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Carrera de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa

**“Drama-Based Instruction as a Strategy to Enhance Oral Skills in University EFL
Students”**

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Resumen:

El objetivo de esta síntesis de investigación era determinar los efectos del uso de la instrucción basada en el teatro para mejorar las habilidades orales en un aula de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL por sus siglas en inglés). Se analizaron veintiún estudios que utilizaron la instrucción y las estrategias basadas en el teatro para enseñar las habilidades de habla. Todos los estudios fueron seleccionados de acuerdo con algunos criterios de inclusión, tales como la edad de los participantes, la lengua materna de los mismos y el nivel de inglés. Además, después de que todos los estudios se analizaran en profundidad, se establecieron seis categorías que ayudaron a comprender los efectos del uso de la instrucción basada en el teatro en el desarrollo de las habilidades orales. Los resultados mostraron muchas ventajas del uso de la instrucción basada en el teatro, ventajas como la motivación y la confianza, el trabajo en equipo, la imaginación, la nivelación de la ansiedad y la mejora del rendimiento de los estudiantes, entre otras. Sin embargo, algunos estudios también mostraron algunas desventajas de implementar este tipo de instrucción en el aula. Por último, los resultados mostraron que, en general, la instrucción basada en el teatro es una estrategia adecuada que puede ayudar a mejorar las habilidades orales de los estudiantes. Por lo cual, se recomienda seguir investigando para analizar cómo se puede utilizar la instrucción basada en el teatro en un contexto latinoamericano.

Palabras clave: Instrucción basada en el teatro. Métodos de enseñanza de ESL/EFL. Habilidades de habla. Profesores de EFL/ESL. Estrategias de teatro. Estudiantes universitarios.



Abstract:

This research synthesis aimed to determine the effects of using drama-based instruction to enhance speaking skills in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Twenty-one studies that used drama-based instruction and strategies to teach speaking skills were analyzed. All the studies were selected according to some inclusion criteria, which involved the participants' age, native language, and English Level. Additionally, all the studies were analyzed in-depth, and six categories were established to understand the effects of using drama-based instruction on speaking skills development. The results showed many advantages of using drama-based instruction, such as motivation and confidence, teamwork, imagination, leveling down anxiety, and improving students' performance, among others. However, some studies also showed some disadvantages of implementing this type of instruction in the EFL classroom. Lastly, the findings showed that overall drama-based instruction is a suitable strategy that can help students' oral skills. Further research is recommended in order to analyze how drama-based instruction can be used in a Latin-American context.

Keywords: Drama-based instruction. ESL/EFL teaching methods. Speaking skills. EFL/ESL teachers. Drama strategies. University students.



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Introduction

Learning speaking skills can be a challenge for EFL/ESL learners due to the lack of opportunities to practice English outside the classroom and face real-life situations in which they can use and practice the target language (Akyüz, & Taniş, 2020). According to Dawson and Lee (2018), drama-based pedagogy is a type of instruction that can help students practice the language while creating real-life situations that allow students to use the language in a more spontaneous way to improve speaking skills. Besides, Fauzan (2016) explains that drama-based strategies can improve classroom teamwork, which is important when learning speaking skills since students feel self-aware of their mistakes and listen to their peers for feedback. However, there is not enough information about how to use drama-based instruction in university classrooms. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze the effects of using drama-based instruction to develop speaking skills in an EFL classroom and the drama-based strategies that can be used with university students.

This research synthesis consists of six chapters. Chapter one includes the background, the statement of the problem, the rationale, the research questions, and the objectives.

The second chapter presents the theoretical framework, consisting of key concepts and definitions that help understand the terms used in this research synthesis.

The third chapter covers the literature review, in which the 21 studies used in this research synthesis are gathered and organized into two sections: positive and negative effects and advantages and disadvantages of drama-based instruction for teaching oral skills in the EFL/ESL classroom.

Chapter four is the research methodology, which describes how this research synthesis was carried out and the inclusion criteria for selecting the studies.



The fifth chapter presents the data analysis and classification of the information gathered from the 21 studies; in order to answer the research question, five categories were created.

Finally, the sixth chapter establishes the conclusions and recommendations for further research.

Chapter I: Description of the Study

1.1. Background

Due to globalization, English has become the Lingua Franca of the world; in other words, "a medium of communication between peoples of different languages" (American Heritage Dictionary, n.d.). Moreover, it is the language used for science, technology, examinations, and communication worldwide (Ahmad, 2016). Consequently, English as a foreign language (EFL) students should learn to use this language to the extent it allows them to communicate easily with others so that their opportunities to be part of this new and globalized world can be increased (Chalak & Kassain, 2010).

However, developing communicative competence in English is not easy, and EFL learners can face many different problems that can limit their progress. One of these problems is anxiety, which can affect students' performance in the classroom (Awan, Azher, Anwar & Naz 2010). Since EFL learners do not usually have enough opportunities to practice their English in a real-life context, they may not develop their speaking skills easily (Araki & Raphael, 2018); thus, learners become anxious, nervous, and insecure about using the language. As Araki and Raphael (2018) pointed out, "when university students are asked to speak spontaneously about issues and ideas, it appears they are often 'frozen' by an unfamiliar requirement of 'speaking their mind'" (p.41).

One way to overcome anxiety when learning English is by using drama as an instructional tool. Drama has been defined as a classroom activity in which the learner is engaged in using language in a situation or task in a communicative way (Cockett, 2000). For instance, Araki and Raphael (2018) showed that drama helped learners increase their speaking skills and diminish their anxiety and fear of talking. Similar results were shown in the research



developed by Atas (2015), in which twenty-four students over the age of eighteen, who were studying to become emergency medical technicians, were exposed to a 6-week course full of drama-based activities such as language games, roleplay, mime, improvisation and drama scripts in order to decrease their anxiety when speaking English. At the end of the experiment, the students showed lower anxiety levels and fewer worries about pronunciation.

One of the main drama strategies is roleplaying (Krebt, 2017), which "is one of the classroom teaching techniques that encourage students to participate actively in the process of learning English. It allows foreign language students to practice the target language in a context similar to real-life situations where stress and shyness are removed" (Tompkins, 2001, p. 1). Consequently, roleplay activities can be useful to enhance speaking skills since they allow learners to practice a "real-world language" (Rojas & Villafuerte, 2018). Magos and Politi (2008) showed that the amount of practice students have when exposed to roleplay activities made essential contributions to their knowledge and creativity. Besides, Cho (2015) carried out a study on improving students speaking skills through roleplay activities. The learners showed improvement in their speaking skills while developing other skills, such as writing and listening. Likewise, the use of strategies such as scripting, miming, and improvisation showed similar results.

On the other hand, speaking is considered "the most basic means of human communication" (Celce-Murcia, 2003, p. 103), and it is the skill that students will be judged upon most in real-life situations (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2001). In this light, drama can play an essential role in developing learners' speaking abilities (Gill, 2013) because it gives students the freedom to use the language. In fact, drama allows students to participate in active oral exchanges to improve their speaking abilities (Gill, 2013) since students can use the language



frequently to share their ideas and opinions with their peers without fear of failing, and in case they make mistakes, their classmates could correct them (Cooper, Downing & Brownell, 2018). For example, the study carried out by Pishkar, Moinzadeh, and Dabaghi (2017) showed that students improved their oral skills and confidence. The study also indicated that the fluency and accuracy of the participants increased as they used the language. Besides, a study developed by Hişmanoğlu and Çolak (2019) showed that drama is a valuable strategy to enhance speaking skills since it let the learners have direct contact with the language; besides, the students considered drama strategies enjoyable and exciting.

