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Effects of Drama Activities on EFL Students' Speaking Skills

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Abstract

A considerable number of studies have been conducted to explore better ways to foster speaking skills of EFL learners. Drama has recently been considered as one of those ways to improve speaking skills. In the light of this information, this research aimed to discover the effects of drama activities on speaking skills of EFL students and to analyze their perceptions about the use of drama activities in foreign language learning. Participants in this study included 21 preparatory class students enrolled at a state university in Turkey during 2018-2019 academic year. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected by means of a pre-intermediate level speaking achievement test and an attitude questionnaire followed by semi-structured interviews regarding students' perceptions about the use of drama activities in foreign language classrooms. IBM SPSS Statistics 23.0 and pattern coding were used to analyze the data. The findings of the study revealed that the integration of drama in speaking courses had a positive effect on encouraging EFL students' speaking skills and the students had positive feelings toward the use of drama activities in foreign language courses. The results of the study are expected to contribute to curriculum developers, teachers, instructors and teacher educators.

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Key Words: Drama; EFL; speaking; teaching speaking; foreign language teaching

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1. Introduction

Speaking, defined as a productive oral skill comprising the generation of systematic verbal utterances with the aim of conveying meaning (Nunan, 2003), has often been viewed as the most challenging of the four language skills (Bailey and Savage 1994). As this skill requires production, speaking gets more demanding for EFL learners who lack the opportunity of practicing English outside the class and the target language in real-life situations (Uztosum & Erten, 2014). Therefore, many studies have been conducted to explore such better ways as debates (Somjai & Jansem, 2015), storytelling (Samantaray, 2014), brainstorming (Hamden, Rostampour, & Abdorahimzadeh, 2015) etc. to improve speaking skills of EFL learners.

Drama has recently been considered as one of those related ways by contemporary trends in teaching speaking. The word “drama”, referring to a wide concept, can be defined in several ways. However, from the educational perspective, Hubbard, Jones, Thornton, and Wheeler (1986) define it as ‘various oral activities that include creativity’. Holden (1982) specifies that drama corresponds to pretending as it requires learners to put themselves into imaginary situations, outside the classroom context, or the skins and characters of other people. What Wessels (1987) stresses as drama could create a necessity to speak can be perceived as an effective call-to-action button for integrating drama into speaking courses. When learners are asked to act out, they associate themselves with the assigned roles by pretending to be someone else. At that stage, imagination starts taking part in each different context and it fosters information exchange, which enables learners’ active engagement in communication. Therefore, drama is considered to provide a field for sufficient practice in acquiring speaking skill (Schejbal, 2006). Maley and Duff (2005) discuss how drama enables a natural integration of language skills and promotes the classroom interaction with an intensive focus on meaning. Besides, Philips (2003) designates drama as a motivator fostering speaking in an active learning environment. Fleming (2006) and Zyound (2010) also support the efficacy of using drama in classrooms by stating that drama promotes a learner-centered classroom practice which enables learners to perceive, think, act and interact during learning process instead of being passive receivers of knowledge. Additionally, Desiatova (2009) considers drama as a stimulator triggering one’s imagination and effective thinking abilities, which proves that in addition to fostering communication skills, drama additionally stimulates problem solving, critical and creative thinking skills of learners.

Grounded on what the integration of drama can bring into speaking courses, this research aims to propose teaching speaking through drama. It is assumed that the integration

of drama and its techniques into classroom practice not only stimulates but also enriches discrete kinds of speaking activities such as the focus on fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, stress, intonation etc. Such a practice is also considered to promote opportunities for practicing English by utilizing target language in real-life situations. That's why in this research, drama is employed as a teaching methodology both to maximize foreign language speaking performance and to promote positive feelings toward the use of drama in foreign language classrooms.

1.1. Literature review

Drama has been applied as an influential tool so as to teach various aspects of language. The effects of drama on language teaching in terms of skills development have been studied by some researchers from distinct perspectives such as listening comprehension skills (Brouillette, 2012), reading skills (Krueger & Ranalli, 2003), writing skills (Robbie, 1998), and vocabulary knowledge (Demircioğlu, 2010).

