuals participating in the study, 20 were female and 12 were male.

2.3. Data Collection Tools and Process

The data collection process was conducted in two distinct phases. The initial phase involved administering open-ended questionnaires to all participating pre-service teachers following eight weeks (approximately two months) of implementation within the semester. In the subsequent phase, ten pre-service teachers were randomly selected from the initial participant group to engage in semi-structured focus-group interviews. The focus-group methodology was intentionally chosen over individual interviews due to its inherent advantage in fostering interactive dialogue among respondents, facilitating richer data collection through participant interactions, especially when respondents shared similar experiences and cooperative dynamics (Green et al., 2007).

Participants were encouraged to actively engage with one another, offering reflective comments based on their collective experiences throughout the Drama in ELT course. In order to ensure comfort and reduce anxiety related to language proficiency, interviews were conducted in participants' native language, enabling them to articulate their thoughts more naturally and thoroughly. The entire focus-group interview was audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim.

Interview Questions

In this qualitative study, the open-ended questions are as below:

1) What were you thinking before the drama lessons and practices? What did you think and feel after the drama lessons and practices? Can you express your feelings and thoughts?

2) Can you tell us about your feelings during the drama lessons?

3) What effect did the drama presentations you made in the lessons including drama activities have on you?

4) What is your opinion about the integration of drama into English language teaching?

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5) When you start teaching, would you consider using drama in your lessons while teaching English to your students? Explain it, please.

In this qualitative study, the semi-structured interview questions are as below:

1) What is your opinion about using the *Drama in English Language Teaching?*

2) How do you assess the *Drama in English Language Teaching* course with regard to the quality of its content design and the effectiveness of the materials utilized?

3) How would you assess the contribution of the *Drama in English Language Teaching* course to your professional development? In what specific ways do you think it has enhanced your skills, knowledge, or perspective as a future English language teacher? Please elaborate.

2.4. Data Analysis

For the data analysis, the information collected from both the open-ended questionnaires and the focus-group interviews underwent rigorous examination conducted collaboratively by the researcher. The coding and categorization processes were additionally verified through consultation with an external expert in the field to enhance reliability. The data analysis followed the systematic three-step coding procedure characteristic of the Grounded Theory methodology, as outlined by Green (2007). Initially, open coding was performed to segment and label the raw data, resulting in the preliminary emergence of codes derived from participants' responses. Subsequently, during the axial coding stage, these initial codes were refined by identifying relationships and organizing them into cohesive categories, thereby reducing the number of codes and clarifying thematic connections. This step facilitated the identification and definition of the main themes and their corresponding subthemes. Finally, selective coding was applied as the concluding analytical stage, which involved re-evaluating the previously identified codes, subthemes, and main themes. Similar or overlapping elements were merged to establish clear and coherent categories and subcategories. This process enabled the formulation of an explanatory theoretical framework derived directly from the empirical data. Throughout the coding process, inter-coder reliability was reinforced through cross-validation methods, ensuring the robustness and consistency of the findings (Miles, 1994).

2.5. Ethics Committee Approval

In this study, all the rules specified in the 'Directive on Scientific Research and Publication Ethics of Higher Education Institutions' were followed. None of the actions specified under the second section of the Directive, 'Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics', have been carried out. Ethical rules have been followed in all stages of the preparation of the conceptual framework of this research, application of data collection tools, collection of data, analysis and interpretation of data. All responsibility belongs to the author. In this study, all the rules specified to be followed within the scope of 'Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive' have been followed. In order to conduct the study, the necessary ethical approval of the study was obtained from Biruni University Scientific Research Ethics Committee with decision number 2024-BİAEK/06-23 at its meeting dated 20.01.2025 in İstanbul, Türkiye.

Ethics Committee Approval

Name of the ethics committee: Biruni University Scientific Research Ethics Committee

Date of the ethics assessment decision: 20.01.2025

Ethics assessment document number no: 2024-BİAEK/06-23

3. FINDINGS

The findings obtained from the content analysis of the qualitative data are presented according to the identified themes, main categories, and subcategories for each open-ended question. These are followed by interpretations and selected verbatim excerpts from students' responses.

The themes, codes, and corresponding data analysis related to the first open-ended question are presented below.

1. What were you thinking before the drama lessons and practices? What did you think and feel after the drama lessons and practices? Can you express your feelings and thoughts?