Nevertheless, some studies have also shown some negative effects of using drama-based instruction in the EFL classroom. For instance, the study developed by Lee and Kang (2017) showed that even though most students were comfortable using drama strategies, some students felt self-conscious and apprehensive about participating in these activities, which caused them not to improve as the others. According to Lee and Kang, the student's personality can affect their target language usage (TL). Besides, studies developed by Daif-Allah and Khan (2016), Sweeney (2017), and Cooper, Downing, and Brownell (2018) showed that sometimes there is not enough time to develop drama-based activities. The combination of these limitations can make students get discouraged from using the language when using drama.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Of the four language skills, writing, reading, speaking, and listening, speaking is perhaps the most important (Carter & Nunan, 2001; Celce-Murcia, 2001).

For English learners, mastering speaking is challenging since it needs a huge powerful effort. You cannot plan the exact words/sentences in speaking. Unlike reading or



writing, speaking happens in real-time; usually, the person we are talking to is waiting for us to speak right then. (Fauzan, 2014, p. 50)

Using strategies that improve speaking skills is important for EFL university students because they will be able to communicate with people worldwide and share their ideas and opinions, which can help them boost their future careers and get better jobs. By using drama strategies, students can improve oral skills; nevertheless, studies about drama-based instruction applied to university EFL students in Ecuador have not been found. Some studies about drama-based instruction were carried in neighboring countries such as Costa Rica, Colombia, and Chile. A research carried out by Lizasoain, Ortiz, Walper, and Yilorm (2011) in Chile showed that students who were exposed to drama and drama-based activities significantly improved their speaking skills. They also showed an increase in their motivation, self-esteem, and confidence and a decrease in negative feelings such as anxiety and frustration. However, none of these studies were carried out with university students; consequently, this research synthesis attempts to analyze the basis of drama-based instruction and the debates that have arisen in order to understand its effects, which hopefully may serve as a foundation for more research in this area at the university level.

1.3. Justification

To enhance speaking skills is one of the challenges that EFL learners face while learning the English language. One of the reasons why speaking can be hard for students seems to be a lack of real practice during the learning process since learners do not use the language as they would in real-life interaction (Kirk, 2018). Another reason might be that sometimes learners are afraid of saying something wrong or mispronouncing a word and being laughed at for it (Hosni, 2014). Several studies conducted by many authors show that drama-based



strategies can cause positive effects in developing oral skills, as well as to improve confidence and decrease fear of failure (Cockett, 2000; Celce-Murcia, 2001; Atas, 2015; Cho, 2015; Dyson, Chang, Chen, Hsiung, Tseng & Chang, 2016; Gill, 2016)

The importance of using a drama-based approach to enhance oral skills is undeniable (Kurniasih, 2011). The appearance of the drama-based pedagogy changed the perception of teaching speaking worldwide because this approach has had a significant impact on English teaching (Dawson & Lee, 2018). However, teachers are still using the traditional methods such as the Grammar-Translation method (GTM), where communication is reduced to listening to the teacher speak and using the mother tongue (MT) instead of the target language (TL) (Mart, 2013). Consequently, students cannot develop, increase, or improve the oral skills needed to communicate (Aqel, 2013). For example, Calle, Calle, Argudo, Moscoso, Smith, and Cabrera (2012) developed a study in Ecuador to determine why students who graduate from public high schools had a low English level. They conclude that teachers still use traditional methods that focus on the teacher rather than the learners and that GTM is a fundamental part of education.

According to Wessels (1991), "drama in education uses the same tools employed by actors in the theatre. However, while in the theatre, everything is contrived for the benefit of the audience, in-classroom everything is contrived for the learners' benefit" (p. 9). Therefore, the main objective of drama activities is to improve the learning process, especially in developing oral communication skills. Moreover, the constant repetition of dialogues allows students to learn those word structures, which will help them create common-sense phrases for a conversation. Studies also show that students exposed to this type of strategy reduced their anxiety levels, fear of failure, and frustration and, at the same time, improved their motivation and creativity (Atas, 2015).



In Ecuador, the research about drama-based instruction is almost non-existent. Teachers keep using traditional methods, and studies have shown that even though teachers know and understand the importance of speaking skills, they do not have enough time to help students develop this skill because they give more importance to grammar, writing, and reading than to speaking (Hosni, 2014). If university students may improve speaking skills by using drama-based instruction and thus, broaden their opportunities to study abroad and have access to jobs where speaking English is a request, it is imperative to further the research on this area of study.

1.4. Research Question

What are the effects of using drama-based instruction to develop speaking skills in an EFL classroom?

1.5. Objectives

1.5.1. General Objective

To analyze the effects of using a drama-based approach to teach oral skills in an EFL classroom.

1.5.2. Specific Objectives

To determine the advantages and disadvantages of using drama to develop speaking skills in an EFL classroom.

To identify the different drama strategies that can be used in an EFL classroom to enhance speaking skills.

Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

It is essential to provide a conceptual basis for this research synthesis; therefore, this theoretical framework includes some key concepts (such as speaking skills, drama, and drama-based instruction) as well as some explanations of theories related to drama instruction (such as communicative approach, affective filter hypothesis, zone of proximal development (ZPD), drama-based pedagogy, and multiple intelligences).

2.1. Definitions

2.1.1. *Speaking Skills*

Ur (1996) considered speaking skills the most important of all the four basic language skills. Speaking is an interactive process that requires the involvement of various participants, unlike listening, reading, or writing (Noll, 2006). The ability to speak involves the production of utterances and the process of constructing meanings and statements and receiving and processing information with confidence (Brown, 1994). Using English for oral communication can be complicated for EFL learners since they should be aware of the participants' context, purpose, and relationship (Ashour, 2014). According to Fauzan (2016), mastering speaking represents a problem for learners due to "reluctance, hesitation, fear of making mistakes, or lack of adequate vocabulary" (p. 50). In order to enhance oral skills, there are six categories that EFL students should manage: pronunciation, comprehension, fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and grammar (Hişmanoğlu & Çolak, 2019).



2.1.1.1. Pronunciation. Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994) defined pronunciation in two senses; the first sense refers to "the production and reception of sounds of speech" while the second sense refers to context, how people use the language regarding acts of speaking (p. 3). Pronunciation is also related to adaptation since the native-speaker community may be more interested in helping a person trying to adapt to their culture than a person who does not show efforts to sound native (Dalton & Seidlhofer, 1994). However, the authors explained that the native-speaker community could also consider nonnative pronunciation offensive since it could be considered an appropriation of their culture.

2.1.1.2. Comprehension. According to Education and Training (2020), comprehension involves understanding oral, written, and/or visual work. It is an active process that

- a) enables learners to construct and extract meaning from the text
- b) allows for problem-solving and thought processes.
- c) It is a cultural and intellectual practice that is much more than a semantic element of meaning creation.

Comprehension is the capacity to understand a conversation and/or speech at a standard speed in "world-like situations" (Ashour, 2014, p. 39). In other words, comprehension refers to understanding what someone says or asks and how the speaker answers.

2.1.1.3. Fluency. Fluency usually refers to the proficiency that a learner can achieve when speaking, reading, or writing. Ashour (2014) defines fluency as the ability to converse with others, much more than the ability to read, write, or comprehend oral language. Koponen and Riggensbach (2000) described fluency as how effortlessly a speaker delivers a message with eloquence, continuity, and automaticity. In order to be fluent, a speaker should be able to use and comprehend the language effortlessly. An important remark is that fluency is not related to accent or pronunciation; instead, it is related to vocabulary.