As for speaking, drama has been considered to provide learners a chance to practice English by using target language in life-like situations. It has been widely employed by language teachers in speaking courses as it also facilitates particular kinds of speaking activities focusing on different aspects of speaking skill such as fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, stress, intonation etc. However, there exist a few studies which have proved that the use of drama contributes to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' speaking skills in EFL context both abroad and in Turkey.

1.1.1. Studies conducted worldwide

Initially, Iampitakporn (2002) conducted an experimental study to compare the English-speaking achievement of students using drama activities and students using conventional teaching and explore students' opinions on drama activities. Findings revealed that the experimental group using drama activities outperformed the control group trained by conventional teaching methods in terms of achievement in speaking and the students' opinions on drama activities were highly positive. Following that, Bang's study (2003) aiming to discover the improvement of college students' communicative ability through drama-oriented activities and to explore students' reactions towards such activities stated that the drama technique resulted in a significant improvement in students' communicative abilities. On the other hand, with regard to their perceptions, the participants indicated both positive and negative reactions towards the use of drama activities. The study suggested the benefits of

integrating drama activities in EFL classroom not only for communicative but also for cognitive, affective, socio-cultural and linguistic domains. Subsequent to the studies above, Nuktong's pre-experimental study (2010) implemented to examine the effects of drama-based instruction on students' oral communication ability and motivation in learning English revealed a significant increase in students' oral communication abilities and their motivation in learning English. The study also proved learners' positive attitudes towards learning through drama-based instruction. The study suggested the use of drama activities to foster learners' English-speaking skills. Finally, in another pre-experimental study conducted by Iamsaard and Kerdpol (2015), the effects of drama activities on improving English communicative skills were investigated and the results revealed that students' communicative speaking skills improved after the study. Furthermore, learners' opinions on the use of drama activities in speaking courses proved to be highly positive.

1.1.2. Studies conducted in Turkey

In addition to the EFL studies conducted in various countries, some alternative studies investigating the effects of using drama on speaking skills of EFL learners have also been conducted in Turkish context. For instance, Saraç (2007) conducted a pre-experimental study to discover whether creative drama has a positive impact on developing the speaking skills of young learners and the findings emerged from the observations revealed that the students' speaking skills gradually increased towards the end of the study. Besides, the findings obtained from the students' journals designated that creative drama entailed a positive influence on the learners' self-confidence and their willingness to participate. Following that, Saraç (2007) and Kılıç (2009) aimed to explore the effects of creative drama on students' English-speaking skills and students' attitudes towards speaking English with an experimental study. The results indicated that there were positive and significant effects on both the speaking test scores and the attitudes of the students towards speaking English after the study, which suggested the integration of drama activities into classroom instruction. Lastly, Saygılı (2014) conducted a pre-experimental study to investigate speaking strategies of English as a Specific Purpose students and whether drama would help them to improve their speaking skills and discovered that the integration of drama activities into classroom practice not only promoted students' speaking strategies but also ameliorated their speaking abilities.

There have also been some studies conducted in Turkey and other countries which encapsulated EFL students' perceptions on the use of drama in their classrooms. The findings have varied from one study to another. Some studies proved that EFL learners had positive

attitudes towards learning the target language through drama activities (Lee, 2007; Park, 2015; Yılmaz, 2016; Yun, 2007) and the pedagogical implications of these studies suggested that integration of drama activities into foreign language classroom instruction is beneficial. Contrary to those studies' findings, some studies indicated that EFL students had not only positive but also negative attitudes towards the use of drama activities in foreign language classrooms. For example, in Bang's study (2003) the participants indicated both positive and negative reactions towards the use of drama activities.

In conclusion, due to the limited number of studies that embraced both perceptions and L2 speaking performances of the students at the same time, further research is needed to contribute to the studies on the effects of drama on Turkish EFL learners' oral skills. In response to this gap, this study aims to find out not only what effects drama activities have on speaking skills of Turkish university pre- intermediate level EFL students but also the perceptions of students toward the use of drama in foreign language classrooms in EFL context.