Table 1.
Main Categories and Sub-categories

Initial Emotional States	Anxiety, Stress, Nervousness, Fear of creativity
Evolving Emotional Responses	Relief, Comfort, Enjoyment, Fun
Personal Growth	Confidence, Reduced fear of making mistakes, Self-expression
Pedagogical Insight	Awareness of the educational value of drama

The data reveal a significant emotional transition among participants, shifting from initial apprehension to positive engagement. Pre-service teachers frequently reported feelings of anxiety and uncertainty prior to the course, particularly concerning self-expression and performing in front of peers. However, as the lessons progressed, participants described experiencing increased comfort and enthusiasm, recognizing drama as both an enjoyable and educational tool. This emotional evolution fostered greater self-confidence and a stronger willingness to participate actively in classroom activities, highlighting drama's positive influence on both affective and professional development.

Examples from students' responses:

"Before the drama class, I was a bit worried because the idea of being in a creative process was difficult for me. However, after the lessons started, these worries completely disappeared."

"Expressing myself in front of the class and creating a drama with a few friends was challenging at first. However, this changed during and after the class. Drama classes generally helped eliminate these anxieties."

The themes, codes, and corresponding data analysis related to the second open-ended question are presented below.

2. Can you tell us about your feelings during the drama lessons?

Table 2.
Main Categories and Sub-categories

Emotional Engagement	Joy, Curiosity, Excitement, Inspiration
Creative Empowerment	Creativity, Motivation, Self-Expression, Group synergy
Professional Awareness	Courage to apply drama, Insight into teaching practices

During the drama lessons, participants reported predominantly positive emotional states, characterized by feelings of joy, creativity, and inspiration. The lessons were perceived as liberating experiences that fostered a sense of freedom, motivation, and group cohesion. Importantly, the experiential nature of drama enhanced learners' engagement and contributed to their developing professional self-awareness.

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Several participants explicitly noted that the lessons encouraged them to integrate drama techniques into their future teaching practices.

Examples from students' responses:

"During drama classes, I feel creative and motivated. During group work, I get into an energetic mood."

"I feel more creative during the drama lessons. These lessons gave me more courage to use drama with my own students."

The themes, codes, and corresponding data analysis related to the third open-ended question are presented below.

3. What kind of effects did the drama presentations including activities you made in lessons have on you?

Table 3.
Main Categories and Sub-categories

Professional Development	**Skill** Lesson planning, Creativity in teaching, Student engagement
Affective Benefits	Self-confidence, Communication, Emotional expression
Practical Application	Transfer of theory into practice, Awareness of classroom methodology

The drama presentations were perceived as instrumental in bridging the gap between theory and practice. Participants reported enhanced self-confidence and communication skills, along with a deeper understanding of how to apply drama strategies in real classroom contexts. These experiences enabled pre-service teachers to internalize and implement creative teaching methods, refine their lesson planning abilities, and improve classroom interaction techniques. The micro-teaching components were particularly impactful in illustrating how drama can transform traditional language lessons into dynamic and participatory learning experiences.

Examples from students' responses:

"Drama improves our teaching skills and also teaches us how to deliver engaging and effective lessons to students."

"The aim of the micro-teaching courses was to develop student teachers' ability to plan and implement lessons using creative methods."

The themes, codes, and corresponding data analysis related to the fourth open-ended question are presented below.

4) What is your opinion about the integration of drama into English language teaching?

Table 4.
Main Categories and Sub-categories

Linguistic Development	Speaking and listening skills, real-life language use, natural language acquisition
Affective and Motivational Gains	Increased motivation, enjoyment, engagement, self-confidence

Creative Pedagogy	Creativity, interactivity, learning by doing
Cultural Awareness	Understanding cultural elements through role-play and context
Practical Integration	Reinforcement through practice, applicability to real classroom settings

Participants expressed overwhelmingly positive views regarding the integration of drama into English language teaching, recognizing its multifaceted contributions to language learning. A dominant theme was the enhancement of speaking and listening skills through authentic, real-life contexts. Students also emphasized the motivational and confidence-building aspects of drama, noting that its interactive and enjoyable nature increased their participation and willingness to communicate. Another prominent theme was creativity and active learning, with participants appreciating drama as a method that moves away from traditional, passive instructional approaches. Several respondents highlighted the cultural dimension of drama, underscoring its potential to expose learners to diverse cultural norms and expressions within contextualized scenarios. Finally, participants regarded drama as a practical and applicable pedagogical tool that can be effectively implemented in classroom settings, particularly through role-playing and dramatization of real-life dialogues.