2.1.1.4. Accuracy. According to TeachingEnglish (n.d.), accuracy refers to "how correct learners' use of the language system is, including their use of grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary" (para, 1). It is important to differentiate between fluency and accuracy. For example, students can be fluent in explaining something clearly; however, they cannot be accurate if they commit many mistakes while trying to communicate. Accuracy is related to grammar rules and vocabulary.

2.1.1.5. Vocabulary. Vocabulary can be considered the basis of speech. Education and Training (2019) defined vocabulary as "the knowledge of words, including their structure (morphology), use (grammar), meanings (semantics), and links to other words (word/semantic relationships)" (para. 1). In other words, vocabulary refers to the terms that a learner knows, understands, and uses while speaking, listening, reading, or writing. There are two aspects that a student should learn about vocabulary: recognition and meaning. Recognition refers to the ability to identify a word in a conversation, while meaning is related to the ability to use that word. Thus, learning vocabulary is useful to develop comprehension and fluency (Ashour, 2014).

2.1.1.6. Grammar. Chung and Pullum (n.d) defined grammar as "the collection of principles defining how to put together a sentence" (para. 1). Grammar refers to the structures and word order that an utterance has to follow to make sense. Although a learner can communicate with others without knowing or using the grammar rules, it is important to learn to speak and write correctly (Salazar, 2006).

2.1.2. Drama/ Educational Drama

Educational drama can be defined as an activity that requires students to represent themselves or others in an imaginary situation (Holden, 1981). ED supports students to interact in the TL, creating an environment of involvement and communication in which students are

actively engaged and willing to participate (Kao & O'Neill, 1988). ED seeks meaningful learning and a "construction of knowledge" (Brennan & Pearce, 2009, p. 2). Based on this concept, one can say that educational drama is a tool that allows students to be active participants in the learning process. It allows students to experience the language rather than merely learn about it (Tanner & Chugg, 2018).

2.1.3. Drama-based learning strategies (DBLS)

Drama in Education (also known as Creative Dramatics/Drama) was defined by the American Association of Theatre for Youth as "an improvisational, non-exhibition, process-centered form of drama in which participants are guided by a leader to imagine, enact and reflect upon human experience" (Davis & Behm, 1978, as cited in Anderberg & Kratochvil, 2005, para. 3). In other words, drama-based learning strategies can be defined as teaching instruction in which students are able to learn based on interaction with their peers.

In an EFL classroom, acquiring communicative competence can be a crucial goal; consequently, EFL teachers should use different strategies to achieve it. If the DBLS are correctly selected, students' behavior and participation can be positively affected. As Kao and O'Neill (1988) said, "students become active participants, and they interact between them, creating a world of social roles" (p.4).

Additionally, drama strategies consider different students' learning styles since they involve multiple intelligences (Ashton-Hay, 2005; Dawson & Lee, 2018). Drama-based strategies provide many tools that students can use to improve and practice their English more naturally. "Drama-based activities enable learners to experiment with new roles and ideas and use language in action and not in a mere grammar-based lesson in which communication is not real" (Neelands, 1984, p. 6). Applying DBLS in an EFL classroom can help students



contextualize, consolidate language, and develop their communication skills since drama strategies allow learners to express their ideas, opinions, and beliefs without fear of failure (Tseng, 2015).

Drama-based strategies should be carefully selected by the educator, considering their students' needs and personalities. Nevertheless, it is important to consider the topic/subject that is going to be taught. Many strategies can be used in drama-based instruction; however, after analyzing different studies, the following four strategies were the most used and popular:

2.1.3.1. Role-play. According to Glover (2014), role-play is a strategy that allows learners to "explore realistic situations by interacting with other people in a managed way in order to develop experience and try out different strategies in a supported environment" (para. 1). By using this strategy, learners can create a conversation where they can be themselves or adopt a character. It can also increase English use and help learners reduce the fear of public speaking. Additionally, it might decrease the learner's negative feelings towards learning a language if it is well-executed. Role-plays are compatible with the communication approach allows students to communicate in different contexts with different social roles (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

2.1.3.2. Scripting/scriptwriting. "Scriptwriting is a strategy in which students produce the text using their own words to dramatize" (Hişmanoğlu & Çolak, 2019, p.192).

It is also "a sequence of events and actions related to specific situations" (TeachingEnglish, n.d. para. 1); in fact, a script follows a specific topic and an order of events. Scripting is a controlled instruction strategy in which the teacher gives students a topic to create their scripts or provides a script made by herself/himself (Araki & Raphael, 2018). Creating scripts is related to writing skills; however, reading them aloud or performing them can also improve speaking skills. Role-play and scripting can be combined into one strategy that is *scripted role-*



play, which can be used as a *full-scripted role-play*, a *semi-scripted role-play*, and a *non-scripted role-play* (Cho, 2015, p. 39). Teachers can choose a strategy and method according to their students' level and the topic they want to cover.

2.1.3.3. Miming. The term mime can be defined as a "non-verbal representation of an idea or story through gesture, bodily movement, and expression" (Dougill, 1987, p. 13). Miming, also known as a miming game, is "one of the most effective guessing games," in which the teacher gives the word, phrase, or sentence to the students, and they have to come forward and mime that word for their classmates to guess. Even though the student acting does not talk, their classmates have to use the vocabulary they know to interact with one other (Anggiras, 2019). Miming is a strategy that can be used to learn and practice speaking for all English levels. Nevertheless, teachers should be aware that shy students can feel uncomfortable using this strategy (Hişmanoğlu & Çolak, 2019).

2.1.3.4. Improvisation. Improvisation is a spontaneous action performed without a script or preparation but with minimum guidance from the teacher (Aryn, 2021). With this strategy, students can use their creativity to perform in front of their classmates. Improvisation helps students overcome their insecurities when using the language while improving their self-confidence and speaking skills. However, teachers should plan improvisation activities in advance to avoid chaos in the classroom (Araki & Raphael, 2018).

2.1.4. Strategies

2.1.4.1. Learning strategies. Rubin (1975) defined learning strategies as "the techniques or devices that a learner may use to acquire knowledge" (p.43). Nevertheless, Rubin's definition was considered too broad, which caused a debate and conflict between various authors. In the years following Rubin's definition, terms like "learning behaviors"

(Wesche, 1979; Politzer & McGroarty, 1985; Weinstein and Mayer, 1983), learning tactics (Seliger, 1984), and learning techniques (Stern, 1992) were considered synonyms of strategy. Oxford (1992) defined language learning strategies as specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students (often intentionally) use to improve their progress in developing L2 skills. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language.

She also classified learning strategies into six categories (memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies), which later were divided into two main categories (direct and indirect strategies) (Griffiths, 2004). However, even though some authors accepted the definition given by Oxford (1992), not all agreed with her. Dörnyei and Skehan (2003) considered that the term strategy should be replaced by *self-regulation*, which was supported by Tseng, Dörnyei, and Schmitt (2006), who proposed the creation of a new approach centered in the "learners' innate self-regulatory capacity" (p. 79). Griffiths and Cansiz (2015) pointed out that *learning strategy* is a concept that refuses to be dismissed, but at the same time, is refusing to be defined.