1.2. Research questions

The research questions that guided the study as follows:

1. To what extent will the use of drama activities affect Turkish EFL students' language performance of L2 speaking?
2. What are the perceptions of Turkish EFL students regarding the use of drama in foreign language classes?

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

The study was designed as a single instrumental case study as the researchers focus on an issue and then select a bounded case to illustrate the issue with an in-depth and advance understanding. As suggested by Stake (1995) the use of an instrumental case study is for having a 'research question, a puzzlement, a need for general understanding, and feel that we may get insight into the question by studying a particular case' (p.3). With regard to the current research, the researchers intend to better understand whether drama activities affect Turkish EFL students' language performance of L2 speaking and to explore the issue of the use of drama in EFL class via the utilization of the single case of one institution to illustrate the reaction of the class to drama integration. According to Yin (2003), "case studies can be based on any mix of

quantitative and qualitative evidence” (p. 15). Therefore, the current study benefitted from both quantitative and qualitative data gathering approaches in order to provide a further understanding of research problems than either approach alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

2.2. Setting & Participants

The research was generated in one of the state universities in Turkey during the fall semester of 2018-2019 academic year. For the selection of the participating group, convenience sampling was conducted. Among several classes, only one class was selected because of its convenient accessibility and proximity to the researchers (Given, 2008). The study group consisted of 21 pre-intermediate EFL preparatory class students (8 females & 13 males). The English Preparatory Program wasn't compulsory for these students because they weren't registered in departments in which the medium of instruction is English; however, they attended the English Preparatory Program voluntarily. They were all native speakers of Turkish. Their ages ranged from 18 to 20 and approximate years of their English language learning ranged from 9 to 11 years. In this preparatory program, they totally had 24 hours of English classes including four basic skills. Only two hours comprised speaking skill. Up to the procedure, they had been taught by two different non-native EFL teachers since the beginning of the semester and already taken two exams: a quiz and a midterm exam.

2.3. Data Collection Instruments

To implement this research, data were collected by means of the Pre-Intermediate Level Speaking Test developed by the School of Foreign Languages of the university, an Attitude Questionnaire developed by Lee (2007) and in-depth interviews with students in semi-structured design for triangulation.

2.3.1 The Speaking Test

The Speaking Test developed by the School of Foreign Languages of the university was employed to test the pre-intermediate level participants' language performance of L2 speaking in terms of four distinct aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and information exchange. The total score of the test was 20 points; each section was rated as five points. The test encompassed two parts: in the first part, there were questions about learners' personal lives. In the second part, on the other hand, the students were asked to describe some pictures in detail

orally with some follow-up questions. Each student was graded in detail by the teacher according to a rubric.

2.3.2 The Attitude Questionnaire

The Attitude Questionnaire developed by Lee (2007) was applied to explore the perceptions of participants about the use of drama in foreign language classrooms. The questionnaire comprised 11 items and the respondents were expected to rate the degree to which they agree or disagree with them on a five-point Likert Scale. As indicated by Lee (2007), as for the reliability, a pilot study was conducted in 2007 with a group of students with different language abilities to test students' comprehension of the statements and the options based on the ordinal scale. The operation was satisfactory and thus the questionnaire was used in his study. The questionnaire was also justified to have the content validity (Lee, 2007).

2.3.3 Interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews were performed as the method of data collection. The selection of these students was grounded on predetermined criterion that was relevant to meeting the research aim (Patton, 2002). Accordingly, the interviews were conducted with five of participating students whose main score in the Pre-Intermediate Level Speaking Test demonstrated a significant change after the procedure. The interviews were performed in Turkish and audiotaped. They lasted for ten minutes. Additional questions were reflected, when needed to elicit further details.