Examples from students' responses:

"Drama is a great tool for teaching English. It allows students to develop their language skills in a natural and effective way. In particular, it strengthens speaking and listening skills, increases cultural awareness, and encourages students' participation in the lesson."

"Integrating drama into English language teaching makes language learning more effective and enjoyable. Drama allows students to use their language skills in real-life situations and in creative ways. Activities such as role-playing help them understand the natural flow of language and increase their self-confidence."

The themes, codes, and corresponding data analysis related to the fifth open-ended question are presented below.

5)When you start teaching, would you consider using drama in your lessons while teaching English to your students? Explain it, please.

Table 5.
Main Categories and Sub-categories

Intent to Implement	Definite intention to use drama, Conditional intention
Perceived Benefits	Increased classroom participation, Real-life language use, Self-confidence, Fun
Pedagogical Advantages	Creativity, Motivation, Communication skills, Cultural awareness
Contextual Considerations	Concerns about age-appropriateness (e.g., in high school settings)

The majority of respondents expressed a strong intention to integrate drama into their future English teaching practices, recognizing its effectiveness in promoting active learning and authentic language use. Participants emphasized that drama fosters engagement, creativity, and self-confidence while creating a dynamic and enjoyable learning environment. Many also associated drama with the development of communication skills and the enhancement of cultural awareness, suggesting that they perceive its educational value as extending beyond language instruction.

A few participants noted contextual considerations, particularly regarding the suitability of drama for different age groups. Some expressed concerns that adolescents in high school might perceive drama

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activities as childish. Nevertheless, even these respondents acknowledged the potential of drama when implemented thoughtfully and in an age-appropriate manner.

Examples from students' responses:

"Yes, I definitely plan to use drama in the future because it offers students the opportunity to learn language in a fun and creative way. I also think it helps improve communication skills and increase cultural awareness."

"As I said, it works well in primary and middle school, but in high school, adolescents might say, 'What is this? Am I a child?' So, I am not sure there will be active participation."

In the second part of the study, the sem-structured interview questions were asked to 10 volunteer students in order to take additionally verified knowledge and have a deep understanding of the study.

The main theme and corresponding subthemes related to the first semi-structured interview question are presented below.

1)What is your opinion about using Drama in English Language Teaching?

Main Theme: Perceived Pedagogical Value of Drama in ELT

- Sub-theme 1: Active Learning and Interaction

- Sub-theme 2: Language Acquisition through Experience

- Sub-theme 3: Emotional and Creative Engagement

- Sub-theme 4: Motivation and Classroom Atmosphere

Participants expressed overwhelmingly positive perceptions of drama as a pedagogical strategy. The dominant theme emphasized drama's capacity to transform language learning into an active, experiential, and emotionally engaging process. Responses indicated that drama reduces reliance on rote memorization, fosters classroom interaction, and promotes long-term retention. In addition, participants valued drama for its contribution to enhancing creativity, vocabulary development, and communicative competence. Several respondents also noted its role in transforming classroom dynamics by increasing student motivation and enjoyment.

Examples from students' responses:

"Drama makes language learning more fun and interactive. Instead of memorizing words, students learn the language by communicating and acting."

"Drama is a very effective tool for developing speaking skills, expanding vocabulary, and increasing the ability to express emotions."

The main theme and corresponding subthemes related to the second semi-structured interview question are presented below.

2) How do you assess the Drama in English Language Teaching course with regard to the quality of its content design and the effectiveness of the materials utilized?

Main Theme: Evaluation of Course Design and Material Utility

- Sub-theme 1: Practical and Engaging Content

- Sub-theme 2: Creativity and Adaptability of Materials

- Sub-theme 3: Group Work and Improvisation as Learning Strategies

- Sub-theme 4: Suggestions for Enhancement (e.g., cultural enrichment)

Participants generally evaluated the course content and materials positively, describing them as practical, inclusive, and conducive to experiential learning. A recurring theme was that the materials supported students' creativity and participation, particularly during group performances and improvisational activities. The course design was also noted for its adaptability and suitability for learners at different proficiency levels. However, some participants suggested incorporating more culturally diverse materials to further enrich the learning context.

Examples from students' responses:

"Doing the drama activities ourselves enabled us to learn practically and made the process more effective. The materials were designed in a way that was both creative and appropriate for different levels."

"The course content was quite comprehensive and offered many practical applications. However, it would have been useful to diversify the materials or to supplement them with cultural elements."

The main theme and corresponding subthemes related to the third semi-structured interview question are presented below.