Finally, there is no complete agreement on what strategies are exactly; how many strategies exist; how they should be defined, demarcated, and categorized; and whether it is- or ever will be possible to create a real, scientifically validated hierarchy of strategies (Oxford, 1990, p. 67). Nevertheless, for this research synthesis, the definition given by Oxford (1992) will be used since it is the most actual definition.

2.1.4.2. Teaching strategies (TS). According to Issac (2010), a teaching strategy can be considered a plan for a lesson in which the teacher includes the objectives, structure, and activities to develop in the classroom. *Teaching strategies* can be considered thoughtful activities used to give students proper stimulus; additionally, these strategies allow teachers to



identify and recognize the different variety of learning strategies that can be used in the EFL classroom to improve the English level source. "Educators need to look critically at any instructional strategy before they choose to implement it, weighing both pros and cons of the strategy" (University of Nebraska, n.d., para. 13)

2.1.5. Learning techniques

A learning technique can be defined as how something is done or the way someone carries out a particular task to accomplish specific actions or procedures (Hyacinth, 1990). Learning techniques help learners "get out of themselves, and into situations and roles," allowing them to practice the target language (Hyacinth, 1990, p. 231). According to Heldenbrand (2003), students can excel in their language learning by using drama learning techniques after experiencing drama. Heldenbrand created a list of reasons and benefits of using drama learning techniques:

Drama is a relaxed and informal way to learn English.

Drama helps to learn new vocabulary and expressions.

Drama helps to improve pronunciation and intonation.

Drama builds confidence in the learner's speaking skills.

Drama motivates students.

Drama builds a better understanding of the culture.

Drama removes the focus from the English textbook.

Drama involves the whole person as a total physical activity (Heldenbrand, 2003, pp. 29-32).

Based on the definitions given to *strategy* and *technique*, it is important to notice that some authors consider them as synonyms, while others consider them as two different terms.



2.2 Theories

2.2.1. *Drama-Based Pedagogy (DBP)*

The term drama-based pedagogy emerged "to describe a specific approach that used drama techniques to teach" (Dawson & Lee, 2018, p. 1). Drama in education began during the new education movement developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Some twentieth-century versions of this approach were "The Dramatic Method of Teaching, The Play Way, Child Play, and Creative Drama" (Even, 2013, pp. 303-304). This pedagogy applies one of the basic elements of drama: dialogue. The creation and interpretation of a dialogue help develop the productive skills: writing and speaking. In drama-based pedagogy, learners can act and react to the situations that the teacher presents. This kind of training is important because it "provides contexts for multiple language encounters and encourages authentic dialogue between teachers and students" (Kao & O'Neill, 1988, p.1). Also, the more EFL learners use the TL, the most comfortable they will be talking with others. In addition, if students can improve their confidence while speaking, they will reflect fewer negative attitudes towards the language and decreased nervousness and anxiety levels (Atas, 2015).

DBP uses both active and dramatic approaches to achieve its main goal, improving language learning. Dawson and Lee (2018) said that drama allows students to use their creativity and imagination, breaking the belief that the teacher is the only one participating in the learning process. Instead, both students and teachers are active participants of it.

2.2.2. *Communicative Approach: Communicative Competence (CC)*

In 1965, "educators and linguists who had grown dissatisfied with the Audiolingual and Grammar Translation Method of foreign language instruction" developed the communicative approach (CA) (Demirezen, 2011). Hymes (1972) published the theory of communicative



competence as an answer to Chomsky's linguistic competence. Communicative competence is defined as the ability to use the language effectively in different contexts and use it correctly (Tarvin, 2014). Hymes (1972) explained CC through four lenses:

- *Possibility*: Refers to whether it is possible to achieve grammatically correct statements.
- *Feasibility*: Refers to the ability to understand and process multiple clauses.
- *Appropriateness*: Refers to meet the cultural expectations, i.e., if the interaction is culturally appropriate.
- *Occurrence*: Refers to "whether the statement is made or not" (Tarvin, 2014, p. 4)

"A statement might be grammatically correct, mentally feasible, and culturally appropriate; but if it is interrupted by another action or the speaker is too timid to speak [...], the communication does not occur" (Tarvin, 2014, p. 4). To acquire communicative competence, learners need to use the language and overcome their limitations. Likewise, they also need to understand the culture of those English-speaking countries. By using drama-based instruction, students might achieve this goal and increase their knowledge of slang words, which may help them expand their vocabulary and sound more natural while speaking to native English speakers.

2.2.3. Affective Filter Hypothesis (AFH)

The affective filter is an "invisible psychological filter that can either facilitate or hinder language production in a second language" (Vasquez, n.d., para. 1). Krashen (1982) proposed five hypotheses related to second language acquisition; one of them is the "affective filter hypothesis which states how affective factors relate to the second language acquisition process"



(Krashen, 1982, p. 30). This hypothesis explained the relationship between EFL learners' emotions and the percentage of success or failure of acquiring the TL. According to Krashen (1982), many variables can affect the affective filter; however, all these variables can be grouped into three categories:

Motivation: ESL learners with high motivation tend to do better while learning a second language.

Self-confidence: ESL learners with self-confidence tend to do better while learning a second language.

Anxiety: ESL learners with low anxiety levels tend to do better while learning a second language.

If the affective filter is high, learners face more problems, limitations and are more reluctant to acquire the second language. Conversely, students become more confident to take risks, commit mistakes, and answer questions when it is low.

2.2.4. Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The sociocultural theory introduced by Lev Vygotsky in 1978 explains that children learn better by interacting with others. Vygotsky introduced the term zone of proximal development (ZPD), which "is the difference between what a person can achieve when acting alone and what the same person can accomplish when acting with support from someone else and/or cultural artifacts" (Lantolf, 2000, p.17). The idea of ZPD is that individuals learn better when working with others. Through this association, they can "learn and internalize new concepts" (Shabani, Khatib & Ebadi, 2010, p. 238), allowing them to achieve education's main goal. The term proximal refers to something close and how assistance complements the learner's competence (Cole & Cole, 2001).



According to Dawson and Lee (2018), to help students work in their ZPD, it is necessary to describe, analyze, and relate information (DAR). The DAR process supports students' critical thinking and reflection, resulting in a better understanding of concepts. In addition, students interact with their peers and teacher in drama-based instruction, improving their speaking skills. Hişmanoğlu and Çolak (2019) stated that when students work together, they start to be more self-critical about their own mistakes when using the language, which helps them improve their knowledge; consequently, students will be able to create a connection between the new knowledge and their prior knowledge.

2.2.5. Multiple Intelligences

According to Gardner (1983), there are eight types of intelligence that human beings can have: musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic. Gardner's theory has been popular among educators and researchers since he proposed it in his book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* in 1983 (Roper & Davis, 2000). Moreover, by using drama-based strategies, it is possible to see the integration of various types of intelligence, as Ashton-Hay (2005) explained that drama incorporates various intelligences which help learners to improve their learning.

Drama incorporates *verbal-linguistic* learning using language, scripts, vocabulary and reading. *Intrapersonal* learning relates to the feelings and emotions involved in drama, characterizations, and how we respond as individuals. In contrast, *interpersonal* learning comes from working with others to create a scene or role play. *Kinesthetic* learning activates the physical self, the body, and doing actions. As students recreate images, pictures, visual



details, staging, movement, location, and direction with drama, their *spatial* learning skills are developed. *Logical* learning follows rational patterns, cause and effect relationships. (p. 3)

Based on that, the connection between the multiple intelligences and the use of drama-based strategies becomes undeniable. The classroom becomes a safe space for learners to develop their personalities and attitudes. Since drama-based instruction involves teamwork, visual learning, listening, speaking, and writing, students can feel more motivated to use the TL (Taneri & Akduman, 2014).