2.4. Procedure

This mixed- method research was employed in a class in which one of the researchers was the teacher of the students. In order to ensure validity and reliability of the research, the other researcher was also present within the classroom during the whole procedure. The participating group consisted of 21 (8 females and 13 males) pre-intermediate EFL preparatory class students. Before taking part in the study, all of the students were informed about the research at the very beginning of the study and expected to complete informed consent forms. At the beginning of the study, instead of administrating a pre-speaking test, the researcher took students' scores of the speaking part of the midterm exam as a reference for the pre-test. The speaking test was used to assess the students' L2 speaking performance in terms of four different aspects including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and information exchange. The pre-test scores were utilized to assess students' current L2 speaking performance. In the study, the same speaking test was applied as the post-test. The time interval between the pre

and post-tests was six weeks to reduce the effects of the pre-test on the upcoming results of the procedure.

For the next six weeks, the participating group was administered drama-based tasks by the teacher. During the procedure, once a week, the teacher practiced drama activities prepared by Clandfield and published by Macmillan (2003), with the students. These drama activities were mainly based on improvisation and these were the main teaching aids in the procedure to encourage speaking skills of the participant students. The activities embraced in the procedure were the following: Greetings, Channel Hopping, Alphabet Dialogue, Dubbed Movie, The Good, the Bad and the Ugly Advice and The Fortune Teller with Two Heads. On the first day of the procedure, the drama activity was 'Greetings'. During this activity, the students were expected to walk around the class. They were asked to greet each other. At first, the students greeted each other by just shaking hand. Following, the students were asked to greet their friends more specifically. They pretended to be a lost friend, an enemy, an ex-boyfriend or girlfriend, etc. On the second day of the procedure, the activity was 'Channel Hopping'. For this activity, the class was divided into groups and given 'channels' or 'television shows' such as a soap opera, a sportscast, a reality show, an action movie etc. The teacher pretended to have a remote control and by pointing one group, the teacher turned on the channel. Each group was asked to provide the speech of the channel or show they represented. The teacher changed the channel as she wished by pointing to one of the groups. The students were required to be picky. Otherwise, the teacher told them that she would change the channel if she got bored. On the third day of the procedure, the activity was 'Alphabet Dialogue' which comprised 26 lines of dialogue. Each line started with a given letter (let's say A). The upcoming reply needed to start with 'B' and so on until the moment that the whole alphabet was covered. The following activity was 'Dubbed Movie' in which two or more students were asked to do a role play. Students were asked to act out a scene from a movie which they knew very well. While some of the students were moving their mouths as if they had been speaking, the others did the speaking. For this activity, the students were given some time for preparation. As for the fifth day of the procedure, the drama activity was 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly Advice'. To implement this task, the students were asked to form groups of three and they sit down in a row. They were all given problems expecting some advice. For this, in each group every student was expected to provide a different kind of advice: good, bad, and really bad (ugly) advice. In this activity, if the 'bad advice' had been really bad, then the 'ugly advice' was expected to be even worse. On the last day of the procedure, the drama activity was the Fortune Teller with

Two Heads. Two of the students were assigned the role of being the fortune teller. The rest of the class was expected to ask them questions about the future. The challenging part of the task was that the fortune teller had to reply the questions one word at a time per student. As the fortune teller's 'heads' were not able to consult each about what they were going to say, each world reshaped the answer accordingly.

In the final week of the procedure, the students were administrated the same Pre-Intermediate Level Speaking Test with the aim of comparing their scores to the previous ones to see what impact the procedure had on their L2 speaking performance. Besides, at the end of the procedure, the questionnaire aiming to investigate the perceptions of participants about the use of drama in foreign language classrooms was administrated to the participating students. The students were informed that (a) this questionnaire wasn't a test, (b) their answers wouldn't be graded, and (c) they didn't have to give any details about their identities. Following the questionnaire, to triangulate the results, the semi-structured interviews were held with five students (three females and two males) once at the end of the procedure. Purposive sampling was conducted for the interviews. The selection of the students was grounded on predetermined common criteria that were relevant to meeting the research aim (Patton, 2002). The students whose main score in the Pre-Intermediate Level Speaking Test changed significantly after being exposed to the drama activities were asked to take part in the interviews. They were informed about the audio-recording and asked to give informed consent right before the interviews. During the interviews, the participating students were expected to give more details regarding their perceptions about the use of drama in foreign language classrooms to triangulate the results.