3) How would you assess the contribution of the Drama in English Language Teaching course to your professional development? In what specific ways do you think it has enhanced your skills, knowledge, or perspective as a future English language teacher?

Main Theme: Professional Growth through Experiential Learning

- Sub-theme 1: Development of Creative Teaching Practices

- Sub-theme 2: Improved Communication and Classroom Management Skills

- Sub-theme 3: Increased Self-Confidence and Public Speaking

- Sub-theme 4: Learning by Doing as an Educational Philosophy

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The course was perceived as a transformative experience contributing significantly to participants' professional development. They emphasized that it equipped them with creative teaching tools, enhanced their ability to engage students, and increased their self-confidence in classroom settings. The hands-on nature of drama enabled participants to internalize the learning by doing principle, which they found both applicable and beneficial for future teaching contexts. Some also noted that the use of costumes and role-play reduced anxiety related to public speaking, thereby strengthening their teaching presence and classroom performance.

Examples from students' responses:

"The possibility of getting excited while lecturing and making mistakes during a presentation is reduced thanks to drama, because it is much easier to dress up in a costume and play a role in front of 35–40 people than to simply talk in front of them."

"This course made significant contributions to my professional development. By learning drama techniques, I had the opportunity to develop more creative methods in classroom management and language teaching."

Across all three questions, participants consistently highlighted the transformative, creative, and engaging nature of drama in English language teaching. The themes converged on the idea that drama promotes holistic learning by integrating language acquisition, emotional intelligence, creativity, and pedagogical skill-building. These findings reinforce the relevance of drama as a powerful and sustainable educational strategy within the field of ELT.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the multifaceted benefits of drama in English Language Teaching (ELT), reinforcing its role as a holistic pedagogical tool that fosters not only linguistic competence but also emotional, interpersonal, and professional development among pre-service teachers. Through a systematic content analysis incorporating open, axial, and selective coding procedures, several interrelated thematic dimensions emerged.

Firstly, participants reported a significant shift from initial anxiety and performance-related apprehension to feelings of enjoyment, motivation, and self-confidence. This emotional evolution resonates with Purcell-Gates et al. (2002), who argue that sustained drama activities desensitize students to performance anxiety by providing repeated opportunities to engage with language in authentic, emotionally resonant contexts. Similarly, Ögeyik (2009) and Cebeci (2016) found that drama encourages positive emotions in both learners and teachers by creating an engaging and psychologically safe learning environment. These findings are echoed in the present study, where pre-service teachers indicated increased confidence in teaching and public speaking through dramatized performance, thereby confirming the emotional benefits of embodied pedagogy.

Secondly, the pre-service teacher participants consistently acknowledged the contribution of the course to their professional development, particularly in enhancing classroom management, lesson planning, and communicative teaching strategies. These findings align with those of Stinson and Freebody (2006), who emphasize drama's potential to promote teacher reflexivity and creative lesson design. Likewise, Güryay (2015) and Dönük (2018) report that drama enables language teachers to diversify instructional practices and transition from textbook-centered approaches to more learner-centered and dynamic forms of classroom interaction. The emphasis on drama as a core instructional strategy rather than a supplementary enrichment activity also reflects Davies's (1990) call for embedding drama within the language syllabus, given its practicality, continuity, and linguistic accessibility.

Thirdly, drama was perceived as a medium that fosters creativity, enhances self-expression, and encourages collaborative learning. Participants' reflections illustrate the constructivist and experiential principles central to drama pedagogy (Bruner, 2009), emphasizing learning by doing and meaning-making through interaction. These reflections parallel the findings of Demircioğlu (2010), Köylüoğlu (2010), and Gill (2013), who argue that drama encourages deeper language processing, vocabulary retention, and conceptual understanding by embedding language use in meaningful social interactions. Furthermore, the authenticity of the learning context, highlighted by Tomlinson and Masuhara (2017), was seen as critical to participants' engagement, suggesting that real-life simulation in drama supports both language fluency and communicative competence.

Fourthly, taken together, the results underscore drama's transformative power in ELT—not only as a linguistic tool but also as an emotionally and professionally enriching practice. Participants viewed drama as instrumental in making language learning enjoyable, interactive, and student-centered. This aligns with the findings of Tajareh and Oroji (2017) and Şimşek (2016), which demonstrate that drama supports vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, and learner motivation. Moreover, the collaborative nature of drama corresponds with Kao and O'Neill (1998), who emphasize its role in promoting peer interaction and intercultural communication—key competencies for modern language classrooms. However, while the overall perception was overwhelmingly positive, some participants highlighted the need for context-sensitive adaptations. As one participant noted, adolescent learners may initially resist drama due to its perceived immaturity as a teaching method. This observation underscores the importance of flexible implementation strategies that consider learner age, cultural context, and classroom dynamics (Şimşek, 2016; Dönük, 2018).