In this section, several concepts, terms, and theories related to drama-based instruction have been analyzed. This analysis serves as a foundation to understand the next chapter, which is about the 21 studies which are the basis of this research synthesis.

Chapter III: Literature Review

This literature review aims to provide an overview of relevant research studies on drama-based instruction with a special focus on the development of oral skills to understand the debates that have been generated in this area of knowledge. This literature review is organized into the following sections: positive and negative effects and advantages and disadvantages of drama-based instruction for teaching oral skills in the EFL/ESL classroom.

3.1. Positive and negative effects of using drama-based instruction for teaching oral skills in the EFL/ESL classroom

Drama-based instruction can positively and negatively affect EFL/ESL learners; therefore, this section will be subdivided into positive and negative effects. In both subsections, the research studies have been classified into the effect of drama-based instruction on oral skills, students' emotions while speaking, and students' teamwork while using oral skills since these topics have been recurrent in the studies.

3.1.1. Positive effects of drama-based instruction

In recent years, many studies related to drama-based instruction have been conducted (Araki & Raphael, 2018; Cooper, Downing & Brownell, 2018; Tanner & Chugg, 2018; Rahman & Maarof, 2018; Sirisrimangkorn, 2018; Akyüz & Taniş, 2020). According to these studies, drama can have positive effects on the development of oral skills in EFL students.

3.1.1.1. Positive Effects of Drama on Oral Skills. According to Galante and Thomson (2017), when beginning to learn a new language, most learners want to develop an advanced speaking ability which can be difficult if they do not receive proper instruction.

The study that these authors conducted took place in São Paulo, Brazil, and was aimed to show if EFL learners exposed to drama instruction programs showed a greater gain in oral skills



when compared to EFL learners in a non-drama program. Twenty-four students with a B1 level participated in this research. They were later divided into two groups (control and experimental). Both classes were taught for four months, 2 hours a week, with a total of 74 hours of instruction. The experimental group was exposed to drama strategies (roleplay, simulation, improvisation, and problem-solving games) in addition to regular EFL instruction in order to provide learners with "linguistic and situational elements from the assigned textbook" (p. 9). On the other hand, the control group used the same materials as the experimental group; however, they were not exposed to drama strategies but to group work. At the end of the four months, both groups had to prepare a final oral presentation. Galante and Thomson (2017) established three categories (fluency, comprehensibility, and accent) to evaluate the speaking skills of both groups. The results showed that the experimental group increased their oral abilities since they displayed greater oral skills when presenting the final project. In contrast, the control group showed less fluency and faced more difficulties expressing their ideas in the final presentation. Moreover, a study carried out by Pishkar, Moinzadeh, and Dabaghi (2017), which also had two groups (experimental and control), showed similar results. Students who belonged to the treatment group enhanced oral skills and fluency while using the TL; they showed performance improvement, fluent runs, speed fluency, and improved pronunciation. In contrast, students who belonged to the control group did not show a noticeable increase or improvement in their use of the TL, indicating that drama-based instruction can help students enhance oral skills.

Similarly, Daif-Allah and Khan (2016) conducted a study that aimed to help English major students to improve their oral skills and maximize their confidence while using the FL. This study took place in Saudi Arabia with 35 university students of the 4th semester at the English language program of Buraydah Community College, Qassim University. The study



lasted 15 weeks, with a weekly session of 15 minutes in which students were exposed to an open discussion strategy. At the beginning of the process, the students were divided into five groups that changed every week, and each group had an EFL tutor who explained to the students what they had to do. Since the strategies used in this study were improvisation and discussion/debate, the students were motivated to participate in the group discussion, and the tutor moved among the five groups asking questions and helping students who did not understand what they had to do. At the end of the session, the students had a 15-minute talk as a whole group to share their opinions and personal experiences related to the topic. Three instruments were developed to measure the students' improvement: a survey questionnaire, a semi-structured interview, and a pre-post speaking test. The study results revealed that the majority of students showed a great interest "to develop their English-speaking abilities in a way that enables them to communicate with people in real life" (Daif-Allah & Khan, 2016, p. 118). The study also showed that working in small groups helped students be participative and reduced the tension that larger groups can cause.

Additionally, studies carried out by Donnery (2014), Cho (2015), Sinambela and Simanjuntak (2017), Sirisrimangkorn (2018), and Akyüz, and Taniş (2020), showed similar results. Students who were exposed to drama-based instruction and strategies showed an improvement in their speaking skills. The authors also highlighted the importance of drama-based instruction to improve oral skills since it is a strategy that allows students to practice and use the foreign language enjoyably and interestingly.



3.1.1.2. Positive Effects of Drama on Students' Emotions. According to Mind (2021), "anxiety is what we feel when we are worried, tense, or afraid – particularly about things that are about to happen, or which we think could happen in the future" (para.4).

Anxiety should be given attention in classrooms since it can affect students' performance. A study undertaken by Araki and Raphael (2018) with Japanese university students showed that when learners were asked to use English, they became extremely anxious. At the beginning of the study, the participants were introduced to the drama-based approach and how the authors planned to use it in the EFL classroom. EFL students explained they felt insecure due to the lack of opportunities to practice the language in real-life contexts, which made them nervous when using the language. However, the mixture of strategies, such as scripted roleplays, dramatizations, language games, simulations, and scenarios, allowed them to use the language more confidently and spontaneously. At the end of this study, students showed a boost in their confidence and a decrease in negative feelings (nervousness, anxiety). Besides, students increased their use of the English language when talking about their feelings, ideas, and concerns; however, not all students felt comfortable using drama-based instruction because some students were shy, so they did not like talking in front of others or being exposed to games.

Similar results were found in the study carried out by Lee and Kang (2017), which showed that drama-based activities leveled down students' anxiety. The study revealed that communication apprehension and test anxiety strongly decreased after being exposed to drama-based instruction. Students perceived that the drama-based strategies relieved their anxiety while speaking English in front of other students and people in general. Some students' motivation for the subject increased because they enjoyed the drama activities. They claimed



to be more motivated to participate in the class. Furthermore, Cooper, Downing, and Brownell (2018) conducted a study to analyze what activities caused students' anxiety to increase and decrease and what classroom activities can be used to decrease anxiety levels. The interviews showed that students felt more anxious when speaking in front of others since they were insecure about pronunciation and accent. Also, students felt more comfortable while using drama-based strategies (debate) since they allowed them to talk about different topics without following a script.

Lastly, Dyson et al. (2016) carried out a study that aimed to show the effects of drama strategies (roleplay) on students' creativity and emotions. The study was applied to Taiwanese college students divided into two groups (control and experimental). The results of the study showed that students who were exposed to drama-based strategies showed higher creativity potential, emotional creativity, and oral skills. Furthermore, the students included in the experimental group showed faster reactions and answers when the instructor presented them with various situations and activities; similarly, they revealed more creative solutions when problem-solving activities were presented.

3.1.1.3. Positive Effects of Drama on Students' Teamwork. “Teamwork relies on individuals working together in a cooperative environment to achieve common team goals by sharing knowledge and skills” (Tarricone & Luca, 2002, p. 641). Nurhayati (2016) carried out a study with 65 students of the fourth semester of the English department at the State Islamic Institute of Tulungagung-Indonesia, which was conducted for four months. The study aimed to improve students speaking and writing skills using drama-based strategies (discussion, roleplay, scripting, and miming). At the beginning of the study, the teacher separated the class into different groups; each group was assigned a theme (romance, comedy, horror, folklore,



legend) to create a script. When students finished writing them, they showed the scripts to the teacher to check mistakes and discuss the story. The results of the study showed that drama-based instruction could help students to improve their speaking, writing, and interpersonal skills; since it allowed them to interact with their classmates, and due to that interaction, students were able to share their knowledge about the themes and creative ideas to create the scripts.