2.5. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by means of a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The data from the paired samples t-test and the attitude questionnaire were analyzed by means of Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 23.0. Initially, the data were examined in terms of normality and outliers. After that, in order to compare pre-and post-scores of the students, a paired sample t-test was conducted. In order for calculating and reporting the obtained Cohen's *ds*, a spreadsheet (Thalheimer & Cook, 2002) was used. For the analysis of the interviews, pattern coding was used as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) with the aim of reducing the 'large amounts of data into a smaller number of analytic units' (p. 69). In this context, the researcher grouped the data into the categories and interpreted them in light of

the study's overall focus on students' perceptions toward the use of drama activities in foreign language classrooms. During the content analyses of the qualitative data, the researchers were supported by research experts to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the study. Initially, the interview questions were sent to two experts in the field so as to make changes and edits if necessary. Subsequent to this step, the translated transcriptions were checked by two reviewers. With regard to inter-coder reliability, the researchers were supported by another researcher from the field during code-checking and data analysis (Merriam, 2009). In this research, the reliability coefficient was found to be .89. The researchers also shared the findings with the interviewees so as to provide respondent validation (Creswell, 2012). Finally, member checking was additionally conducted with an experienced researcher for confirmation (Janesick, 2000).

3. Results

RQ. 1: To what extent did the use of drama activities affect Turkish EFL students' language performance of L2 speaking?

In order to check whether the assumptions for a t-test were validated or not, tests of normality for the relevant variables were conducted. The normality of the data was tested through the Shapiro-Wilk Test and the test indicated a normal distribution of the data at $p > .05$ level. There were no significant outliers within the data as well.

In order to explore whether the drama activities were effective on students' L2 speaking performance, the paired samples t-test was conducted. The researchers aimed to report the effect by taking both statistical and practical significance of their results into account. Based on the results of the conducted Paired Samples T-Test (Table 1), the differences between pre and post-tests were statistically significant in terms of students' language performance of speaking skills ($\alpha < .05$; Cohen's $d = 2.2$) variable. The obtained findings indicated that the researchers rejected the null hypothesis and there was statistically significant difference between the means of the paired t-tests. As for practical significance, the obtained Cohen's d (Cohen's $d = 2.2$) demonstrated that the procedure based on drama activities had a huge effect on students' language performance of speaking performance according to Cohen's criteria.

Table 1

Paired Sample t-Test

Pre-Test/ Paired Differences	T	df
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Post-Test	95% Confidence Interval of the		Std. Error Difference		Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Lower	Upper	
-6.238	0.768	0.168	-6.588	-5.888	.000

RQ. 2: What are the perceptions of Turkish EFL students regarding the use of drama in foreign language classes?

The results of the questionnaire showed (designated) that the students had a positive attitude toward the use of drama activities as clearly indicated in Table 2. According to the results, the majority of the students agreed that they felt comfortable in participating in the drama activities and indicated their serious participation in drama tasks. Besides, when the participating students were asked whether drama activities could improve their language skills, they stated that they believed the drama activities could improve their speaking and listening skills rather than reading and writing. Finally, most of them indicated that the use of drama activities affected their feelings about English lessons positively and remarked their willingness to have drama in their English lessons in the future.

