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Afr. J. Biomed. Res. Vol. 28(2s) (February 2025); 1299-1304

Research Article

“CLT Pedagogy Through Drama-Based Online Zoom Classes”

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Abstract

The integration of drama into communicative language teaching (CLT) has gained prominence as an innovative pedagogical tool for enhancing linguistic skills, confidence, and collaboration. This study investigates the effectiveness of drama-based online Zoom classes in improving English language proficiency among secondary and higher secondary students in rural Vadodara district. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift to virtual learning, necessitating the adoption of interactive teaching methods. Drama serves as an immersive medium that enhances pronunciation, fluency, and peer collaboration in a stress-free environment, offering a creative approach to language learning. Using a mixed-methods approach, quantitative data from performance evaluations and qualitative data from interviews were analyzed. The findings revealed that students demonstrated significant improvements in oral fluency, confidence, and collaborative learning through drama-based CLT. Furthermore, the study highlights the positive impact of drama in overcoming language anxiety, enhancing cultural awareness, and promoting critical thinking. This study advocates the incorporation of virtual drama into mainstream English language teaching, suggesting that it can foster communicative competence and bridge the gap between traditional and digital learning environments.

Keywords: CLT, Drama-Based Learning, Zoom, Virtual Learning, Rural Education, Language Proficiency, Pronunciation, Collaboration, Language Anxiety, Critical Thinking, Cultural Awareness.

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Received: 26-02-2025 Accepted: 05-03-2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53555/AJBR.v28i2S.7053>

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1. Introduction

The evolving educational landscape necessitates innovative teaching methods to enhance language instruction. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift to online education, compelling educators to adopt digital platforms like Zoom for lectures and assessments. This transition highlighted the need for interactive and flexible pedagogical strategies. Language instruction, especially in communicative language teaching (CLT),

required creative approaches to maintain learner engagement. Integrating drama-based techniques fosters experiential learning, confidence, and collaboration. Recent studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of drama-based methods in improving students' speaking skills and engagement in virtual settings. For instance, Almutairi and Alfarwan (2024) found that employing drama techniques in online classes significantly enhanced EFL students' pronunciation, accuracy,

vocabulary, and fluency. Similarly, Mahant and Ghosh (2024) reported that online drama in education positively impacted second language learners' engagement and language acquisition.

Drama-based CLT offers an engaging, student-centered approach to language learning that emphasizes communication in real-world contexts, making it particularly effective in virtual classrooms. The immersive nature of drama activities helps reduce language anxiety, promoting a more confident and fluent use of the target language. Additionally, drama encourages creativity, critical thinking, and emotional expression, which are essential components for developing communicative competence. The use of Zoom, with its interactive features like breakout rooms, screen sharing, and live video performances, provides a versatile platform for conducting drama-based activities that foster peer collaboration and active participation.

This study explores the effectiveness of drama-based CLT via Zoom in enhancing oral fluency, confidence, and peer collaboration among rural secondary and higher secondary students in the Vadodara district. The research aims to assess how virtual drama can improve language proficiency in rural settings, where traditional language teaching resources and methods may be limited. Furthermore, it seeks to understand how online drama activities can bridge the gap between physical and digital classroom experiences, enabling students to develop critical language skills while overcoming the challenges of remote learning.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Role of Drama in CLT Pedagogy

Drama in language teaching serves as an effective pedagogical tool, encapsulated in the acronym ICING:

- **I - Intellectual Development:** Drama encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and cognitive engagement, deepening learners' understanding of language use in context.

- **C - Confidence Building:** It helps students overcome self-doubt by providing opportunities for self-expression, promoting fluency and ease in communication.

- **I - Individual Growth:** Drama fosters personal development, including emotional intelligence, empathy, and self-awareness, which are essential for effective communication.

- **N - Naturalistic Learning:** Drama creates authentic, real-world scenarios where students can practice language in meaningful, dynamic contexts.

- **G - Generalist Skills Enhancement:** It enhances transferable skills such as collaboration, teamwork, and conflict resolution, which are key in both academic and real-life communication.

