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FROM GRAMMAR TO DRAMA: THE IMPACT OF SOCIODRAMA ON SPEAKING PROFICIENCY IN EFL CLASSROOMS

Annotation

This paper provides a brief retrospective overview of prominent foreign language teaching methods, focusing on how speaking skills have been approached within each. Special attention is given to the integration of the sociodrama method in teaching English speaking. A small-scale classroom experiment was conducted with 30 university students at B1–B2 levels, divided into two groups: one using traditional instruction and the other employing the sociodrama method. The results suggest that the sociodrama-based class demonstrated greater student engagement, improved fluency, and more dynamic interaction. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on speaking-focused instruction and the effectiveness of experiential learning strategies.
Key words: Foreign language teaching, speaking skills, sociodrama, B1–B2 students, experiential learning, teaching methods, language acquisition.

ОТ ГРАММАТИКИ К ДРАМЕ: ВЛИЯНИЕ СОЦИОДРАМЫ НА УРОВЕНЬ ВЛАДЕНИЯ РАЗГОВОРНОЙ РЕЧЬЮ НА ЗАНЯТИЯХ ПО АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ КАК ИНОСТРАННОМУ

Аннотация

В этой статье представлен краткий ретроспективный обзор известных методов обучения иностранным языкам, с упором на то, как подходили к навыкам говорения в рамках каждого из них. Особое внимание уделяется интеграции метода социодрамы в обучение устной речи на английском языке. Был проведен небольшой эксперимент в классе с 30 студентами университетов на уровнях В1–В2, разделенными на две группы: одна использовала традиционное обучение, а другая применяла метод социодрамы. Результаты показывают, что класс, основанный на социодраме, продемонстрировал большую вовлеченность студентов, улучшенную беглость речи и более динамичное взаимодействие. Это исследование вносит вклад в продолжающийся дискурс об обучении, ориентированном на говорение, и эффективности стратегий экспериментального обучения.
Ключевые слова: Обучение иностранным языкам, навыки говорения, социодрама, студенты В1–В2, экспериментальное обучение, методы обучения, освоение языка.

GRAMMATIKADAN DRAMAGA: INGLIZ TILI CHET TILI SIFATIDA O'QITILADIGAN SINFLARDA SOTSIODRAMA USULINING OG'ZAKI NUTQ MALAKASIGA TA'SIRI

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqola xorijiy tillarni o'rgatishning mashhur usullarining qisqacha retrospektiv ko'rinishini taqdim etadi va har birida nutq qobiliyatlari qanday yondashganiga e'tibor qaratadi. Ingliz tilini o'rgatishda sotsiodrama usulini integratsiyalashga alohida e'tibor beriladi. B1-B2 darajalaridagi 30 nafar universitet talabalari bilan kichik hajmdagi sinfda tajriba o'tkazildi, ular ikki guruhga bo'lingan: biri an'anaviy ta'limdan foydalangan holda, ikkinchisi esa sotsiodrama usulidan foydalangan holda. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, sotsiodrama asosidagi sinf o'quvchilarning faolligini, ravonlikni yaxshilaganini va yanada dinamik o'zaro ta'sir ko'rsatdi. Ushbu tadqiqot nutqqa yo'naltirilgan ta'lim va tajribaviy o'rganish strategiyalarining samaradorligi bo'yicha davom etayotgan nutqqa hissa qo'shadi.
Kalit so'zlar: Chet tilini o'rgatish, nutqiy ko'nikmalar, sotsiodrama, B1–B2 talabalari, tajribaviy o'rganish, o'qitish usullari, tilni o'zlashtirish.

Introduction. Foreign language education has long been a central pillar of global academic curricula, driven by the increasing need for multilingual competence in a connected world. Over the decades, a variety of teaching methods have been developed, refined, and re-evaluated in an effort to enhance language acquisition and communicative competence. Among the four fundamental language skills — listening, speaking, reading, and writing — speaking is often considered the most challenging to teach and assess effectively.

Historically, many methodologies have prioritized grammar or reading, occasionally neglecting oral communication. However, the modern communicative approach has brought speaking to the forefront, emphasizing real-life interaction and contextual usage of language. Within this context, drama-based techniques, particularly sociodrama, have emerged as innovative tools for improving learners' speaking skills by simulating authentic social interactions.