Table 2

The analysis of the attitude questionnaire

Statements	SD	D	UN	A	SA
1. I like drama activities.	0(0%)	1(4.8%)	3(14.3%)	8(38.1%)	9(42.9%)
2. I think there might be problems using drama to teach English	9(42.9%)	5(23.8%)	3(14.3%)	4(19.0%)	0(0%)

3. I feel comfortable in participating in the drama activities.	1(4.8%)	1(4.8%)	2(9.5%)	8(38.1%)	9(42.9%)
4. I did the drama activities seriously.	0(0%)	2(9.5%)	1(4.8%)	9(42.9%)	9(42.9%)
5. The drama activities can improve my reading skills.	1(4.8%)	2(9.5%)	10(47.6%)	3(14.3%)	5(23.8%)
6. The drama activities can improve my writing skills.	1(4.8%)	2(9.5%)	9(42.9%)	4(19.0%)	5(23.8%)
7. The drama activities can improve my speaking skills.	1(4.8%)	0(0%)	1(4.8%)	6(28.6%)	13(61.9%)
8. The drama activities can improve my listening skills.	1(4.8%)	0(0%)	3(14.3%)	11(52.4%)	6(28.6%)
9. I think the classroom atmosphere was good during the drama activities.	1(4.8%)	0(0%)	1(4.8%)	10(47.6%)	9(42.9%)
10. I think the use of drama activities affected my feelings toward	1(4.8%)	0(0%)	3(14.3%)	8(38.1%)	9(42.9%)

English lessons

positively.

11. I like to have	1(4.8%)	0(0%)	2(9.5%)	8(38.1%)	10(47.6%)
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drama in my English lessons in the future.

To triangulate the results, the researchers conducted interviews with five of the participants (three females and two males) to obtain information about their perceptions regarding the use of drama activities in foreign language classrooms. By complementing the results obtained from the attitude questionnaire, the analysis of the interviews also revealed that generally Turkish students were pleased with the integration of the drama activities into foreign language classroom instruction. Based on the analysis of the audio-scripts of the interviews, the researchers explored the five main areas: participants' opinions, preference of course content, reactions, feelings and the obtained benefit through the integration of drama into foreign language courses.

Opinions about drama activities

The first research question aimed to find out what the participants thought about drama in foreign language classrooms. The analysis of this question revealed that all of the participants were familiar with the drama activities. All similarly indicated that they enjoyed taking part in drama activities as a classroom practice which improves their speaking skills as illustrated in the following statements:

What I know about drama activities is that my classmates and I act and have fun. I love them! We speak English during the drama activities. It improves our speaking skills (Student 1, December 13, 2018).

Drama? Let me give you an example. When we take part in a speaking class, we act. We pretend to be someone else to have fun. But at the same time, we need to speak English. This makes us learn how to speak more and more. (Student 3, December 14, 2018).

I think drama is an activity that we are expected to speak more. We act, laugh and have fun. I mean pretending to be someone else. Sometimes we are parents, bosses or animals. It helps

us not only speak English but also promote empathy towards everything (Student 5, December 15, 2018).

Preference of course content

The second question was whether learners prefer language courses in which drama is integrated and the reason why. Again, all participants except one specified that they preferred language courses which encapsulate drama activities. They indicated that taking part in drama activities makes real communication easier as it provides them a chance to practice daily interaction:

I prefer language courses that drama is integrated. For me, learning how to speak with drama is really practical. Speaking and drama go hand in hand. When I want to communicate with an English speaker, all I need to do is to remember the things I did during the drama activities (Student 1, December 13, 2018).

If asked, I prefer drama integrated speaking courses. Outside the class, we don't have a chance to use the language that we are learning in the class. Therefore, drama gives us a chance to practice speaking more and more. Thanks to our teacher, in a stress-free environment, I find a chance to speak a lot without hesitation (Student 5, December 15, 2018).

Only one of the participants indicated that the integration of drama is not necessary for a language class to teach students how to speak accurately and fluently:

It is true that thanks to drama we have more chance to speak in the class. However; I prefer the language courses that focus on language alone. I believe that we need to speak accurately and I think accuracy is underestimated during drama activities (Student 4, December 15, 2018).

