

Utilizing Drama Projects in Facilitating Speaking Proficiency Among Indonesian Non-English Department Students

Titin Purwaningtyas¹, Fury Yulia Damayanti², Rohmatul 'Adzima³

¹ STKIP PGRI Ponorogo

² STKIP PGRI Ponorogo

³ SMA Ar Risalah Lirboyo Kediri

¹ titin@stkipgriponorogo.ac.id, ² fury@stkipgriponorogo.ac.id, ³ rohmatuladzima@gmail.com

Abstract: This study examines the integration of a drama project that can benefit students' speaking learning outcomes in the context of a higher education setting. Drama projects provide real-life material and a supportive learning environment that allows students to perform and interact with others as they practice the dialogue script. This study aims to (1) describe the implementation process of the drama project in the classroom and (2) examine students' motivation, creativity, and collaboration during its implementation. The participants were 35 intermediate-level students from non-English departments enrolled in an intensive English course at a private university in Surakarta. The research used a qualitative design. The researcher obtained the data through semi-structured interviews, an open-ended questionnaire, and classroom observation. The findings indicated that the drama project positively affected students' speaking performance. The project also enhanced higher levels of motivation, creativity, and collaboration throughout the learning process. Meanwhile, students' low performance is affected by several factors, including feeling shy and nervous about acting in front of the camera, limited editing skills, and time constraints. The research findings imply that integrating the drama project is beneficial for facilitating short-term intensive English programs that enhance students' university communicative competence.

Keywords: *Drama, Project-Based Learning, Speaking Proficiency, Intensive English Course*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a basic component of human life in spoken conversation. The ability to speak well is essential for many reasons, including social interaction, work, and educational needs. According to Bygate (2001), as cited in Sirisrimangkorn (2018), speaking is the process of delivering meaningful ideas. The process is complicated, as it requires specialized communicative-acquisition training, particularly in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Speaking ability gives students opportunities to actively participate in classroom group discussions by conveying their thoughts. This perspective highlights that effective teaching methods are necessary for successful speaking, which is characterized by clarity, confidence, and fluency.

The fact that several Indonesian students exhibit diminished motivation and limited enthusiasm for speaking English is unavoidable. It sometimes happens because of an uninteresting instructional strategy done by the teacher or because of worry about making mistakes from the students' perspective (Nazri 2025). Most pupils lack eagerness to learn and become increasingly fatigued because teachers rely solely on traditional teaching methods. This situation is exacerbated by students' decreasing readiness to engage in speaking activities, along with inadequate engagement with the learning material. Consequently, students encounter fewer opportunities for meaningful English-speaking practice, thereby constraining the development of their confidence and speaking abilities.

Speaking is a fundamental skill that helps students communicate effectively, particularly in English. The popularity of English as an international language has attracted students of

higher education from non-English majors to enroll the English courses beyond their main academic discipline to acquire spoken competencies. These students are expected to enhance their English-language proficiency and increase their competitiveness in the job market.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) addresses these challenges by engaging students in real-world problem-solving and the creation of extended projects with tangible outcomes. PBL represents a comprehensive, deep-learning approach that involves students in investigating authentic problems (Blumenfeld et al., 1991) and in designing projects that result in products or presentations (Patton, 2012). Thus, PBL promotes 21st-century skills (collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and technological literacy) while increasing students' engagement in the teaching and learning process.

In this context, drama serves as an effective tool within PBL, promoting student participation and enhancing communication skills through experiential learning. Drama creates a functional, interactive, and low-anxiety environment. Undoubtedly, it supports the development of speaking proficiency through discussion, collaboration, and negotiation (Ashton-Hay, 2005; Alasmari and Alshae, 2020; Sirisrimangkorn, 2018) when incorporated into PBL. Consequently, drama-based PBL is commonly used by English teachers in the teaching learning process to facilitate speaking activities. Additionally, the activity also enhances students' engagement and collaboration through active participation in drama, enabling students to develop communicative skills in practical settings.