Moreover, the study carried out by Lee and Kang (2017) showed similar results. The study was conducted on 27 female students enrolled in the Drama in English Language Teaching (ELT) class at one university in Seoul, South Korea. The following process was used with the participants: a) students were divided into groups, b) each group had to create a script or scenario using a drama strategy (miming, scripted roleplay, improvisation, simulation, debating, or situational drama), c) at the end of the session, four groups were chosen to present their script to the class. The results showed that the students increased their speaking abilities while practicing with their classmates. In addition, students showed lower anxiety levels when speaking in public. When asked about their improvement, the students explained that interacting with their peers helped them gain confidence with the language.

Krebt (2017), Nguyen (2017), and Rahman and Maarof (2018) considered that one of the characteristics and advantages of using drama-based instruction was that students were led to interact with their classmates. Social interaction can be a helpful tool when practicing speaking skills; since it can allow students to correct each other without feeling nervous or anxious. Most of the students enjoyed working in groups and using English with their classmates.

3.1.2. Negative effects of drama-based instruction

Some authors (Gill, 2013; Daif-Allah & Khan, 2016; Dyson et al., 2016; Lee & Kang, 2017; Sweeney, 2017; Cooper, Downing & Brownell, 2018) found some negative outcomes of using drama-based instruction.

3.1.2.1. Negative Effects of Drama on Oral Skills. Even though Lee and Kang (2017) showed overall positive results, their study also had some negative effects on a small group of students. According to the authors, students' personalities can play an important role when learning oral skills through drama-based instruction. Shy students presented some resistance (apprehension) to using drama strategies, which limited the amount of practice when speaking English.

Moreover, authors like Gill (2013) and Sweeney (2017) showed similar results. Introverted students who were forced to use the language did not improve their oral skills as much as their extroverted and non-shy classmates who enjoyed learning the language through drama instruction.

3.1.2.2. Negative Effects of Drama on Students' Emotions. As stated before, students' personalities played an important role when using drama-based instruction. According to Dyson et al. (2016), shy students tended to be more nervous and anxious when interacting and sharing their ideas since they were worried about mispronouncing some words. Furthermore, Cooper, Downing, and Brownell (2018) carried out a study with 52 college students. The study showed many positive outcomes; however, it also showed a negative effect of drama instruction. Some students got anxious just thinking about talking and interacting with others, which caused them to not participate in classes. Consequently, they did not achieve the same English level as their classmates. Cooper, Downing, and Brownell (2018) concluded that it is

important to check if the strategies are well planned and suitable for the students' level before using drama-based instruction.

3.1.2.3. Negative Effects of Drama on Students' Teamwork. The study carried out by Daif-Allah and Khan (2016), with 35 students at the English Language Program of Buraydah Community College, showed that when working in groups, students got distracted and talked about things that were not related to the language lesson using their mother tongue, instead of English. Moreover, the authors also considered that students with shy personalities could get discouraged while working in groups. This discouragement can be due to any classmate laughing at one of their answers or because they compared their oral skills with the ones of other students. Sweeny (2017) showed that some participants felt pressured while working in groups because they considered that their actions affected the whole group and that if they committed any mistake, the group's grades might be affected.

3.2. Advantages and disadvantages of using drama-based instruction to teach oral skills on the EFL/ESL classroom

3.2.1. Advantages

According to Cho (2015), using drama-based strategies in the EFL classroom could help students acquire certain components that might help them to improve their oral skills. These components are fluency, pronunciation, comprehension, accuracy, vocabulary, and grammar (Pishkar, Moinzadeh & Dabaghi, 2017; Lee & Kang, 2017; Sinambela & Simanjuntak, 2017; Sweeney, 2017; Krebt, 2017; Araki & Raphael, 2018; Cooper, Downing & Brownell, 2018; Tanner & Chugg, 2018; Hişmanoğlu & Çolak, 2019)

The study carried out by Akyüz and Taniş (2020) with 21 students in an English preparatory program at a Turkish university aimed to show how drama-based instruction can



affect students' speaking abilities. At the beginning of the study, the authors explained to students what drama-based instruction was and how they planned to incorporate it in the English program; likewise, the researchers analyzed the participants' speaking midterm exams in order to assess their English oral skills. During the six weeks that the study lasted, the students were exposed to an improvisation strategy once a week. This strategy helped students to improve their fluency and pronunciation when talking. By the end of the study, Akyüz and Taniş (2020) interviewed the participants to analyze their improvement and opinions about drama instruction. The students considered that drama allowed them to practice and use oral language, which caused them to improve their fluency when talking. They also considered that drama instruction helped them increase their vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation since they had to talk with their classmates and help each other. Moreover, Tanner and Chugg (2018) conducted a similar study with 26 students enrolled in an English Language program at a university in the Western United States. Nonetheless, Tanner and Chugg (2018) divided the students into two groups (experimental and control). The students in the experimental group received information about the strategies (scripting, roleplay, and dialogue) they were going to use during the 14 weeks the study lasted, while the control group did not receive any instruction related to drama strategies. At the end of the study, the results showed that the experimental group's speaking skills were higher than the control group. The researchers considered that the students in the experimental group were able to express their ideas and opinions clearer and faster than the control group; additionally, the ones in the experimental group were active participants in the activities that the researchers planned using drama-based strategies. Thus, Tanner and Chugg (2018) recommended using drama instruction to teach university and older learners to help them practice the language and acquire fluency and accuracy when speaking.



Similar studies that showed the advantages of including drama-based instruction in the EFL/ESL classroom are the ones developed by Pishkar, Moinzadeh, and Dabaghi (2017), Lee and Kang (2017), and Sinambela and Simanjuntak (2017). According to Sinambela and Simanjuntak (2017), students exposed to drama-based strategies (drills and roleplay) improved their comprehension abilities since they understood complicated questions and answered them quickly. The results also showed that the students' answers were logical, followed the grammar rules, included new vocabulary, and their pronunciation was easier to understand than at the beginning of the study. Likewise, Sirisrimangkorn (2018) conducted a study with 23 students who were involved in the course "Learning English through Drama" (p. 17). The participants were exposed to a pre/post-test, an interview, and a project group in which they had to use a drama strategy. The project consisted of performing Shakespeare's play "Romeo and Juliet," but participants had to create the script and perform it using their creativity. The results of the study showed that students' fluency improved since they had to learn the dialogues to sound as natural as possible. Consequently, the students became more confident and encouraged to use the language than they were at the beginning of the project. Lastly, the participants of the study claimed that they felt more confident for speaking English since they learned new words, which improved their vocabulary knowledge, and through the project, they were able to be involved in their knowledge construction.

3.2.2 Disadvantages

After analyzing various studies, authors like Gill (2013), Cho (2015), Daif-Allah and Khan (2016), Araki and Raphael (2018), Cooper, Downing, and Brownell (2018), among others, considered the *time* or rather the lack of it as an important disadvantage for drama-based instruction.