CLT, conceptualized in the 1970s, has undergone multiple transformations. Initially, it focused on fostering communicative competence through interactive activities. Today, CLT principles are widely implemented in language instruction methodologies, influencing contemporary course materials and digital resources (Richards, 2006). The fusion of drama and

CLT offers an engaging, context-driven approach to language acquisition.

2.2 Recent Studies on Drama-Based CLT via Zoom

1. **Inderawati, A., Syahrial, E., & Supriyanto, B. (2023)** examined the enhancement of creativity and technological skills through virtual drama performances in English education using Zoom.

2. **Irugalbandara, S. (2021)** analyzed the potential of Zoom technology for enabling creativity in the drama classroom, emphasizing peer-assisted learning and group collaboration.

3. **Chen, T., & Li, Y. (2022)** investigated the impact of online drama-based language teaching on ESL learners' speaking skills.

4. **Tan, J. T., & Liew, M. S. (2021)** studied the use of Zoom for virtual role-play and drama-based activities in ESL classrooms, focusing on learners' engagement and language proficiency.

5. **Almutairi, M. T., & Alfarwan, F. (2024)** investigated the impact of online drama activities on the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' speaking and listening skills, revealing substantial improvements in fluency and pronunciation through Zoom-based drama-based methods.

6. **Mahant, S., & Ghosh, A. (2024)** explored how drama-based activities in a virtual environment improved student engagement and language acquisition in second language learners, focusing on Zoom's role in fostering interactive language use.

7. **Duarte, M. P., & Barbosa, C. (2023)** examined how Zoom's interactive features, such as breakout rooms and live performance sessions, facilitated communication and collaboration among language learners, improving their fluency and confidence in speaking.

8. **Goh, M., & Tan, S. (2022)** focused on the role of virtual drama techniques in enhancing ESL learners' vocabulary acquisition, highlighting how Zoom-based performances led to greater retention of new language structures through contextual learning.

9. **Santos, R. P., & Silva, A. F. (2021)** assessed the effectiveness of virtual drama exercises on learners' language anxiety and their ability to perform in a second language, with results indicating reduced anxiety and improved oral fluency among participants.

10. **Kumar, S., & Singh, P. (2022)** researched the integration of drama and Zoom in teaching language learners in rural areas, focusing on how drama-based teaching can bridge gaps in traditional classroom setups, improving both communication skills and learner participation.

These studies further reinforce the benefits of integrating drama-based learning in virtual language teaching, particularly via Zoom, and emphasize its positive effects on various aspects of language proficiency, student engagement, and confidence.

3. Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. This qualitative study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of drama-based Communicative Language

Teaching (CLT) through Zoom in enhancing English language skills. The participants were 30 secondary and higher secondary students from rural Vadodara, grouped by proficiency levels (beginner, intermediate, advanced).

Over 12 weeks, students participated in drama-based activities such as role-playing, script-writing, and group rehearsals using Zoom’s Breakout Rooms. The intervention focused on improving pronunciation, fluency, and confidence. Data were collected through pre- and post-intervention language assessments, student surveys, and teacher observations.

Pre-test and post-test results were analyzed to measure improvements in language proficiency, while qualitative data from surveys provided insights into student engagement, motivation, and challenges faced in virtual learning. Ethical considerations were taken into account, with informed consent obtained from both students and their guardians.

- **Participants:** The study involved secondary and higher secondary students from selected schools in the rural areas of Vadodara district. These students, aged 13-18, were enrolled in English language courses and participated in 12 weeks of drama-based online Zoom classes. The aim was to assess how drama integration could enhance English proficiency in rural settings, where access to traditional educational resources may be limited. The participants attended 4-5 hours of drama-based Zoom classes each week, engaging in activities like role-play, improvisation, and scripted performances. The study also considered the impact of online learning in rural areas with varying levels of technological access. Overall, the goal was to improve not only language skills but also student motivation, confidence, and engagement through interactive drama-based activities.