Some previous studies have recognized that drama projects served many advantages in the context of EFL. Luo et al. (2024) mentioned that drama positively increases teacher-student language acquisition and affects academic outcomes. Here, the teacher's role is inseparable and crucial. The teacher acts as a facilitator who assesses, instructs, and supports students' activities and affects the success of the implementation of drama projects (Skiada and Georgiadou 2014).

Moreover, Drama projects offered benefits by boosting students' social life, vocabulary, pronunciation, and communication skills through practicing, memorizing, and performing the script-based practice (Effridanda, Meutia, and Susiani 2023; Widiyati and Pangesti 2022). Implementing PBL through drama activities has also been associated with increased motivation, self-esteem, critical thinking, and speaking ability (Hulse and Owens 2017; Naci and Saglamel 2013). informed that some students often experienced challenges, including limited collaboration, fear, and insecurity. These findings underscore the essential role of teachers in supporting and guiding students throughout the learning process. These findings underscore the essential role of teachers in supporting and guiding students throughout the learning process.

Speaking classes often remain teacher-centered learning, particularly at the Indonesian EFL university level nowadays. Speaking activities tend to offer limited opportunities for students to engage in and practice speaking. Despite the integration of PBL and drama projects, which are known as effective learning strategies for interactive learning, the study of conducting drama projects within the short-term intensive English program for non-English major students remains unexplored. Therefore, the present research aims to examine the extent to which drama-based projects can be implemented in short-term intensive English programs focused on students' speaking abilities in higher education, while considering the shared benefits of PBL and drama in such settings. Additionally, the research investigates students' enthusiasm, creativity, and teamwork within these programs.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in descriptive qualitative research. The aims of the research are to know the implementation of project-based learning focusing on drama to the EFL classroom of university students during their speaking class and the students' perception of their motivation, creativity, and collaboration towards the implementation of PBL in their English class.

The participants were non-English department students from a private university in Surakarta, Indonesia. This university was chosen since they conducted a short-term intensive English course for the undergraduate students who learn English as their thesis requirement. The non-English department students who joined this course were coming from different faculties, such as: the faculty of law, the faculty of economy, the faculty of education, and etc.

In addition, this university provides its students with a language centre which gives the opportunity to the students in learning foreign languages. The English course was divided into five levels: A level (beginner), B (intermediate), C (upper intermediate), D (English Proficiency course for Reading and Listening), and E (English Proficiency course for Written Structure). This research employed convenience sampling, as participants were selected based on accessibility. Besides, since one of the researchers teaches in this program, which makes it more practical, no administrative barriers were encountered during participant recruitment. A total of 35 undergraduate students, aged 19 to 21, voluntarily participated in this research and enrolled in an Intensive English program at the B level. No exclusion criteria were applied, since the aim was to capture a broad picture and perspective of learners' experience in this drama.

At the initial stage, data collection was conducted using classroom observation to understand the implementation of the drama project; this was followed by an open-ended questionnaire to measure students' perceptions, and a semi-structured interview to strengthen the data obtained from the questionnaire. Here, during the observation, one of the researchers was the English instructor who conducted the drama project in her speaking class and also served as an active observer. Another researcher served as the co-observer, helping the teacher record and take notes on the interaction between the instructor and students during the implementation of a drama project in their class. This peer observation aimed to minimize subjectivity, as one of the researchers was also the instructor. The observation was conducted over several weeks during the project's steps at each meeting. In each meeting, it took about 90 minutes to do the observation.

In the first meeting, the researchers observed the planning steps. Here, both the students and teacher's interaction were observed. The researcher focused on the activities done by the students. The second step of observation was the activities in designing the project. The third was the activities of drafting. And the last step or meeting to be observed was the activities in evaluation steps. The questionnaire was used to know the students' perception of their motivation, creativity and collaboration with their friends towards the implementation of drama projects in their speaking class.