Consequently, this study affirms the pedagogical value of drama in English Language Teaching (ELT) and its potential to equip future teachers with the emotional resilience, creative thinking, and instructional agility required in contemporary language classrooms. Drama empowers teachers to move beyond the role of passive knowledge transmitters and become active facilitators of meaningful communication. It enhances learners' affective engagement, intercultural sensitivity, and communicative competence, offering a comprehensive framework for language learning grounded in interaction, expression, and reflection. Therefore, teacher education programs should prioritize drama not as an optional supplement but as a foundational methodology that integrates the emotional, cognitive, and linguistic dimensions of learning.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

1.GİRİŞ

Bu araştırmada, dramanın İngilizce öğretiminde etkili bir pedagojik yöntem olarak rolü vurgulanmaktadır. Drama, öğrencilerin gerçek yaşamla bağlantılı iletişim kurmalarını, derse aktif katılım göstermelerini ve öğrenme süreçlerinde yüksek motivasyon sergilemelerini teşvik eden bir yöntem olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Desialova'nın (2009) belirttiği üzere drama, öğrencilerin özgüvenini, yaratıcılığını ve empati becerilerini geliştirirken dil kullanımını daha doğal, kalıcı ve anlamlı hâle getirir. Dil öğretiminde drama uygulamaları yalnızca bilişsel değil, aynı zamanda duyuşsal ve sosyal boyutları da içeren, çok duyulu ve öğrenci merkezli bir öğrenme ortamı yaratır.

Edebi metinlerin drama yoluyla dil öğretimine entegre edilmesi, öğrencilere anlamlı ve bağlamsallaştırılmış bir öğrenme deneyimi sunar; daha önce edinilmiş dil bilgisi, sözcük dağarcığı ve ifadelerin pekiştirilmesini sağlarken aynı zamanda yeni dil unsurlarının keşfini kolaylaştırır. Bu süreç, okuduğunu anlama becerisini güçlendirmenin yanı sıra eleştirel düşünme, kültürel farkındalık ve empati gelişimini de destekler. Öğrencilerin edebi metinlerle duygusal ve kişisel düzeyde bağ kurmaları, dil öğrenimine yönelik motivasyonlarını artırarak hem bilişsel hem de bireysel gelişimlerine katkı sağlar. Hall'un (2005) da vurguladığı gibi, edebiyatın yabancı dil öğretimine dâhil edilmesi, öğrenenlerin psikolinguistik gelişimlerini; dil biçimlerine, söylem işleme süreçlerine ve kelime dağarcığına odaklanmalarını destekler.

Dramanın tarihsel kökenlerinin yirminci yüzyılın başlarına dayandığı (Bolton, 1993) ve zamanla öğretme-öğrenme ortamlarında güçlü bir pedagojik stratejiye dönüştüğü belirtilmiştir (Wessels, 1987). Johnson ve O'Neill (1984), dramanın "benzersiz bir araç" olduğunu vurgularken; Piaget (1962), Vygotsky (1978) ve Courtney (1990) gibi kuramcılar da dramanın öğrenme süreçlerindeki önemine dikkat çekmiştir. Günümüzde drama, yalnızca sanatsal bir ifade biçimi değil, aynı zamanda öğretmen eğitimi programlarında etkin bir alternatif öğretim yöntemi olarak kabul edilmektedir (Griggs, 2001; Fleming, 2018). Drama, "yaratıcı drama", "eğitimde drama" ve "süreç draması" gibi farklı yaklaşımlarla kavramsallaştırılmıştır (Heathcote, 1984; O'Toole, 1992; Yaşar, 2006). Türkiye'de Yükseköğretim Kurulu (YÖK, 2018) tarafından "eğitimde drama" terimi resmî olarak benimsenmiş ve İngilizce öğretmenliği lisans programlarında seçmeli ders olarak yer almıştır. Bu bağlamda drama, öğretmen yetiştirme programlarında pedagojik açıdan önemli bir yere sahiptir.