- **Data Collection:** Data collection utilized a pre- and post-test framework, including surveys, interviews, and performance evaluations. The pre-test assessed learners' language proficiency, engagement, and confidence levels. After the drama-based classes, a post-test was conducted to measure improvements. Surveys and interviews captured both quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate changes in language skills and student experiences.

- **Analysis**

- i) **Quantitative Analysis:** The quantitative data, which included performance evaluations and pre- and post-test scores, were analyzed using statistical methods to measure improvements in key areas of language proficiency, such as pronunciation, fluency, and student engagement. The tests helped to evaluate the impact of the drama-based approach on students' speaking abilities, including pronunciation accuracy and fluency. Engagement was assessed through participation rates in drama activities and student responses to surveys about their perceived motivation and involvement.

- ii) **Qualitative Analysis:** The qualitative data collected through interviews and open-ended survey questions were coded and categorized for thematic analysis. The coding process involved identifying recurring patterns and themes in the students' feedback, focusing on

aspects such as their feelings of self-confidence, perceived language improvements, and their experiences of collaboration and peer learning. Thematic analysis allowed for a deeper understanding of students' subjective experiences and provided insights into the emotional and cognitive effects of drama-based learning. Key themes were identified, such as “increased confidence,” “improved collaboration,” and “reduced language anxiety,” which provided valuable context for interpreting the quantitative findings.

By triangulating the results from both quantitative and qualitative methods, the analysis offered a comprehensive understanding of the impact of drama-based CLT on language proficiency, student engagement, and overall learning outcomes. This combined approach enabled a nuanced assessment of how drama activities in virtual environments, specifically via Zoom, fostered language development and communicative competence.

4. Drama-Based Virtual Language Teaching via Zoom

4.1 Digital Strategies for Drama-Based Language Instruction

In the digital era, platforms like Zoom have transformed the way language instruction is delivered, especially in remote learning environments. Zoom’s interactive features offer unique opportunities for drama-based English language learning. Breakout Rooms, for instance, provide smaller, more intimate spaces where students can collaborate, practice role-play, and engage in group activities. These virtual spaces allow educators to group students based on their comfort levels and language proficiency, creating a supportive environment for meaningful peer interaction.

4.2 Drama-Based Online Language Learning: A Creative Path to English Proficiency

In the journey of learning a new language, drama-based activities bring a sense of excitement and self-expression into the classroom — even in virtual settings. By combining creativity with communication, this method transforms language learning into an immersive and enjoyable experience for students.

1. Script-Based Learning

Imagine students becoming storytellers, crafting their own short scripts inspired by familiar situations or literary works. As they write and perform these scripts, they naturally expand their vocabulary, sharpen their grammar, and gain a better understanding of how language flows in real conversations. This hands-on activity empowers students to express themselves creatively while experimenting with different writing styles.

2. Character Role-Playing

What better way to learn language than by becoming someone else? Stepping into the shoes of different characters allows students to explore emotions, accents, and social interactions — all while practicing language in context. Whether playing a shopkeeper, a tourist, or a

historical figure, students gain confidence in using language naturally and with greater emotional depth. This activity also helps them grasp cultural nuances and appropriate expressions.

3. Live Performances and Rehearsals

With Zoom’s recording feature, students can watch their own performances — a powerful tool for self-assessment and growth. By rehearsing repeatedly, they fine-tune their pronunciation, fluency, and body language. Peer feedback further encourages collaboration and constructive improvement, turning every performance into a learning opportunity.

4. Pronunciation and Accent Training

Hearing their own voices through video recordings helps students identify tricky sounds and improve their phonetic accuracy. Teachers can offer personalized feedback, guiding students to speak more clearly and confidently. This activity breaks down language barriers and encourages a more natural speaking rhythm.

5. Improvised Dialogue

Spontaneous conversations are often the trickiest part of language learning — but they’re also the most essential. In unscripted role-play activities, students are pushed to think on their feet, respond quickly, and articulate their thoughts without fear of mistakes. This not only strengthens their speaking skills but also prepares them for real-life conversations.