The questionnaire consists of five items of open-ended questions. Therefore, the students answered all questions based on their real condition and perception. In addition, to strengthen the data, the researchers also conducted a semi-structured interview. There were

some questions administered by the researchers to the representatives of the class members who were joining the drama. Here, the questions concerned the students' feelings towards the implementation of the drama project. The additional questions possibly can be added due to the needs of the data that the researchers expected to know. Hence, the researchers would not only focus on the prepared questions but also they could flexibly add interview questions. In order to validate the data of qualitative research, the researchers used member checking and triangulation. The data obtained from the implementation, questionnaire, and even the interview were analysed to validate the findings. Additionally, after all data were gathered and interpreted, the researchers confirmed the data with the participants to check their validity.

The data were analyzed using the steps from Miles and Huberman (1994). There were four stages in the procedure of analysing the data. First, the researchers gathered all data on the implementation of the drama project through observation in the form of video recording and the students' perceptions of their motivation, creativity, and collaboration through a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. After all the data were gathered, the researchers coded the data and classified them into their categories before interpreting them. The data were analysed using in-vivo coding, which was derived from participants' own words to code the data chunks. Next, the researchers analysed the data and removed unnecessary data to display the research. Then, when the data were complete, the researchers started to display the data. In the last stage, the researchers drew a conclusion or verified the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Implementation Drama Project in the Speaking Class

To respond to the first aim in conducting this research, the observation had been done to know the interaction and activities of the students and the English instructor in implementing the drama project for the short-term intensive English course to the EFL students from private university, especially during their speaking class. In a brief explanation, below are the stages conducted during the implementation of the drama project.

The first stage was speculation. At the beginning, the class started with greetings, checking students' condition and attendance, then followed by explaining the objectives of the class meeting that day. After that, the instructor brainstormed the students with the video that helped the students to understand the teaching goal at the meeting. The video was about a local narrative story (folklore), named Tangkuban Perahu. She asked the students to do note-taking about the sentences or expressions used by the characters in the story. Each student was asked to write down some sentences from the scene. Then, the instructor was going to the core materials she wanted to deliver in that meeting. The material was the reported speech. The instructor's reason why she chose a video of local narrative story as the media to brainstorm with the students since it consisted of a lot of active sentences that can be used to explain about reported speech. She explained about how to form reported speech. She also explained that reports can be used in retelling stories or information to other people. It is in line with the purpose of the instructor to provide students with the video of narrative story because in the next activity the students would retell about the story that they had watched. Before doing a retelling activity, the students practiced to change active sentences to passive sentences and vice versa. The purpose was to ease the students in the retelling activity. Those activities above were conducted to prepare and lead the students with the next project that the instructor had

planned and designed. However, she had not explained the project yet. She only informed the students that they would have a project in the next meeting.

In the second stage, the students and instructors started to prepare, plan, and design the project together. At first, the instructor explained about the project that the students must accomplish, it was about a drama project. Afterward, a student group consists of 4 to 5 students. They were free to choose their group members. The students were actively asking their friends who wanted to join in their group although they were coming from different faculties. The instructor asked them to sit with their group. Then, the instructor made an agreement with the students about what story they wanted to use for their drama. The students agreed to have a local story (folklore) as what the instructor provided in the previous meeting. They also suggested modifying the story based on their creativity and also performed the drama in the form of video. Video was chosen rather than class performance since they had different schedules between English course class and their university class. They were worried when some members could not come if they did class performance. After all were set, the instructor then explained the project in brief. Firstly, the students should find the story in any sources such as: YouTube, Google, or other sources. Each group tried to find the story. The instructor here gave them suggestions about the story they had chosen. Next, they discussed the characters that they needed in the drama. While they decided the characters, they were also defining the role assigned of each member, who acted as who in the drama, who helped in editing the video, who acted as narrator, who acted as the first or second lead, etc. After the role assignment had been chosen, they started to discuss the script. They made an outline about the script in *Bahasa* and English. It was in order to make each member understand what they were going to do. Here, the instructor monitored and helped them if they met difficulties and what they did not know about the vocabularies or terms. The instructor and the students were working together during this planning. Also, in the last meeting, the instructor reminded the students to develop and discuss the script outside the class. They should bring it to the class in the next meeting.