Drama, öğretmen adaylarını öğrenme sürecinin merkezine yerleştirerek aktif katılımı, iletişimi ve iş birliğini destekler. İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin konuşma kaygısını azaltmak ve özgüven kazanmalarını sağlamak amacıyla drama, güvenli ve destekleyici bir sınıf atmosferi oluşturur (Astuti, 2016). Öğrencilerin grup çalışmaları ve sahneleme süreçleri yoluyla ifade özgürlüğü kazandıkları bu yaklaşım, iletişimsel yeterlik gelişimini de destekler.

Bu çalışma, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi bağlamında drama temelli yöntemlerin pedagojik değerini ve öğretmen adaylarının bu yaklaşıma ilişkin görüşleri ile deneyimlerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Günümüzde iletişimsel yeterlilik, öğrenen merkezli öğretim ve duyuşsal gelişim gibi çok boyutlu hedeflerin önem kazanmasıyla birlikte drama, yabancı dil öğretiminde yaratıcı, etkileşimli ve dönüştürücü bir pedagojik araç olarak öne çıkmıştır. Drama, yalnızca dilsel becerilerin değil; aynı zamanda özgüven, empati, kültürel farkındalık ve yaratıcılığın gelişimini destekleyerek öğrenmeyi daha anlamlı ve kalıcı hâle getirir.

Türkiye'de bir vakıf üniversitesinin İngilizce öğretmenliği programında seçmeli olarak sunulan "İngilizce Öğretiminde Drama" dersi temelinde yürütülen bu araştırma, öğretmen adaylarının duygusal, pedagojik

ve kişisel gelişim süreçlerini değerlendirmektedir. Çalışma, drama etkinliklerinin öğretmen adaylarının profesyonel kimlik oluşumu, pedagojik farkındalık ve sürdürülebilir öğretim uygulamaları üzerindeki etkilerini ortaya koyarak, kuramsal bilgi ile sınıf içi uygulama arasında köprü kurmayı hedeflemektedir. Böylece araştırma, dramanın yabancı dil öğretimindeki çok yönlü katkılarını vurgulamakta ve İngilizce öğretiminin niteliğini artırmaya yönelik kuramsal ve uygulamalı bir çerçeve sunmaktadır.

2. METOD

Bu araştırmada, katılımcıların deneyimlerinden ve algılarından yola çıkarak kuramsal bir anlayış geliştirmeyi amaçlayan Gömülü Teori/Temellendirilmiş Kuram temelli nitel araştırma deseni benimsenmiştir (Green vd., 2007). Çalışmanın temel hedefi, İngilizce öğretmenliği lisans programında yer alan İngilizce Öğretiminde Drama dersine katılan öğretmen adaylarından elde edilen nitel verilerden doğrudan türetilen bir alt kuram (substantive theory) ortaya koymaktır. Bu doğrultuda, katılımcıların drama temelli öğretim uygulamalarına ve bu yöntemin dil öğretimine entegrasyonuna ilişkin anlam atıflarını çözümleyebilmek amacıyla içerik analizi yöntemi kullanılmıştır.

Veri analizi süreci, Gömülü Kuram'ın üç aşamalı kodlama yaklaşımına dayandırılmıştır: Açık kodlama aşamasında, açık uçlu sorular ve derinlemesine görüşmelerden elde edilen veriler ilk kez bölümlere ayrılmış ve etiketlenmiştir. Eksen kodlama aşamasında, ortaya çıkan kodlar yeniden düzenlenmiş, aralarındaki ilişkiler belirlenmiş ve temalar ile alt temalar oluşturulmuştur. Seçici kodlama aşamasında ise kodlar ve temalar bütüncül biçimde gözden geçirilmiş, benzer unsurlar birleştirilmiş ve elde edilen tematik yapı kuramsal bir bütünlük içinde yeniden yapılandırılmıştır.

Araştırma, literatür ve çalışma amacı doğrultusunda aşağıdaki iki temel araştırma sorusuna dayandırılmıştır:

1) İngilizce öğretmenliği adaylarının drama etkinliklerinin İngilizce öğretimine entegrasyonu konusundaki görüşleri nelerdir?

2) İngilizce öğretmenliği adayları, İngilizce öğretiminde drama dersi kapsamındaki uygulamalara ilişkin ne düşünmektedir?

Katılımcılar, İstanbul'daki bir vakıf üniversitesinin İngilizce Öğretmenliği bölümünde öğrenim gören ve İngilizce Öğretiminde Drama dersini seçmeli olarak alan 32 ikinci sınıf öğretmen adayından oluşmuştur. Tüm öğrenciler açık uçlu sorulara yanıt vermiş; bunlardan 10 gönüllü öğrenci ise yarı yapılandırılmış odak grup görüşmelerine katılmıştır. Katılımcıların yaşları 19 ile 25 arasında değişmekte olup, 20'si kadın, 12'si erkektir.