6. Group Discussions and Debates

What would a character from a story do in a tricky situation? Group discussions based on script themes or character dilemmas encourage students to express opinions, build arguments, and listen to others. These lively conversations develop critical thinking skills and foster respectful dialogue — essential skills for both language and life.

7. Interactive Storytelling

Stories come alive when everyone plays a part. In this collaborative activity, students take turns adding a line or paragraph to a group story. This fun, pressure-free exercise encourages creativity, teamwork, and vocabulary building while helping learners structure their sentences naturally.

A Blend of Technology and Creativity

By merging digital tools like Zoom with interactive drama techniques, online language classes become more than just lessons — they become shared experiences. This approach not only improves linguistic proficiency but also builds confidence, empathy, and a love for the language. When students engage their imagination and voices, they don’t just learn English — they live it.

5. Pedagogical Benefits of Drama Integration in Virtual Language Teaching

Drama enhances language learning by providing an immersive, interactive, and experiential platform. The

benefits of integrating drama into virtual language teaching are as follows:

1. Grammatical Proficiency: Drama reinforces syntax and structure by allowing students to apply grammar rules in practical, communicative contexts. This experiential approach helps learners internalize grammatical concepts more effectively through active use in role-play and dialogue.

2. Contextual Understanding: Language learning is grounded in real-life scenarios through drama. By simulating everyday interactions, students gain a deeper understanding of how language functions in various social and cultural contexts, enhancing their ability to use the language naturally.

3. Confidence Building: Overcoming stage fear through digital performances boosts learners’ confidence. Performing in front of an audience, even virtually, allows students to take risks in speaking and using the language without the fear of making mistakes, which is crucial for developing fluency.

4. Listening and Pronunciation Skills: Exposure to varied accents and intonations through drama improves listening and pronunciation. Listening to different characters, emotions, and dialects enables learners to fine-tune their auditory skills and understand the nuances of language more effectively.

5. Cultural Awareness: Drama offers a window into different societal contexts through dramatic narratives. By engaging with diverse cultural stories and characters, students develop a broader perspective on global cultures, enhancing their intercultural communication skills and understanding.

6. Creative Thinking and Problem Solving: Drama encourages creative thinking by requiring students to adapt language use to different roles and situations. This stimulates problem-solving skills, as learners must think critically about language choices and their impact on communication.

6. Challenges and Solutions in Online Drama-Based Learning

6.1 Barriers to Effective Implementation

Despite its many benefits, implementing drama-based instruction in online settings comes with its own set of challenges. One of the biggest hurdles is ensuring active participation from all students. Many learners hesitate to perform in front of their peers due to a fear of judgment or self-consciousness. The anxiety of being watched or making mistakes can hold students back from fully engaging in drama activities, especially in virtual classrooms where faces are often magnified on screen. Technical difficulties also pose a significant barrier. Unstable internet connections, audio disruptions, or lack of familiarity with digital platforms can interrupt the flow of sessions, making it harder for students to stay focused. These challenges can create frustration and discourage students from participating actively.

Moreover, the virtual environment often limits physical expression, a crucial element of drama-based learning. Without access to dedicated spaces or props, students may struggle to engage in the full sensory experience that drama activities typically offer. This lack of

immersive elements can reduce the emotional and creative impact of the lessons, making it harder to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

Overcoming these barriers requires creating a supportive, judgment-free environment, providing technical guidance, and encouraging students to see mistakes as part of the learning process.

6.2 Strategies for Overcoming Challenges

Instructors are key in fostering an inclusive environment. Breakout Room Rehearsals and Feedback Sessions allow students to practice in smaller groups, reducing anxiety and encouraging participation. Recording practice sessions offers students the chance to analyze and improve their performances, including pronunciation and gestures. Video analysis provides targeted feedback, helping students refine their skills.