For instance, Cho (2015) considered that the lack of time could severely affect larger classes or groups since some students could not have enough time to talk. In other words, if there are many students in one classroom, not all of them can have the same time to talk, which can limit their speaking skills improvement. Similarly, Daif-Allah and Khan (2016) considered that the students spent time getting in groups at the beginning of the session, which took at least 10 minutes from the 50 that the session lasted. In this context, Daif-Allah and Khan also explained that most English courses do not have enough class hours (1 or 2) per week, which limited the amount of practice that students could have. Araki and Raphael (2018) and Cooper, Downing, and Brownell (2018) explained that it is important to consider time as a disadvantage when using drama-based instruction; however, they also explained that the teacher needs to analyze the class in advance in order to find the best instruction and strategies for the learners.

In this chapter, several studies were analyzed and reviewed in order to show the existing research and debates in the area of drama-based instruction in the EFL classroom. The next chapter will be about the methodology applied to select the studies for analysis.



Chapter IV: Research Methodology

A research synthesis is “the systematic secondary review of accumulated primary research studies” (Norris & Ortega, 2006, p. 4). For this research synthesis, a comprehensive search was conducted in order to find the appropriate sources. Thus, online databases such as Google Scholar, Research Gate, ERIC, and ProQuest Educational Journals were used to find meaningful data related to drama-based instruction.

To find appropriate sources, the following search criteria was used. First, the articles needed to focus on the development of oral skills using drama-based instruction. Second, the studies had to be carried out with EFL/ESL university students or students with a B1 level or higher, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Third, the studies had to be empirical. Fourth, the articles needed to be published since 2010 in order to have updated information that can help show how drama-based instruction has been used in recent years. Fifth, the articles had to be published in academic databases and sources. Sixth, conference presentations, dissertations, and unpublished research papers were excluded in order to make the present research synthesis more reliable.

The key terms of this research synthesis were the following: 1. Drama-based instruction, 2. ESL/EFL teaching methods 3. Speaking skills, 4. EFL/ESL teachers, and 5. Drama strategies. For this research synthesis, qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods studies were considered. The sources are digital due to the difficulty of finding physical studies in the area within our context.

The following were the Journals used in this research synthesis: *European Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics*, *English Language Teaching*, *ResearchGate*, *International Journal of Applied Research*, *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, *Teaching English for Academic Purposes*, *Turkish English*



Education Association, Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, Journal of College Teaching & Learning (TLC), Maskana, Scenario, International Journal of STEM Education, English Language Teaching, Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, Tesol Quarterly, EFL Journal, Novitas-ROYAL, International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL), Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, Journal of Language Teaching and Research, Journal of English Teaching, Estudios pedagógicos (Valdivia), RELC Journal, Journal of Advances in English Language Teaching, Journal of Education and Training Studies, International Journal of Research in English Education, Journal of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics, International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies, ISCE: Journal of Innovative Studies on Character and Education, Korean Language Society, Acuity: Journal of English Language Pedagogy, Literature, and Culture, Journal of Faculty of Education Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University, American Journal of Applied Sciences, Pune Research Scholar an International Multidisciplinary Journal, and The Language Learning Journal.



Chapter V: Data Analysis

In this section, 21 studies were selected, classified, and analyzed to answer the study research question: What are the effects of using drama-based instruction to develop speaking skills in an EFL classroom? The following five categories were established for the analysis: *positive effects of drama-based instruction, negative effects of drama-based instruction, enhancing speaking skills, drama-based strategies, and location.*

5.1. Positive Effects of Drama-Based Instruction

Since the category positive effects is too broad, it was divided into seven subcategories: *motivation and confidence, leveling down anxiety, students' involvement, students' performance, speaking development, teamwork, imagination and creativity, and language skills development.*



Table 1

The Positive Effects of Drama-Based Instruction in the EFL Classroom

Authors	Positive Effects							
	Motivation and confidence	Leveling down anxiety	Ss Involvement	Ss Performance	Speaking development	Teamwork	Imagination and creativity	Other language skills development
Akyüz & Taniş (2020)	x					x	x	x
Araki & Raphael (2018)		x		x	x	x	x	x
Cho (2015)	x				x	x		x
Cooper, Downing & Brownell (2018)	x	x				x		x
Daif-Allah & Khan (2016)	x	x	x		x	x		x
Donnery (2014)	x				x	x	x	x
Dyson, Chang, Chen, Hsiung, Tseng, Chien, & Chang (2016)					x		x	
Fauzan (2016)				x		x	x	x
Gill (2013)	x	x		x				x
Krebt (2017)	x	x		x		x		x
Lee & Kang (2017)	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Nguyen & Do (2017)	x	x	x			x	x	x
Nurhayati (2016)	x	x		x		x	x	x
Pishkar, Moinzadeh & Dabaghi (2017)	x			x				x
Rahman & Maarof (2018)		x				x	x	x
Reed, Aguiar & Seong (2014)	x	x		x			x	x
Sinambela & Simanjuntak (2017)			x	x		x		x
Sirisrimangkorn (2018)	x						x	x
Sweeney (2017)					x			x
Tanner & Chugg (2018)		x					x	x
Total	13 (62%)	11(52%)	4 (19%)	9 (43%)	6 (29%)	13 (62%)	12 (57%)	21 (100%)

Note. N=21



Table 1 shows that most of the studies have found similar positive effects in their findings. As it can be seen, *motivation and confidence*, and *teamwork* are the most common positive effects since they are reported in 13 out of the 21 studies, followed by *imagination and creativity*, which were reported in 12 studies, *leveling down anxiety* in 11 studies, and *students' performance* in 9 studies.

In fact, thirteen studies (62%) show that drama-based instruction can help to improve students' *motivation and confidence* while using English. Authors such as Cho (2015), Nurhayati (2016), Krebt (2017), Lee and Kang (2017), and Cooper, Downing, and Brownell (2018) consider drama-based instruction as a strategy that helps students to improve their motivation and confidence towards speaking English because it encourages learners to practice and use the language. Furthermore, Donnery (2014), Daif-Allah and Khan (2016), Pishkar, Moinzadeh and Dabaghi (2017), Nguyen and Do (2017), and Akyüz and Taniş (2020) show that drama-based instruction challenges students to use the language to talk and interact with their peers which increases their confidence while using the language.

Similarly, thirteen studies also show that *teamwork* can be a positive outcome of using drama-based instruction and strategies. These two categories (motivation and confidence, and teamwork) are interconnected. When learners interact with their peers, they feel more confident to use the language, and negative feelings diminish. This decrease of negative feelings allows them to enjoy using the language (Donnery, 2014; Fauzan, 2016; Nurhayati, 2016; Nguyen & Do, 2017; Sinambela & Simanjuntak, 2017). In addition, Akyüz and Taniş (2020) stated that when students work together, they become more self-critical about their own mistakes, which allows them to become active participants in their learning and improve their confidence to correct mistakes. In the study developed by Donnery (2014), students admitted that working in



groups helped them to "enjoy learning" and to improve their speaking and communication abilities (p.50). Some authors agreed that interactive and cooperative activities allow students to use the target language (TL), and as a result, students were able to improve their speaking skills (Donnery, 2014; Fauzan, 2016; Nurhayati, 2016; Nguyen & Do, 2017; Lee & Kang, 2017; Sinambela & Simanjuntak, 2017; Akyüz & Taniş, 2020). Moreover, Krebt (2017) showed that students were able to see their classroom as a community in which they had to support each other; therefore, this author considered this interaction "the best basis for all learning" (p. 868).