Reactions towards drama activities in foreign language classrooms

When asked whether they enjoyed drama activities and the reason why, all participants indicated that they enjoyed it a lot. Nearly all of them (four out of five) gave the same reason for which they enjoyed. The answers of them revealed they had good time in the class with their friends and their teacher, and had a chance to practice English. Besides, they denoted that drama promoted their empathy towards people, events and so on. One of the participants explained her ideas as follows:

I enjoyed every moment of drama activities. They helped me to practice more and more. Every day we don't have a chance to communicate with native speakers and even if our

teacher speaks English in the class, as learners, we need to support each other. I believe that taking part in language learning activities with people who are the same age and level, you feel freer and learn more and more. You have fun, laugh or let's say you enjoy. I guess this is what drama brings into a foreign language classroom (Student 5, December 15, 2018).

Only one of the participants indicated that even if she enjoyed taking part in drama activities, she preferred more accuracy-focused courses rather than fluency-focused ones:

I enjoyed drama, but our teacher didn't correct our mistakes very often and this bothered me. After the activities, she highlighted some of our mistakes. She should have corrected them immediately. I don't know... but she didn't... (Student 4, December 15, 2018).

The obtained benefit

As for the following question, the participants were asked whether they got benefit from drama activities, if yes, what benefits they got and if not, the reason why they did not. All of the participants identified that drama activities were substantial classroom practices. However, the rationale behind their ideas displayed differences. The responses concerning the obtained benefit are as follows:

Instead of listening to the teacher all the time, filling the gaps or answering comprehension questions, I believe that as learners, we need to support each other. Thanks to drama, we have a chance to share what we know with others (Student 1, December 13, 2018).

I am fed up with dealing with boring exercises for more than 9 years. What drama has brought me is enjoyment. It proved me that learning language is not something boring but enjoyable (Student 2, December 13, 2018).

I think drama promoted the empathy that I needed to have. Sometimes we were parents, bosses and even animals. Drama helped me improve imagination. I didn't take part in such activities beforehand. However, I like it now. We are social beings. Friends are better than answer keys (Student 3, December 14, 2018).

As for the benefit, I guess it is about whether it helped me improve my English or not. For speaking, of course. But I really wonder whether it could help me improve other skills such as listening, reading and writing... (Student 4, December 15, 2018).

Is it possible to criticize such enjoyable activities? I think it promoted our self-confidence as we used to hesitate to speak in classroom. You feel like a native speaker when you are pretending to be the mom of Lisa! (Student 5, December 15, 2018).

Feelings towards drama activities

The last interview question was associated with what impact the course had on students' attitudes toward drama activities in foreign language classrooms and the reason behind their responses. All of the participating students signified that drama integrated speaking course had a positive impact. Four of them stated that they wished to have drama in their future language classes not only for speaking but also for other skills:

The activities reached their aim which was to promote speaking, empathy, friendship and so on. As I indicated beforehand, I want drama to be a part of language learning process. I want to experience it not only in speaking courses but also in others. (Student 1, December 12, 2018).

Only one of the students asserted that even if she spent good time, enjoyed a lot and had chance to practice English, she sometimes found such activities time-consuming:

We have to listen to our teacher to learn more and more. Drama makes us listen to our friends more rather than our teacher. I guess it is a bit time-consuming. Being able to speak is OK, but what for speaking accurately? (Student 4, December 15, 2018).

In conclusion, the results obtained from the Pre-Intermediate Level Speaking Test revealed that the integration of drama activities into the course content resulted in a significant difference in students' scores regarding their L2 speaking performance, as can be seen clearly from the paired sample t-test results. Also, the findings from the questionnaire reflected that students had a positive attitude towards drama activities. The majority of the students agreed with the integration of drama activities into their future language classes. This depicted that using drama activities encouraged students to take part in classroom activities during speaking courses as many participants in the interviews stated that they enjoyed taking part in drama activities, also it motivated them to speak more and more. Moreover, both the interviews and the questionnaire represented the students' positive attitude toward the utilization of drama activities in foreign language classrooms.

4. Discussion

The present study aimed to discover what influence the use of drama activities has on Turkish university pre- intermediate level EFL students' speaking skills and explore the students' perceptions regarding the use of drama activities in foreign language classrooms. The findings of the present study revealed that the integration of drama into foreign language

classroom was influential to improve learners' speaking skills and its potential for the field of L2 acquisition.