Veri toplama süreci iki aşamada yürütülmüştür. İlk aşamada, sekiz haftalık uygulama sürecinin sonunda tüm katılımcılara açık uçlu anketler uygulanmıştır. İkinci aşamada ise, ilk gruptan rastgele seçilen 10 öğretmen adayıyla odak grup görüşmeleri yapılmıştır. Bireysel görüşmeler yerine odak grup yöntemi tercih edilmesinin amacı, katılımcılar arasında etkileşim ve karşılıklı yansıtma (reflection) yoluyla daha derin ve zengin veri elde etmektir. Katılımcıların rahat hissetmeleri ve dil yeterliğiyle ilgili kaygılarının azaltılması amacıyla görüşmeler ana dillerinde yapılmış, tüm oturumlar ses kaydına alınarak sözcüğü sözcüğüne çözümlenmiştir.

Bu nitel araştırmada kullanılan açık uçlu sorular aşağıda sunulmuştur:

1) Drama dersleri ve uygulamaları öncesinde ne düşünüyordunuz? Drama dersleri ve uygulamaları sonrasında ne düşündünüz ve ne hissettiniz? Duygu ve düşüncelerinizi ifade edebilir misiniz?

2) Drama dersleri süresince hissettiklerinizi bizimle paylaşabilir misiniz?

3) Drama etkinliklerini içeren derslerde yaptığınız drama sunumlarının üzerinizde nasıl bir etkisi oldu?

4) Dramayı İngilizce öğretimine entegre etme konusundaki görüşünüz nedir?

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5) Öğretmenlik mesleğine başladığınızda, İngilizce öğretimi sürecinde drama yöntemini kullanmayı düşünür müsünüz? Lütfen açıklayınız.

Bu nitel araştırmada kullanılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme soruları ise aşağıda yer almaktadır:

1) İngilizce Öğretiminde Drama yönteminin kullanılmasına ilişkin genel görüşünüz nedir?

2) İngilizce Öğretiminde Drama dersini, içerik tasarımı ve kullanılan materyallerin etkililiği açısından nasıl değerlendirirsiniz?

3) İngilizce öğretiminde drama dersinin mesleki gelişiminize katkısını nasıl değerlendirirsiniz? Bu dersin gelecekteki İngilizce öğretmenliği kimliğiniz açısından bilgi, beceri veya bakış açınız üzerinde hangi somut etkileri yarattığını düşünüyorsunuz? Lütfen ayrıntılı olarak açıklayınız.

Araştırmada kullanılan açık uçlu ve yarı yapılandırılmış sorular, öğretmen adaylarının drama dersleri öncesindeki ve sonrasındaki düşüncelerini, ders sürecindeki duygusal deneyimlerini, drama temelli sunumların etkilerini ve gelecekteki öğretim uygulamalarında dramanın yerini nasıl değerlendirdiklerini anlamayı hedeflemiştir.

Sonuç olarak bu yöntemsel yapı, öğretmen adaylarının dramanın dil öğretimindeki rolünü nasıl algıladıklarını, deneyimlediklerini ve mesleki gelişim süreçlerinde nasıl konumlandırdıklarını anlamaya yönelik sistematik ve yorumlayıcı bir çerçeve sunmaktadır. Araştırma, drama temelli pedagojinin öğretmen kimliği gelişimi, yansıtıcı düşünme ve sürdürülebilir öğretim uygulamalarına katkılarını ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır.

3. BULGULAR, TARTIŞMA VE SONUÇLAR

Analiz sonuçlarına göre üç ana tematik boyut belirlenmiştir: (1) Duygusal Dönüşüm, (2) Mesleki Yeterlik, (3) Kişisel Katılım. İlk olarak, katılımcıların drama dersleri öncesinde kaygı, özgüven eksikliği ve sahne korkusu gibi olumsuz duygular taşıdıkları; ancak dersler ilerledikçe bu duyguların yerini keyif, rahatlama ve özgüvene bıraktığı görülmüştür. Bu bulgu, Purcell-Gates vd. (2002) ve Ögeyik (2009) gibi araştırmalarla örtüşmekte olup drama uygulamalarının duyuşsal gelişime katkısını desteklemektedir.