This paper presents a retrospective review of major foreign language teaching methods with a focus on how speaking has been addressed within each. Furthermore, it reports on an experimental study comparing the effectiveness of the sociodrama method to traditional teaching approaches in enhancing English speaking abilities among university students at B1–B2 CEFR levels.

Literature Review. The evolution of foreign language teaching methods reflects broader shifts in educational philosophy and cognitive science. Several methodologies have shaped classroom practices, each with distinct implications for teaching speaking skills.

Traditional Approaches to Language Teaching

The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), dominant in the 19th and early 20th centuries, emphasized reading and writing, largely ignoring speaking. Students focused on memorizing vocabulary and translating texts, with little opportunity for oral communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

The Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) emerged in the mid-20th century, rooted in behaviorist psychology. It relied on repetition and drills, aiming to develop speaking through habit formation. While this method addressed speaking more directly than GTM, it often lacked communicative authenticity (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

By the late 20th century, the Communicative Language Teaching approach shifted the focus to real-life communication. Speaking was now viewed as a key competency. CLT encouraged student interaction, role-play, and functional language use. However, critics noted that communicative activities could sometimes lack structure or be dominated by more confident speakers (Littlewood, 2004).

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Experiential Approaches

TBLT and other experiential models further emphasized learner-centered, interactive language use. Tasks simulating real-life situations provided meaningful context for communication. These models paved the way for more creative techniques — including drama-based methods — to teach speaking effectively.

Sociodrama in Language Teaching

Sociodrama, introduced by Jacob L. Moreno in the field of psychotherapy, has been adapted for educational contexts as a tool to explore social dynamics, emotions, and roles through dramatization. Unlike simple role-play, sociodrama involves the enactment of real or imagined group scenarios where students act out social conflicts, negotiations, and experiences (Blatner, 2007).

In the context of language learning, sociodrama offers a powerful means of enhancing speaking skills:

It provides learners with authentic communicative environments.

It reduces anxiety through collaborative play and improvisation.

It supports fluency, spontaneity, and emotional expression, crucial for real-world interaction.

Several studies (Kao & O'Neill, 1998; Stinson & Freebody, 2006) demonstrate that drama-based learning improves learners' confidence, linguistic range, and willingness to speak. Sociodrama, with its emphasis on social interaction and meaning-making, aligns with the goals of CLT and TBLT but adds an emotional, reflective layer to classroom practice. Thus, integrating sociodrama into English speaking classes offers an alternative pathway to communicative competence — particularly for students at intermediate levels who need to activate and internalize previously learned structures.

Research Methodology. This study employed a quasi-experimental comparative design to investigate the effectiveness of the sociodrama method in enhancing English speaking skills compared to traditional classroom instruction.

Participants. The participants of this study were 30 university students enrolled in an English-speaking course at the B1–B2 levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). They were randomly divided into two equal groups:

Experimental Group (n = 15): Received instruction using the sociodrama method

Control Group (n = 15): Received traditional instruction focused on textbook dialogues, grammar exercises, and guided speaking tasks

All participants were between 18 and 22 years old and had similar prior English learning backgrounds, as assessed through a placement test and pre-course oral proficiency interview.

Procedure

The study was conducted over a period of four weeks, with each group receiving three 90-minute speaking-focused sessions per week. The teaching materials were aligned in terms of vocabulary and grammar, but the mode of instruction differed significantly.

Experimental Group: Sociodrama Method

Students in this group participated in structured sociodrama sessions centered on real-life themes such as:

Job interviews

Cultural misunderstandings

Group travel planning

Conflict resolution in academic settings

The sessions followed a three-stage framework:

Warm-up – Short games and emotion-focused activities to reduce anxiety and build group cohesion.

Sociodramatic enactment – Students improvised scenes based on scenarios, switching roles and reflecting on characters' perspectives.

Reflection and feedback – Group discussion and teacher-led reflection focused on language use, emotional expression, and fluency.

Control Group: Traditional Instruction

This group followed a standard communicative syllabus using a textbook and teacher-led activities. Speaking tasks included pair dialogues, short presentations, and grammar-based role-plays. Fluency and spontaneity were encouraged but not structurally embedded into the lesson format.

Data Collection Instruments

Pre- and Post-Tests: A structured oral interview assessed vocabulary range, grammatical accuracy, fluency, and coherence.

Classroom Observations: Conducted weekly using a speaking performance rubric.

Student Feedback Survey: Collected at the end of the experiment to assess student perceptions of engagement and speaking confidence.

Analysis and results. Quantitative data from pre- and post-tests were analyzed using paired sample t-tests to identify improvements within and between groups. Qualitative data from student surveys and observations were thematically analyzed to support and interpret the numerical findings. The analysis of pre- and post-test scores revealed significant differences in speaking performance between the experimental (sociodrama) and control (traditional) groups.

Pre-Test Results

At the start of the study, both groups demonstrated comparable speaking proficiency:

Experimental Group (Sociodrama): Mean score = 64.3 / 100

Control Group (Traditional): Mean score = 63.7 / 100

No statistically significant difference was found at the baseline ($p > 0.05$), confirming that both groups had similar levels of speaking ability prior to instruction.

Post-Test Results

At the end of the four-week period:

Experimental Group: Mean score = 82.5 / 100

Control Group: Mean score = 73.1 / 100

The experimental group showed significantly greater improvement (mean gain of 18.2 points) compared to the

control group (mean gain of 9.4 points). A paired t-test showed the difference in gains between the two groups was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

Observational Data

Observations conducted during lessons using a standardized rubric (fluency, confidence, interaction, and vocabulary use) indicated:

Higher levels of spontaneous speech, emotional engagement, and risk-taking in the sociodrama group.

Students in the traditional group were more hesitant and relied on memorized structures, particularly in unfamiliar speaking situations.

Student Feedback

The post-course survey revealed key contrasts:

93% of students in the sociodrama group reported increased confidence and speaking fluency. 87% found the classes more enjoyable and interactive than previous language lessons. In contrast, only 60% of students in the traditional group felt their speaking had improved significantly.

Common comments from the experimental group included:

"I felt like I was really using English, not just practicing."

"It helped me understand how to speak naturally in emotional situations."

Conclusion. The results of this study underscore the potential of sociodrama as an effective method for improving speaking skills in foreign language classrooms, particularly at the intermediate level. Compared to traditional instruction, the sociodrama-based approach led to statistically significant improvements in fluency, spontaneity, and student confidence.

Interpretation of Findings

The higher gains in the sociodrama group can be attributed to several key factors: Authentic communication: Students were immersed in real-life, emotionally rich situations, which required active negotiation of meaning.

Lower affective filters: The playful and collaborative nature of sociodrama likely reduced anxiety, creating a safe space for risk-taking in speech (Krashen, 1982).

Role-playing and empathy: Shifting perspectives in dramatized scenarios helped learners become more flexible and expressive in communication — essential elements of oral fluency.

These findings align with the work of Kao and O'Neill (1998), who highlighted drama's role in activating language in meaningful contexts, and Blatner (2007), who emphasized sociodrama's capacity for promoting emotional intelligence and communication skills.

In contrast, the traditional group, while making progress, exhibited more modest gains. The focus on form, structured dialogues, and predictable tasks limited opportunities for spontaneous use of language. This supports critiques of conventional teaching methods that prioritize accuracy over communicative competence (Littlewood, 2004).

Implications for Teaching Practice

These results suggest that sociodrama should be considered a valuable supplement or alternative to traditional methods in speaking-focused instruction. Language instructors can adopt sociodrama techniques to:

Foster real-world interaction skills

Promote learner autonomy and motivation

Address diverse speaking needs in a more inclusive, experiential way

Moreover, sociodrama is adaptable across cultural contexts and proficiency levels, making it a versatile tool for modern language classrooms.

This study was limited by its small sample size and short duration. While findings are promising, larger-scale research over a longer period is needed to assess long-term language retention and performance. Additionally, future studies could explore the impact of sociodrama on other skills such as listening, intercultural competence, or emotional intelligence. In reviewing foreign language teaching methods with a focus on speaking, it is clear that while traditional and communicative approaches have made valuable contributions, drama-based methods — and sociodrama in particular — represent a significant pedagogical advancement. By merging emotion, interaction, and linguistic challenge, sociodrama offers an engaging, impactful way to develop speaking fluency and confidence among learners.

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