The findings of the study obtained from the Pre-Intermediate Level Speaking Test demonstrated that drama activities enhanced students' speaking skills by proving what Wessels (1987) stresses as "Drama can generate a need to speak" (p. 9). Acting out proved to make learners associate themselves with the assigned roles by pretending to be someone else. At this moment, the power of imagination triggered a great number of exchanges, which enabled learners' active engagement in communication. Thus, as Schejbal (2006) stated, drama provided learners a field for sufficient practice in acquiring speaking skill. As Maley and Duff (2005) suggested, drama promoted a natural integration of language skills and interaction in the classroom setting. Additionally, what Philips (2003) suggested as drama is a motivator which fosters speaking in an active learning environment has proved to be true. The results of the present study and the previous studies (Bang, 2003; Iampitakporn, 2002; Iamsaard & Kerdpol, 2015; Kılıç, 2009; Nuktong, 2010; Saraç, 2007; Saygılı, 2014) complemented each other as they all proved the positive effects of the drama on fostering learners' speaking skills.

In addition, the results of the study represented that the participating students had an overall positive attitude toward the integration of drama activities into foreign language instruction. These results support the findings obtained by the other researchers (Lee, 2007; Park, 2015; Yılmaz, 2016; Yun, 2007) who reported language learners' positive attitudes towards the integration of drama activities into foreign language instruction.

The in-depth interviews with the selected participants also revealed that the participating students benefitted from the integration of drama activities into foreign language instruction in terms of improving their L2 speaking performance as it enables them to express themselves better, provides them with a chance to practice speaking more, promotes their empathy, creativity and imagination. Furthermore, the participating students' reflections revealed how drama fulfils their social needs.

5. Conclusion

The present study was significant to explore what effects the drama activities have on students' L2 speaking performance and to explore the students' perceptions about the integration of drama activities into foreign language instruction. As indicated beforehand, the research has claimed that drama activities are effective teaching practices which enhance language learners' L2 speaking performance and as a result of using drama activities, the

students have a positive attitude toward the integration of drama activities into foreign language classroom instruction. The findings imply that drama activities fostering L2 speaking performance should be an integral part of every foreign language classroom instruction.

In that sense, the results of the study are expected to contribute to curriculum developers, teachers, instructors and teacher educators as the findings displayed that students' attitudes were positively affected thanks to the integration of drama activities into foreign language classroom instruction when teaching language skills, especially speaking. At this point, language teachers' knowledge of drama needs to be questioned and emphasized. Apart from this, employing different techniques will give teachers a chance to monitor their own practices since it enables them to reflect on their teaching. In other words, teachers will have a chance to test the efficacy of their teaching. Based on the experiences and reflections, teachers can regulate their teaching strategies or techniques accordingly. In addition to this, for syllabus designers, material designers and test developers, drama needs to be taken into consideration. Content of the syllabus or language assessment tests can be reshaped with the help of the integration of drama. Furthermore, material designers need to pay attention to the drama activities whilst the preparation of materials to encourage not only speaking skills but also the others. In conclusion, teaching techniques, materials and ways of assessment need to be regulated with the integration of the drama activities with the aim of promoting learners' language skills.

6. Limitations and Further Research

As for the limitations, the current study had some in terms of its content. Initially, one of the researchers was also the teacher of the present study, and her current knowledge of drama techniques was limited. Therefore, the variety of drama activities provided by the teacher was mostly relied on improvisation. Further studies can be conducted right after teachers are provided with some training embracing different types of drama activities. Additionally, the future research could also investigate the effects of drama on speaking skills of different number of students with different ages and different proficiency levels since the current study was conducted merely with pre-intermediate level preparatory class students. Finally, further research needs to be generated with the aim of exploring the ways of developing language learners' other language skills. In such studies, the efficacy of using drama activities might be investigated. However, the present study still plays a significant role in the field of English

language learning through drama activities despite these limitations; moreover, it affords a foundation for further research.

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