To overcome technical issues, instructors should provide clear platform tutorials and conduct pre-class testing to identify potential connectivity problems. Encouraging peer collaboration in group activities fosters a sense of community, which enhances confidence and participation. Creating a non-judgmental environment and incorporating regular check-ins or mindfulness exercises can help reduce anxiety, ensuring students feel comfortable in the virtual drama space.

7. Results and Discussion

The implementation of drama-based communicative language teaching (CLT) through Zoom showed significant improvements in students' language proficiency, confidence, and engagement. The key findings include:

□ Better Speaking Skills

With regular practice in lively, real-life situations, students improved their oral fluency and pronunciation. They learned to speak more naturally, clearly, and confidently in different conversational settings.

□ Higher Engagement and Motivation

Drama activities made learning more fun and interactive, encouraging students to participate actively. This boosted their enthusiasm and helped them stay more interested in their language learning journey.

□ Boosted Creativity and Critical Thinking

By playing different roles and imagining new scenarios, students learned to think creatively and find solutions in English. This helped them explore language in flexible and imaginative ways.

□ Better Teamwork and Peer Learning

Group activities like role plays and improvisations taught students how to collaborate, share ideas, and **learn** from each other while improving their communication and problem-solving skills.

□ Less Speaking Anxiety

Drama created a safe and supportive environment where students felt more comfortable making mistakes. This helped reduce their fear of speaking and built their confidence in using English.

□ Improved Listening Skills

Students became better listeners as they had to pay attention to their peers' performances, accents, and speech patterns. This made them more skilled at understanding conversations and responding appropriately.

These results support recent research on drama-based language teaching, highlighting its effectiveness in improving communicative competence, building confidence, and fostering a deeper, more engaged approach to language learning.

8. Conclusion and Future Research Directions

Drama-based CLT, when integrated with virtual platforms like Zoom, provides a dynamic and effective language learning experience. The fusion of drama with digital learning enhances pronunciation, fluency, and confidence, making it a valuable pedagogical tool. Through role-playing, improvisations, and live performances, students are immersed in real-world scenarios, facilitating authentic language use in a supportive environment. The flexibility of virtual platforms also allows for easy access to diverse materials and resources, further enriching the learning experience. Moving forward, incorporating drama into mainstream virtual education can transform conventional language instruction into an engaging, interactive, and impactful learning process, fostering not only linguistic skills but also critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. This approach not only engages students but also prepares them for effective communication in both personal and professional settings.

9. Recommendations for Future Research

• Comparing Traditional and Online Methods

Studying the differences between in-person and online drama-based language teaching to see which method works better for improving language skills, student participation, and overall learning outcomes.

• Long-Term Impact of Drama-Based Learning

Researching how drama activities in online classes affect students' language skills, confidence, and retention over a longer period of time.

• Use of AI and Virtual Reality

Exploring how AI tools and virtual reality can make drama-based language learning more immersive, personalized, and interactive in online classrooms.

• Student and Teacher Opinions

Understanding what students and teachers think about using drama in online language learning — what they find helpful, what challenges they face, and how it could be improved.

• Emotional and Social Development

Examining how drama activities help students develop emotional intelligence, empathy, and social skills along with language proficiency.

- **Primary Level Research:** To conduct similar studies at the primary education level to assess the impact of drama-based methods on younger learners.
- **Diverse Educational Contexts:** To expand research to include English Medium Schools alongside the Gujarati and Hindi Medium schools already studied. This will provide insights into the effectiveness of the method across different language mediums.
- **Subject Variety:** To extend research to include other subjects beyond English prose. Investigating the application of drama-based methods in teaching subjects such as science, history, and mathematics could offer valuable insights.
- **Longitudinal Studies:** To implement longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term effects of drama-based teaching on language proficiency and overall academic performance.
- **Digital Literacy:** To examine the impact of varying levels of digital literacy on the effectiveness of online drama-based teaching methods and develop strategies to address these challenges.
- **Comparative Analysis:** To conduct comparative studies to assess the effectiveness of drama-based methods against other modern teaching approaches, such as gamification or interactive simulations.

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