The third is conducting the project, where the students are performing the project designed in the previous stage, discussing, collecting the problems and presenting their final products that could be in the form of presentation, performance, or even publication, etc. In this stage the students started to do the main activity of the project. Here, they consulted the script they had made in the previous meeting. The instructor had a role to give feedback, to check the expressions or sentences they used, and correct their work. After that, the students did revision with their group. Additionally, they practised some pronunciation of the words with their friends in the group and the instructor. In this stage, the students also started to discuss the video that they would make. The instructor told the students to finish their work at home to record the video of the drama based on the setting they needed. At the last meeting of this stage, the students were asked to submit their video in the next meeting. Their video would play in the last session of the project, that was in the evaluation stage that would be conducted in the next meeting.

As the final of the project, there was the evaluation stage. In this phase or stage, the students joined the meeting and brought the final video they created with their friends in the group. Then, the instructor led them to have a reflection and assessment together with their friends. They watched the video and tried to give comments and suggestions to each video in

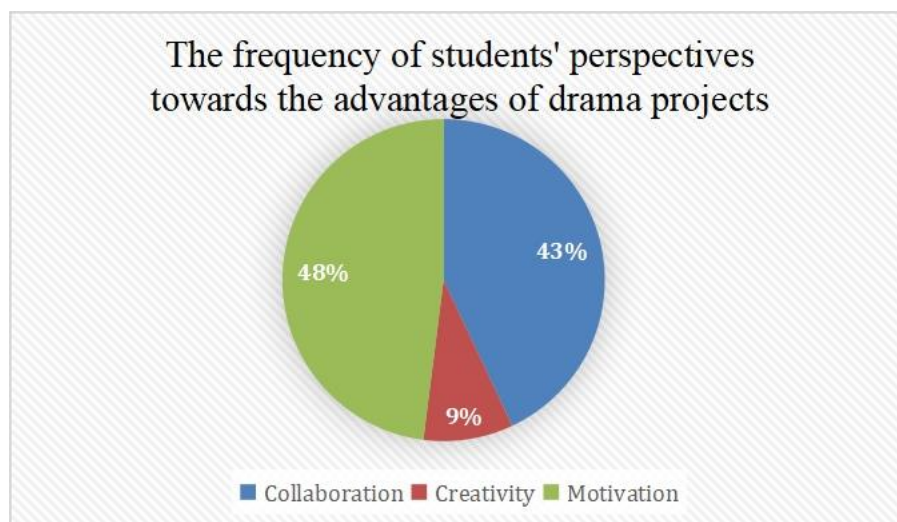
that class. The students' self and peer assessment were considered to be included in the instructor's assessment.

Those phases conducted by the instructor followed the stages that proposed by Kriwas (1999) as mentioned in Skiada and Georgiadou (2014), were: speculation, designing the project, conducting the project, and evaluation. In the initial stage the instructor made the students predict what they would do next after discussing and analysing the materials together before they had a project. Here, the instructor not only explained the prerequisite materials but also she tried to stimulate their critical thinking towards the possibilities of what happened next. In Riswandi (2018), the activity of the first stage is teachers and students speculate possibilities that will lead to the projects smoothly (Bell 2010). Bell (2010) suggested that teachers and students speculate possibilities that will guide the projects easily. After the speculation stage, the instructor and the students started to design the project. In that phase the students mingled and made a group, also divided the job descriptions to each member. Here, the instructor had a role to be a facilitator and information provider for her students. According to Riswandi (2018), the second is designing the activities of the project, belonging to arranging the organization of a project activity that includes group formation, role assigning, concerning methodology decision, information source, etc.

Furthermore, the implementation and evaluation were also conducted as the key component of this project. The implementation of the project was conducted to produce a performance and submitted in the form of video. In the next stage, the instructor and the students did an evaluation to make the project much better in the future. They did not miss this stage since it helps them to identify what weaknesses they faced or what they could improve in the future, and make sure they have achieved the learning objectives. "The assessment of activities of the participants and discussion about whether the early aims and goals have been achieved, implementation of the process, and final products" (Brinia, 2006), as cited in Fragoulis (2009). It also aimed to check the final product they have produced.

2. Analysis of Students' Motivation, Collaboration, and Creativity

To answer the second research question of this study, the researchers checked what is the students' perception toward the implementation of project-based learning focusing on drama. The drama project is beneficial for the learner's language development, especially speaking skills. The researchers analysed the data by using the questionnaire with 35 students as the participants, and semi-structure interviews to sharpen the questionnaire's result. Commonly, most learners give a positive response that the drama project enhances the collaboration, creativity, and motivation which promote their speaking skill. First, the researchers obtained the data from the questionnaire. The result showed that the most frequently benefit of the implementation of drama project is motivation (48%), followed by collaboration (43%), and the last is creativity (9%). The researchers displayed the findings of the data in the form of diagram as mentioned in the following:



First, the most frequent advantage of the use of drama projects said by most of the students was motivation (48%). Students' affective also developed through some activities of project-based learning focusing on drama. Some of them claimed that the activities in the drama project motivated them better in the next project. One of the students gave her opinion related to this drama project. She had to be more patient both in speaking English and retaking video several times to get what her team wanted. Others stated the atmosphere on the project was fun and comfortable so it let them be more confident in speaking English fluently. While other students viewed the drama project led them to speak actively in the specific situation and also, they could get the value of the story in the drama. Some affective factors exposed by the students in the questionnaire above strengthened by their answered in the interview session below:

Student 6: “.....*How to be patient, speak in English and understand each word of the script. By retaking video sometimes, we can evaluate our acting in front of the camera.*”

Student 25: “..... *this task is very enthusiastic; it can train my confidence.*”

Student 29: “.....*My confidence increased, and I can speak English fluently and play a role in the drama.* “

The drama project provided an atmosphere which was full of joy and entertainment. Conducting projects – based through drama also developed the confidence of the learners. Communicative activities in a comfortable environment could motivate them and develop their confidence in speaking. It means that the more they practice, the more they enjoy, the more confident they are. As a result, learners' motivation in learning language was increased when activities of the drama project were fun. Besides, the learners accumulated their confidence not only in practising English-speaking skills but also performing their acting talents among their friends in a group. Few students stated they were a little nervous at first when they took off the video, but after several rehearsals; however, they looked more relaxed and confident.

The implementation of the drama project also increased students' collaboration. Around 43% of students enjoyed working in a team. It could also reduce their anxiety because they can practice together with their friends. Undoubtedly, every member of the team helped each other to check and evaluate the mistakes in performing the drama. The rest of the students

answered they have a solid team so they can give the best performance. In line with the data obtained from the questionnaire, the researchers strengthen the data with the interview of the students. The students' comments below supported the data in the questionnaire:

Student 1: *".....this is my first time doing this kind of task. The collaborative activity is very challenging; I just find the difficulty in memorizing the drama script difficult but I enjoy it very much dan it is a lot of fun."*

Student 3: *".....Good team work and we can help each other, but we find it difficult to look for the setting to take the video."*

Student 6: *".....Very good team work, the difficulty in defining the place to take the video, it constrained the weather because of the rainy season."*

Moreover, based on the interview data, some students also found the difficulty to look for the setting where the drama could be conducted or how to act their characters in front of the camera. Thus, creating good teamwork was a crucial part in assisting the students to face any difficulties they found in conducting the project.

The last, the drama project implementation also enhanced students' creativity. The total of 9% of students stated that the drama project fostered them to be more creative. It can be seen from the questionnaire and was supported by their interview result. It was reported that drama projects steadily boost their creativity.

Student 7: *".....When discussing this drama project and writing the script, our group doesn't find any difficulty. All the characters of the story in the drama are played well by our group because we don't have much time to practice so we often retake the video, but it is okay."*

Student 14: *".....I am very happy; I can explore myself and entertain myself so much."*

Student 18 : *".....It's very challenging for me as the editor to edit the video, i feel frustrated but so much fun."*

Based on those reasons, it can be concluded that the implementation of project-based learning focussing on drama has highly improved learners' creativity and talents. The findings showed that students' creativity still put them in the last place. The teachers are challenged to more explore the students' creativity relating to their critical thinking. While for the students, it is suggested that they should have more collaboration to give feedback and help each other to improve their English-speaking skill. For both the teachers and students should have fairly proportions in decision-making related to the objectives to the teaching and learning process.

As mentioned by some participants, it was believed that conducting this project were able to boost their collaboration, motivation to improve their pronunciation skill needed in speaking skill, and creativity. Kannan (2019); Maley and Duff (2005); Österlind and Österlind (2018) agreed that drama project helpful for learners as effective tools in language learning such as enriching affective aspects, fostering self-awareness and others - awareness, self-esteem and confidence, and motivation through the activities. Furthermore, Fischer (2015) as cited in (Sari et al. n.d.) concludes that a project gives a chance for students to develop many skills because they work on the project themselves. Most learners are motivated and confident in speaking English. As Dougill (1987) and Taylor (2000) point out, drama can be suitable for

fundamental requirements of language learning since they can generate motivation, improve confidence, and offer contextual language learning.

It was strengthened by Sirisrimangkorn (2018) states there are many benefits of project-based learning implementation through drama in terms of collaboration. *First*, it encourages students to study and work cooperatively. *Second*, some activities such as interaction, dialogue and conciliation were beneficial elements to gain the active learning process. Some students' answers in the questionnaire revealed that they have the opportunity to interact and to practice speaking English with other members so that they were happy to join in this project. Other students also answered that it was their first time to have such a project, but they enjoyed it enough. Thus, some students stated that working in a team was enjoyable and fun. It is in line with Maley and Duff (2005) who remark that drama presents enjoyable experiences since it operates as an effective way in language learning. In addition, Park (2015) states that the drama project was practical and it was an effective instructional tool for the foreign language teacher and the grown-up learners since it gave many opportunities for creativity, autonomy, cluster work and performance. Furthermore, the use of drama projects promoted and explored the learning style where creativity and thoughts develop (Maley and Duff 2005).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that drama serves as an effective method for teaching English-speaking skills to students from non-English departments. The implementation of the drama project revealed both strengths and weaknesses. The project provides advantages for both teachers and students. For teachers, integrating drama projects can improve teaching outcomes, especially in English-speaking classes, along with students are able to socialize with their groups, increase learning motivation, improve teamwork, and enhance creativity. The positive and engaging environment of drama activities contributes to their effectiveness in developing speaking skills. On the other hand, students' affective factors, such as feeling shy, forgetting the line of the dialogue, and feeling anxious, were found and affect their performance when taking the recording. Additional obstacles included limited time for editing and disruptions due to weather conditions. The study suggests that drama projects promote meaningful and cooperative learning experiences. Moreover, students develop cultural appreciation for both Indonesian culture as the source and English as the target language.

Future research should explore alternative techniques for teaching English-speaking or other language skills to students from non-English departments. Further studies are encouraged to investigate live, in-class drama performances to better capture real-time communication and spontaneity, rather than focusing solely on video-recorded outputs. It is recommended that future researchers assess the quality of students' script writing when composing dialogue, as well as how students engage in collaborative writing in terms of language acquisition and grammatical accuracy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researchers extend their deepest appreciation to the students for the devotion and creative energy they carried to this project. Their active engagement in the drama activities provided the rich data upon which this study is constructed. This research would not have been possible without their invaluable contributions.

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