İkinci olarak, öğretmen adayları ders sürecinde edindikleri deneyimlerin mesleki gelişimlerine önemli katkı sağladığını belirtmişlerdir. Drama uygulamaları, katılımcıların yaratıcı ders planlama becerilerini geliştirmiş, sınıf yönetimi konusunda yeni stratejiler edinmelerini sağlamış ve öğrenci merkezli öğretimi içselleştirmelerine olanak tanımıştır. Bu durum, Stinson & Freebody (2006) ile Dönük (2018)'ün çalışmalarında vurgulanan dramanın öğretmenlerin pedagojik esnekliğini artırma rolüyle örtüşmektedir.

Üçüncü olarak drama sürecinde yaratıcı ifade, grup etkileşimi ve empatik yaklaşım gibi kişisel kazanımlar ön plana çıkmıştır. Katılımcılar, drama sayesinde hem bireysel hem de kolektif öğrenme deneyimlerini derinleştirdiklerini ifade etmişlerdir. Bruner (1986) ve Vygotsky (1978)'nin yapılandırmacı öğrenme kuramlarıyla uyumlu olarak, "yaparak yaşayarak öğrenme" yaklaşımının öğretmen adaylarının öğretim anlayışlarını dönüştürdüğü gözlemlenmiştir.

Drama dersinin içeriği ve materyallerine yönelik değerlendirmelerde, içeriklerin uygulamalı, etkileşimli ve öğrencilerin seviyelerine uygun olduğu vurgulanmıştır. Bununla birlikte bazı katılımcılar, materyallerin kültürel çeşitlilik açısından zenginleştirilmesi gerektiğini belirtmiştir. Katılımcılar, dramanın yaratıcılığı, iş birliğini ve kendini ifade etme becerisini güçlendirdiğini vurgulamışlardır. Drama, etkileşim yoluyla anlam oluşturmayı ve yaparak öğrenmeyi temel alan yapılandırmacı yaklaşımı desteklemekte; dili gerçek yaşam bağlamlarında kullanma olanağı sunmaktadır. Bu durum, drama yönteminin esnekliğini ve öğretim bağlamlarına kolayca uyarlanabilirliğini göstermektedir.

Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma, drama yönteminin yalnızca dil öğretimini destekleyen bir araç değil; aynı zamanda öğretmen adaylarının duygusal, pedagojik ve kişisel gelişimlerini bütüncül biçimde destekleyen güçlü bir öğretim stratejisi olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Çalışma, dramanın dönüştürücü bir pedagojik araç olduğunu göstermektedir. Drama, öğretimi hem bilişsel hem de duyuşsal açıdan zenginleştirirken öğrenme sürecini daha anlamlı, keyifli ve katılımcı hâle getirmektedir. Araştırma, dramanın öğretmen adaylarının yaratıcılığını, esnekliğini ve duygusal farkındalığını artırarak onları çağdaş dil öğretimi ortamlarına hazırladığını ortaya koymuştur. Katılımcıların büyük çoğunluğu, drama yöntemini gelecekteki öğretim süreçlerinde kullanmayı planladıklarını ifade etmiştir. Ancak yaş grubu ve okul düzeyine bağlı olarak yöntemin uygun biçimde uyarlanması gerektiğine dair bir farkındalık da oluşmuştur. Bu bağlamda, öğretmen yetiştirme programlarının drama yöntemini temel öğretim yaklaşımlarından biri olarak görmesi ve bu doğrultuda kuramsal ile uygulamalı içerikler sunması önerilmektedir. Çalışma, drama temelli öğretimin öğretmen eğitiminde yapılandırmacı, duyuşsal ve iletişimsel boyutlarıyla bütünleştirilmiş yenilikçi bir yaklaşım olarak değerlendirilmesi gerektiğini vurgulamaktadır. Bu nedenle, drama öğretmen yetiştirme programlarında isteğe bağlı bir etkinlik olarak değil; öğrenmenin bilişsel, duyuşsal ve dilsel boyutlarını bütünleştiren temel bir öğretim yöntemi olarak ele alınmalıdır.

Exploring the Perspectives of ELT Pre-Service Teachers on Integrating Drama Activities into English Language Teaching and their Experiences in Drama in ELT Course

(İngilizce Öğretmenliği Aday Öğretmenlerinin Drama Aktivitelerini İngiliz Dili Eğitimine Entegre Etme Konusundaki Görüşlerinin ve İngilizce Öğretiminde Drama Dersi'ndeki Deneyimlerinin Araştırılması)

ARAŞTIRMANIN ETIK ONAYI

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest.