

The effect of drama method and drama-based activities on Iranian pre-intermediate EFL learners' speaking skill

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Abstract

Although Iranian language learners spend many years in language classes, many of them have problems when communicating in a foreign language and their abilities to communicate and speak in the target language is lower than their capabilities in paper and pencil tests. Apart from lack of fluency, they suffer from self-confidence and anxiety. This study was conducted to examine the benefits of drama method and drama-based activities to enhance verbal communicative skill. The question whether students' attitudes employing drama method will change about English instruction was also investigated. The experiment was conducted with 20 Iranian students whose major was not English and their proficiency levels in English language were pre-intermediate. Experimental group was instructed through drama method for 18 sessions (two 1.5 hour sessions in a week). Role-play for pre/post tests and questionnaire for learners' attitude were used through this method. The findings revealed that mean score of students in the experimental group was higher than that of the control group. Drama method and drama based activities provided the students with more occasions to speak the second language in classroom, and use language in activities which are like a real life situation and make declarative knowledge turned to procedural knowledge. Drama method enhanced students' self-confidence and decreased their anxiety. Being related to real life situations, drama based activities are more purposeful for learners, hence they motivate them more than usual. Generally speaking, it can be concluded that drama method enhances speaking ability of the foreign language learners, and learners' attitude toward drama-based teaching is positive.

Keywords: drama method; speaking skill; EFL learners; fluency; effort to communicate; comprehensibility

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1. Introduction

There are various teaching method and techniques used in language learning and teaching to provide meaningful learning by making connections to daily life activities. One of these methods is called "drama method". This method has been tested and used in different countries and by different researchers and teachers. Maybe teachers use once in a while drama activities in their classes but their use of drama method is not extended. Teachers are reluctant to use drama activities in classrooms for reasons like: not knowing how to use them, limited resources, time constraints, or fear of looking foolish (Royka, 2002). But the reason that teachers ignore the benefits of drama method and surrender to these simple fears is that they do not know the great benefits of drama method.

Considering significance of study, it should be stated that the present study is an attempt to expose language learners to a variety of drama-based tasks in order to make a connection between language features and real life communication. This study is student-centered and gives more chance for speaking and communicating to students rather than the teacher. The chance for speaking is provided through activities like role plays, improvisation, simulation, mime and play reading. The topics are more related to student's need and real-life communicative situations. Therefore, English has become the primary lingua franca of an interconnected globalized world. Iranian students need to know English at uppers degrees of their education to take part and succeed in different seminars or various other activities. Also, the world is becoming a global village in which all countries are trying to communicate with each other through English, or sometimes via other languages which may be a foreign language for one side of this connection.

Among the four major language skills, speaking is increasingly important in second/foreign language settings. However, it is very difficult for Iranian learners to communicate effectively with other people in target language. According to Hu (1996) and Weng (1996) such learners are called "dump English" and "dump English" refers to the situation when students want or need to communicate in English but they cannot perform the task successfully due to reasons such as: tension, shyness, or lack of effective communication skills in English (cited in Shen & Suwanthep, 2011). Although many learners have been taught English for many years but they are good test-takers and poor communicators. In Iran, English language is learned as a foreign language and Iranian foreign language learners rarely speak English in their daily lives.

Real communication involves ideas, emotions, feelings, appropriateness and adaptability (Chauhan, 2004). The conventional language classes hardly give learners an opportunity to use language in this manner and also develop fluency. For these reasons, it is of paramount importance for English teachers to find effective pedagogical techniques to help enhance learners' speaking abilities, among other English skills they also need to develop. Drama method and drama-based tasks provide situations and activities which let learners practice communication involving most of the factors existing in real life communication without any risk and danger. So this can result in oral communication improvement.

This study aimed at selecting activities to improve communicative competency. Moreover the present study is based on the belief that learning materials and learning practices should provide a stress-free atmosphere for learning English language and the classroom tasks aim to simulate the use of language in activities and interactions similar to those conducted in real life situation. As learner's views and attitudes about their learning are important and truly affect the process of learning and teaching, so learners' attitude were also considered in this study.

1.1 Research questions

- Does drama-based teaching method improve the oral communicative skill (fluency, comprehensibility, effort to communicate, and quality of communication) of pre-intermediate EFL learners?
- Does the experimental groups' attitude toward drama-based instruction change after the treatment?

2. Review of literature

2.1 What drama method is?

Wessels (1987, p. 7) defined drama as a normal situation in daily life "*drama is doing. Drama is being. Drama is such a normal thing. It is something that we engage in daily when we face with difficult situations*". As Courtney (1980, p.7) stated drama is "*the human process whereby imaginative thought becomes action, drama is based on internal empathy and identification, and leads to external impersonation*". Similarly, Bolton (1984) called the way of using drama for teaching as "*dramatic playing*"; while, Dewey (1963) considered drama in education as "*learning by doing*".

Wessels (1987) further emphasizing on communication skills explained drama method as one that causes genuine communication, so drama method is a way of teaching that takes into account the background, emotions, the relations, the status, the body language and other paralinguistic features. Holden (1981) held that "*drama implies to every activities that ask the students to portray him in an imaginary situation; or to portray another person in an imaginary situation*" (p. 1).

In the 1950's and 60's a distinction was developed between "*drama in education*" and "*theater activities*". Maley (1983) stated that:

"Drama is more concerned with what is happening within and between members of a group placed in dramatic situation. It is never intended for performance and rarely if ever rehearsed, since it depends on the spontaneous invention and reaction of people involved in it... drama involves the participants themselves" (cited in Guadart, 1990, p. 230).

Drama method includes different activities which can be used in class like: simulation, role play, mime, improvisation, reading plays and so on. All of these activities make an integral part which belongs to a main teaching concept, that is communicative language learning which is advocated by Morrow (1981) and Brumfit (1984) (as cited in Vasantrao, 2012).

Role play - Ladousse (1987) stated that role play takes different meanings for different people, so it is hard to define role play. It includes "*roles*" and "*plays*". Therefore, it role play is an activity which requires a person to take on a role that is real or imaginary and it involves spontaneous interaction of participants as they attempt to complete a given task.

Simulation - According to Wikipedia "*simulation is extensively used for educational purposes. Simulation is often used in the training of civilian and military personnel. This usually occurs when it is prohibitively expensive or simply too dangerous to allow trainees to use the real equipment in the real world*".

Improvisation - According to Landy (1982) improvisation is an unscripted, unrehearsed and spontaneous set of actions considering little direction by teacher including whom one is, who one is, and what one is doing there(as cited in Adebeyi & Adelabu, 2013).

Mime - According to Longman dictionary definition for "*mime*", it means using movements and gestures to express what you want to say without using words. Pantomime is a non-threatening activity for students, because it is the classmate who produces language.

Reading Plays - In the present study, reading play refers to reading them aloud and then, discussing the plays. Students sit down and read the play in front of other classmates. Since there is no moving around, students should be clear and expressive. Reading plays also imposes have less pressure on the students since they are not required to memorize lines.

2.2 *History of drama method*

Drama and theater arts dates back to ancient times when plays were dramatized inside the church, but as time passed they went out of the walls of church. The use of drama has been used over the course of history from the time of Aristotle, who believed that theatre provided people a way to release emotions, right to the beginning of the progressive movement in education, where emphasis was placed upon “*doing*” rather than memorizing (McCaslin, 1998, as cited in Moorie, 2004).

Although drama in education is more recent, other military, government and corporate business institutions have used drama as a valuable training and teaching method for many years (Taylor, 1996, as cited in Ashton-Hay, 2005). After that drama was developed by Prussian Army as a simulation technique for employing officers. The Prussian diagnosed that there is a problem with their officers and troops. They saw that the officers were qualified according to their paper and pencil tests results but in fact they lacked strategic military decision making skills in the field when they were to accompany troops; so as that, they came up with behavioral tests through simulation (Jones, 1982). Dodson (2000) claims that the early most well-known advocates of drama in L1 classroom were Heathcote and Bolton who encouraged teachers to mix theater into all their actions in the classroom. After that, the drama method came to the language classrooms.

2.3 *Drama method considering type of effect*

Bridge between use and usage - According to Anderson (1983) there are 2 types of knowledge: declarative and procedural (as cited in Murillo, 2007). Anderson described learning as the transit from what we know in theory (declarative) to what we can actually do with it (procedural) and vice versa. Drama is a method which causes a bridge between what students know and what they can actually do. Two strong advocates of drama method, Maley and Duff (1982, p.14) believed that “*students need periods in which they practice what they know without any restraint, without fear of being wrong*”. So, drama technique is interest-oriented, informal practice and yet purposeful activity which makes a stress-free situation for learning language.

Interaction - According to Vygotsky (1930) language developments depends entirely on interaction and social interaction enables individuals to construct knowledge which is meaningful to them. While, Hymes (1966) also argued that “*communicative competence must include not only the linguistic forms but also knowledge of when, how and to whom it is appropriate to use this form*” (as cited in Paulston and Bruder, 1976, p. 55). Demircioglu (2010) indicated that learners in this method act as both participant and observer who are playing a role while interacting with others in a role and create drama (as cited in Samantaray, 2014).

Student-centeredness - Drama is an effective and valuable instructional strategy because of its unique potential to create reflective, constructive and “active” learning in the classroom as well as enhancing oral skills development (Di Pietro, 1987; Donato & McCormick, 1994; Lukinsky, 1990; Miccoli, 2003; Schon, 1991; Via, 1976, as cited in Ashton-Hay, 2005). According to Jeremy Harmer (1998) good learners do not wait to be taught. Shor (1992) claimed that role play can be used to help students engage critically with course material, taking into account “*deep meanings, personal implications, and social consequences*”.

Motivation - Reece and Walker (1997) stated that motivation is a key factor in the second language learning process. They also stressed that a less able student who is highly motivated can achieve greater success than a more intelligent but not well-motivated student. Shulman (1986) expressed that learning is facilitated most effectively if students are motivated and that motivation can be enhanced through positive affective climate. Motivation is one factors considered and emphasized in of drama method and drama-based activities. According

to Dougill (1987) and Teylor (2000), drama techniques can satisfy the needs of language learners in that they create motivation, enhance confidence, and provide context in learning a language (as cited in Janudom & Wasanasomsithi, 2009). Ladousse (1987) further noted that role play is a means of increasing students' motivation, engagement, and confidence.

Anxiety and self-confidence - Anxiety is one of the influential affective variables, which prevent learners from successful learning of a foreign language. As anxiety makes learners nervous and afraid, it contributes to poor aural and oral performance. Self-confidence also can negatively affect learning when learner thinks of oneself as deficient. So, as Heyde (1979, as cited in Lee & Park, 2005) claimed, high self-confidence and lower level of anxiety can positively correlate with oral performance. According to Amato (1998) the use of drama into language teaching causes students lose themselves in the characters, plots and situations, and also leads to a decrease in anxiety levels and heightened students' self-confidence, self-esteem and awareness.

Imagination - It is claimed that trying to be in someone else's shoes and to imagine certain situations cause a physical, visual and immediate experience (Courtney, 1980). Dewey (1921, as cited in Samanataray, 2014) also stated that drama is a form of "*learning through doing*". With regard to the importance of imagination in learning he considered imagination as "*the gateway through which meanings are derived from past experiences that are carried into the present*".

Considering different styles of intelligence - Drama has the power of engaging different learning styles. It can also facilitate connections with students and motivate most of the learners. It is clear that people learn differently and at different paces because of their biological domains (Reiff, 1992)

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

Total participants in this study were 20 students at the pre intermediate level. Control group includes 10 male students, and they were taught English in Asr-e-Zaban institute in Astan-e-Ashrafie. Students in experimental group were 10 (8 female, 2 male) learners. Participants were chose through interview and oxford placement test from volunteers that were requested to take part in free English language class and were informed through advertisement in Rasht. They were randomly divided to control group and experimental group. The institute in which experimental group were instructed was Boostan institute.

3.2 Instruments

The instruments which were used to fulfill the aims of the present study include:

- Advertising leaflet, Divar application, Instagram, and Facebook.
- Oxford Placement Test (OPT). Since, it was a standard test, it has been considered as both valid and reliable.
- A test in interview-role play format as pretest and posttest was used to stimulate participants to speak in real-life situations. The quality of the participants' speech was evaluated by considering factors such as, fluency, effort to communicate, quality of communication, and comprehensibility (Bartz, 1979).
- American English file (book 2), intermediate vocabulary by B. J. Thomas.
- Camera for recording pretest, posttest.
- An attitude questioner for assessing learners' view about drama method and drama-based tasks. Lee (2007) stated that "*a pilot questionnaire was conducted in early May 2007 with a group of 12 students*

with different language abilities to test students' comprehension of the statements and the options based on the ordinal scale, and the operation was satisfactory and thus the questionnaire was accepted".

- Dramatic instruments like plays, stories, films, in order to develop classroom activities.

3.3 The pattern of drama method used in this study

As the theory of teaching, which is the basis of drama method, is communicative language teaching, the activities used in the present study were: role plays, improvisation, simulation, mime, play reading and also play writing. The resources were: text book (American English file 2, intermediate vocabulary), student made materials, movies, videos, music, pictures downloaded from internet. Four chapters of the American English file and 10 chapters of intermediate vocabulary were chosen to be taught.

The process in the class:

Review - the content learnt previous session were reviewed through pantomime or play writing. For play writing activity, students should write a small play with recent learnt words and structures, at home. So they read that in the class as a narrator. They used body language, facial expression, and different voice. For pantomime, one student pantomime meaning of a word, the second student guessed that word, the third student make a sentence with that.

Process - to introduce the new content, teacher used an interesting topic. This topic was sometimes the same as item what was in the book, a picture, a story, a listening. Sometimes teacher prepared a piece of play, a part of movie. This attracting point was not done just through showing that picture or movie. For example, about the picture, teacher showed the picture to student, asked them to guess what it was about and what was happening in that. Students guessed and said their opinions. Step by step the story formed. Then teacher determined every student act a character with its characteristics. Then dialogues were written. The next step was acting. This little play was acted.

New grammar was explained directly and clearly. Then considering the role play had been recently acted out, the dialogues and sentences were extracted, analyzed and drilled. To let students internalized the new content, teacher asked students think and imagine a new situation, write dialogues with new content and act that story. Another way for introducing new content, words, teacher told a story. Teacher used a picture she had prepared before. The story could be about a special topic or an everyday situation. Teacher emphasized or repeated the new word when she was telling the story. After that the list of new word was made. Next step for reviewing and internalizing was acting improvisation. They acted out the told story.

Evaluation - the last 10-15 minutes of class was a good time for evaluation student individually. This happened through lecture or play reading. For giving lecture, student who was had been specified for that session gave a lecture, a speech, a recipe or something like these. The students should choose a different characteristic. They could give the recipe as a professional chef or an amateur. It was a good activity which help teacher to evaluate the fluency.

Another one was play reading. Students read a play facial expression, a little body movement. The play would be from market or student made. Pronunciation was emphasized in this task. Teacher was able to evaluate the intended student individually more precisely. Considering the result of placement test and pretest, teacher could concentrate on weak points of each student to improve them. The treatment consisted of 16 sessions. At the middle of term there was midterm exam which consisted of 2 parts: paper and pencil test, practical test. Considering one lesson had been learnt in previous lessons, teacher show a picture to them and asked learners to speak about that picture as an artist. Every student was showed a different picture. The criteria for evaluation included 4 items: fluency, Effort to communicate, quality of communication, comprehensibility.

A class was held out of institution to make students try to speak and communicate in a different atmosphere. It caused there were new topics and new challenges which are more real life situation and related to student's needs. So students were taken to the Rural Museum of Guilan. Speaking Persian was forbidden from first moment till last moment of this trip. They could use body language, pantomime facial expression to communicate if they faced a problem for speaking English. Student wrote their feelings about this method of teaching foreign language the first and the last session.

Error correction was done in ways:

- When there was an error, teacher asked tried to inform student with some facial or changing her voice. If student was not able to correct his/her error, teacher asked other students to say the correct answer. It would happen middle the activity or after the activity immediately depending duration of activity and repetition of error.
- Teacher asked a student to pay attention and note the errors of students during the tasks.
- It happened in second half of term. Because teacher specified which student do that during which activity considering student's problematic points and content.

3.4 Research Design

This study is an experimental pre-test-posttest control group type in which we investigated the cause-effect relationship between drama method and drama-based activities and speaking skill. Two groups at pre-intermediate level of language proficiency were pre-tested using role-play. Then, the experimental group was taught through drama-method. After 18 sessions 9 weeks two groups acted out in a role-play posttest, which was the same test as the pre-test considering the structure but different considering the situation language learners acted in. In fact this study involves an exploratory design with quantitative data collection and analyses in which impacts of the one independent variable on the speaking skill score (dependent variable) were measured. In this experimental study the control variable was students' pre-intermediate language proficiency level. For quantitative data the scores from the experimental and control groups (dependent variable) were used to find out whether the students improved their speaking skill. After data collection and scoring we used an independent T-test in order to determine if the means of two groups were significantly different from one another. A paired T-test was also used to determine if means of each group differ significantly from pre-test and posttest. A questionnaire was used in order to investigate the experimental group students' attitude and to find out if there was any significant change before and after students underwent drama method instruction.

3.5 Pre-test and Post-test

All the 16 participants were pre-tested and post-tested. These test consisted of situations similar to everyday life situations and learners acted them on. The situations were:

- Shopping in a supermarket.
- Explaining accident as a witness.
- Reserving and booking flight and a room in hotel in a travel agency.
- Making appointment for visiting doctor.

A teacher played as the contact or participant in conversation (seller, agency manager, and police). The students' performance in the pretest was video recorded, and then it was rated according to 4 aforementioned criteria. Students knew that they were video recorded.

3.6 Data Analysis

In order to achieve response for the study’s questions the participants were asked to act a role play. This kind of role play was done as pretest and posttest. 4 elements were considered in this type of test including: fluency, effort to communicate, quality of communication, and comprehensibility each of which were categorized to 6 levels i.e. 1 to 6. The recorded role plays were reviewed by a rater. On the basis of the explanation of levels of each element, the rater scored each participant’s performance. As such, each participant had a score for each element and totally 4 scores were given to each learner. Due to the potential subjectivity of rating and in order to have more reliable data, this rating was carried out by 2 raters. If the correlations were not acceptable, the rating was done by a third rater.

3.7 Statistical Tests

Pearson product moment correlation - The first step after collecting data was to do correlation tests in order to ensure that the achieved scores are reliable. So *Pearson product moment correlation* was conducted. As correlation between scores gained by 2 raters in all 4 tests, i.e. pretests of experimental and control group and post-tests of experimental and control group, were near 1 and acceptable, the scores gained by the first rater were used for other statistical analyses.

Shapiro-Wilk test - Data distribution of control group and experimental group in pre-test and posttest was assessed through *Shapiro-Wilk* test. If the observed *P*-Value is larger than the significance level of 0.05, the data distribution would be normal.

Independent T- test - We needed to compare the difference between mean scores in each group in pre-test and also posttest to find out if there was any significance difference between them which could result from the different instructions. We must have a high enough *p*- value to be sure that such a large difference was not due to chance. To this purpose, *an independent sample T-test* was used.

Paired T-test - We needed to consider each group’s level of English language oral proficiency before and after the study. Thus, paired t-test was conducted to figure out if there was large enough *p*-value in order to ensure that the difference between experimental group pre-test and post–test mean score resulted from the treatment. Such test was conducted for testing experimental group learners’ attitude toward drama method instruction, too.

4. Results

Pearson correlation test was used in the present study for analyzing the ratings given by the two raters to the participants’ performances. (See Table 1)

Table 1

Pearson correlation between raters in pre-test and post-test

	PRE.EX.A and PRE.EX.B	POS.EX.A and POS.EX.B	POS.CON.A and POS.CON.B	PRE.CON.A and PRE.CON.B
Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.921**	.880**	.950**	.919**
N	10	10	10	10

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Scores assigned by rater A and rater B were positively correlated, Pearson’s $r(10) = .92, .88, .95, .91, p < .01$. High correlation between scores of intended groups assigned by rater A and rater B showed that one set of scores (gained from rater A or B) could be used for testing the hypothesis. Normality of data distribution of control group and experimental group in the pretest and the posttest was assessed through Shapiro-Wilk test. (See Table 2)

Table 2

Results of Shapiro-Wilk Test

	Statistic	Shapiro-Wilk <i>df</i>	Sig.
EXP.PRE	.965	10	.841
EXP.POST	.919	10	.351
CONT.PRE	.928	10	.431
CONT.POST	.907	10	.259

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for the speaking skill score of the students in control group and experimental group in pre-test and posttest.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Pre-test and Post-test Scores

	N	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation
EXP.PRE	10	11.60	.56174	1.77639
EXP.POST	10	15.60	.52068	1.64655
CONT.PRE	10	11.60	.88443	2.79682
CONT.POST	10	12.10	.95975	3.03498

The mean score of control group in the pre-test was (Mean = 11.60, SD = 2.79) which after treatment increased to (Mean 12.10, SD = 3.03). The mean score of experimental group in pre-test was (Mean = 11.60, SD = 1.77) which after treatment increased to (Mean = 15.60, SD = 1.64). So, in this study the (*r*) value was (.583). This is considered a strong effect size using Cohen's (1988) criteria of .1= small effect, .3 = medium effect, .5 = large effect. Moreover, if there was any significant difference between mean scores of each group before treatment and after treatment, so each group scores in pre- test and posttest are compared.

The paired t-test indicated that no significant difference was observed in control group's scores in pre-test and posttest, $t(9) = -.16, p < .05$, but there is significant difference in experimental group's scores $t(9) = -18.97, p < .05$. Also, if there was any significant difference between the mean scores of control group and experimental groups in pre-test and posttest, so the mean scores were compared. The independent T-test indicated that control group's scores were not significantly different (Mean = 11.60, SD = 2.79) from experimental group's scores in pre-test (Mean = 11.60, SD = 1.77), $t(9) = .00, p < .05$. Results of independent samples t-test showed no significant difference between them; it means both groups were not statistically different. However independent sample T-test showed that control group's score were highly different (Mean = 12.10, SD = 3.03) than experimental group's scores in posttest (Mean = 15.60, SD = 1.64), $t(9) = 3.20, p < .05$.

Figure 1 shows experimental and control groups' speaking skill in pretest considering each components of test. It showed that both groups' scores were not significantly different.

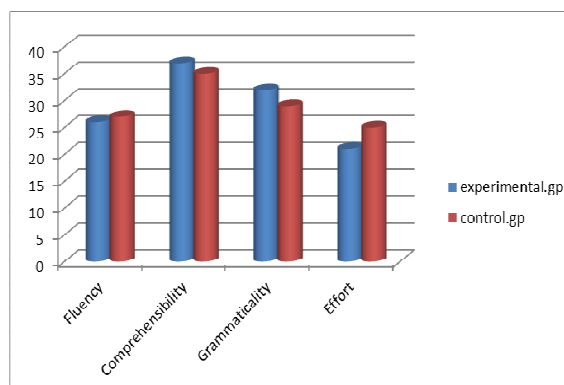


Figure 1. Comparison of Experimental and Control Groups' Speaking Skill in Pretest

Figure 2 shows experimental and control groups' speaking skill in posttest considering each components of test. It showed that both groups' scores were significantly different.

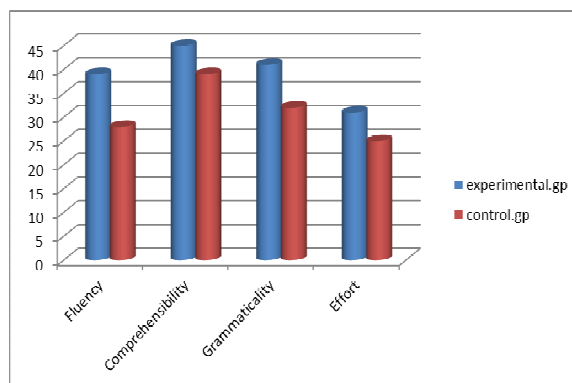


Figure 2. Comparison of Experimental and Control Groups' Speaking Skill in Post-test

Figure 3 shows that scores of experimental group considering each component were significantly different in pre-test and posttest.

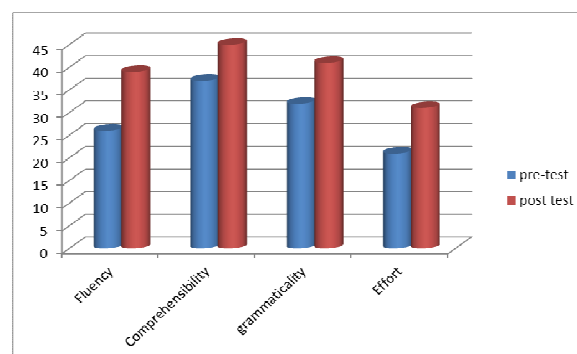


Figure 3. Comparison of Experimental Groups' Speaking Skill in Pre-test and Post-test

Figure 4 shows that scores of control group considering each component were significantly different in pre-test and posttest. In order to analyze second hypotheses, paired t-test was used. Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for experimental group students' attitude toward drama-based teaching method before and after treatment.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Experimental Group Students before and after Treatment

	Mean	N	SD	Std. Error Mean
EXP.BEFORE	35.10	10	5.06513	1.60174
EXP.AFTER	46.80	10	5.47317	1.73077

In order to test the second hypothesis, paired T-test was used. The mean scores of learners' attitude before treatment, i.e. drama based instruction, and after treatment were compared. Results of paired t-test showed that there is a significant difference in the learners' attitude toward drama method before (Mean = 35.10, SD = 5.06) and after the treatment (Mean = 46.80, SD = 5.47), $t(9) = -9.02, p < .05$. Figure 4 illustrates the learners' response to each statement in attitude questionnaire before and after drama-based instruction.

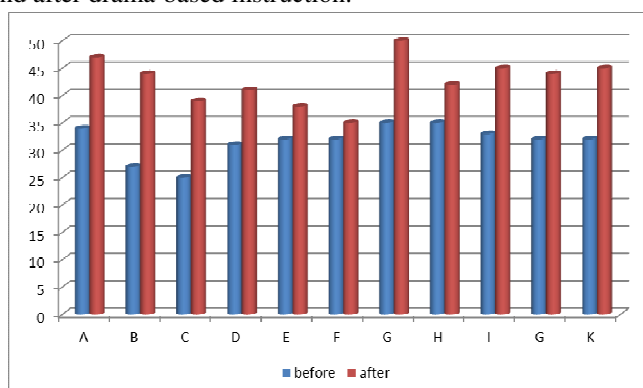


Figure 4. The Responses of Students to the Attitude Questionnaire Before and After Drama-based Instruction

5. Conclusion

Results of independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference between the two groups and an improvement in the posttest (Sig = .006). The results of paired t-test revealed that difference between pre-test and post-test in experimental is significant (Sig = .001). In order to figure out the reasons for such findings it is better to review relative claims. Drama method is useful because:

- It is an ideal way to bring skills of grammar, reading, writing, speaking, listening together where the focus is not on the form but on fluency and meaning (Dodson, 2000, p. 139);
- Drama method reinforces the need to speak (Wessels, 1987, as cited in in Janudom & Wasanasomsithi, 2009);
- It helps students to use language, (Savela, 2009, as cited in Samantaray, 2014);
- It causes students engage in second language speaking freely and creatively as well as explore options through the creative use of language (Xiao, 2003);
- It causes variety, change in pace, and opportunities for a lot of language production and also a lot of fun (Ladousse, 1991).

Although considerable progress has been made during past few decades in improving EFL learners' oral communicative competence, learners still have problems in speaking and communicating orally at universities, conferences, and in and out of language classes. Iranian EFL learners suffer from lack of exposure to English language. So, they have very few opportunities to speak English meaningfully and authentically. The present study applied drama method which consisted of activities such as role play, mime, simulation, improvisation, reading plays, and so on in order to improve Iranian EFL learners' speaking ability by providing language learners with more interaction, more self-confidence, less anxiety, more motivation, and more imagination as well as opportunity to practice meaningfully what they have learnt.

Students' attitudes toward drama-based teaching method were elicited by a questionnaire which included 11 questions. The result paired t-test showed that there was a significant difference in the attitudes of learners in the experimental group before and after the treatment (Sig = .000). The results of the present study also indicated that the students made such predictions toward this method of instruction before experiencing it. So, it indicated that most of negative points and reluctance that learners expressed about the application of drama-based teaching method are some negative predictions which resulted from some kind of fear of experiencing unknown methods and fear of tasting more challenge. However, when they were instructed through drama-based teaching method, they held a more positive attitude toward drama method and drama-based tasks by overcoming this fear.

Teachers by providing learners with more interaction, more self-confidence, less anxiety, more motivation, and more imagination as well as opportunity to practice meaningfully what they learn will most probably improve speaking skills of language learners. This study also sheds light for language learners, especially EFL learners (such as Iranian students), who have very few real life situations in which target language is spoken and suggests them to use more drama method activities in order to learn language materials. Such activities help them to make target language situations. Syllabus designers and material developers can examine EFL learners' and teachers' needs considering the use of drama-based instruction method and activities. This is because lack of materials which facilitate using this method such as, textbooks, play books, movies, and media player equipment is really felt in Iran.

6. References

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