On the other hand, imagination and creativity in education involve "using an existing set of knowledge or skills in a particular subject or context to experiment with new possibilities in the pursuit of valued outcomes" (theeducationhub, n.d., para. 1). In Table 1, 12 out of 21 studies reported imagination and creativity as a positive result of using drama-based instruction and strategies in the EFL classroom. Authors such as Donnery (2014), Dyson et al. (2016), Araki and Raphael (2018), Rahman and Maarof (2018), and Akyüz and Taniş (2020) indicated that students exposed to drama instruction were able to put themselves into imaginary situations and to become different characters, which allowed them to improve their vocabulary when using the language. Additionally, Reed, Aguiar, and Seong (2014) noticed that the increase of creative activities such as improvisation could help students become active participants in the classroom and improve their self-consciousness when talking to their classmates.

Leveling down anxiety was found in 11 out of 21 studies. As it was stated in chapter 2 (theoretical framework), anxiety represents a limitation when using the FL. However, some authors found that drama-based instruction can help students to overcome this limitation. For instance, Araki and Raphael (2018) found that by using drama strategies (role-play), students



felt comfortable and encouraged to talk in English, which helped them to improve their speaking skills. Similarly, Daif-Allah and Khan (2016), Krebt (2017), Lee and Kang (2017), Nguyen and Do (2017), and Tanner and Chugg (2018) observed that drama instruction allows the use of stress-free tasks that can reduce anxiety and increase confidence in EFL learners since students are able to improvise and use their own words to share their ideas and thoughts with their classmates.

Moreover, *students' performance* refers to students' participation, individual work, and group activities and projects (Gill, 2013; Fauzan, 2016; Nurhayati, 2016; Lee & Kang, 2017; Krebt, 2017). According to Pishkar, Moinzandeh, and Dabaghi (2017), students who belonged to the experimental group and were exposed to drama-based instruction showed improvements in speaking performance; in other words, the students were able to create their own dialogues, help each other to correct mistakes, and speak more fluently than the students from the control group. Similarly, Sinambela and Simanjuntak (2017) noticed that students used more English in the EFL classroom after using drama-based instruction, which the authors considered a positive effect of using drama

Lastly, even though the main focus of this research synthesis is speaking skills, the category *other language skills development* refers to how language skills such as writing, listening, and reading can be improved by using drama-based instruction and strategies. In the case of *writing skills*, authors such as Donnery (2014), Daif-Allah and Khan (2016), Nurhayati (2016), Nguyen and Do (2017), Araki and Raphael (2018), and Akyüz and Taniş (2020) noticed that students who were exposed to drama strategies such as role-playing and scripting were able to improve their writing skills as well as their oral skills. They noticed that students could practice and improve their writing skills by creating their own dialogues and scripts. Similarly,



the students improved their *reading skills* when they had to read and understand the dialogues in front of the class. Moreover, Reed, Aguiar, and Seong (2014), Krebt (2017), Sirisrimangkorn (2018), and Akyüz and Taniş (2020) found that students can improve their *listening skills* when they interact with their classmates since they have to pay attention to what others are saying in order to answer correctly and follow the activity.

5.2. Negative Effects of Drama-Based Instruction

The subcategories *lack of enthusiasm, shyness and nervousness, lack of time, and discouragement* summarize the negative effects of drama-based instruction reported in some studies.

Table 2

Negative Effects of Drama-Based Instruction in the EFL Classroom

Authors	Negative Effects			
	Lack of enthusiasm	Shyness and nervousness	Lack of time	Discouragement
Araki & Raphael (2018)	x	x	x	
Cho (2015)	x		x	
Cooper, Downing & Brownell (2018)		x		x
Daif-Allah & Khan (2016)			x	x
Dyson, Chang, Chen, Hsiung, Tseng, Chien, & Chang (2016)		x		
Gill (2013)	x	x	x	
Lee & Kang (2017)	x	x		
Sweeney (2017)	x			x
Total	5 (63%)	5 (63%)	4(50%)	3 (38%)

Note. N=8

Table 2 shows that *lack of enthusiasm* and *shyness and nervousness* can be the main limitations when using drama-based instruction and strategies. Gill (2013) and Lee and Kang



(2017) addressed these limitations in their studies. The authors claimed that even though drama-based instruction is an exciting way of developing classes, students' personalities and attitudes towards the activities may vary. For example, in the study conducted by Lee and Kang (2017), some students were not interested in group work because of their personalities, which caused them not to participate in the activities. As a result, their English did not improve as the authors expected. In addition, Cooper, Downing, and Brownell (2018) claimed that students' shyness and nervousness about talking in front of others caused them to "freeze" and refuse to speak. In other cases, this nervousness may be caused by apprehension to commit mistakes in front of their classmates.

Additionally, Cho (2015), Daif-Allah and Khan (2016), Dyson et al. (2016), and Araki and Raphael (2018) considered *lack of time* as a negative outcome of using drama-based instruction. The authors explained that using drama-based instruction and strategies can take more time than planned since the students need to have a clear idea of how drama works before starting the instruction. Moreover, Araki and Raphael (2018) noticed that students work better when they do not feel pressured about the time since they are able to share more information and become active participants in the class; therefore, the authors considered that in order to use drama-based instruction in the EFL classroom, the students need more English hours than the ones they have.

Discouragement is another negative effect found in 3 out of 8 studies and refers to how students can be negatively affected while using drama-based instruction. For example, Daif-Allah and Khan (2016), Sweeney (2017), and Cooper, Downing, and Brownell (2018) noticed that some students who did not have the same language proficiency level as their classmates



felt disappointed and discouraged when participating in the activities, which caused them not to improve as much as their classmates did.

Regardless of the negative effects of drama instruction, most authors agree that overall drama-based instruction can help students improve their speaking skills as long as there is enough time to do the activities.

5.3. Enhancing Speaking Skills

According to Hişmanoğlu and Çolak (2019), the main components of the speaking skill are "*pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar*" (p.188); therefore, these components were used as categories for the analysis as well as *comprehension, accuracy, and fluency* because they were found in the majority of articles (see Table 3).

Table 3

Speaking Skills

<i>Author</i>	<i>Speaking Skills</i>					
	<i>Fluency</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>Comprehension</i>	<i>Accuracy</i>	<i>Vocabulary</i>	<i>Grammar</i>
Akyüz & Taniş (2020)	<i>x</i>			<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	
Araki & Raphael (2018)	<i>x</i>		<i>X</i>		<i>x</i>	
Cho (2015)	<i>x</i>		<i>X</i>		<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>
Cooper, Downing & Brownell (2018)				<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	
Daif-Allah & Khan (2016)	<i>x</i>		<i>X</i>		<i>x</i>	
Donnery (2014)	<i>x</i>				<i>x</i>	
Dyson, Chang, Chen, Hsiung, Tseng, & Chang (2016)	<i>x</i>		<i>X</i>			
Fauzan (2016)			<i>X</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>



Galante & Thomson (2017)	x		x			
Gill (2013)		x				
Krebt (2017)	x	x	x	x	x	
Lee & Kang (2017)	x		x			x
Nguyen & Do (2017)		x			x	x
Nurhayati (2016)	x	x				x
Pishkar, Moinzadeh & Dabaghi (2017)	x	x		x		
Rahman & Maarof (2018)		x			x	x
Reed, Aguiar & Seong (2014)			x			x
Sinambela & Simanjuntak (2017)	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sweeney (2017)	x		x			x
Sirisrimangkorn (2018)	x				x	
Tanner & Chugg (2018)	x				x	x
Total:	15 (71%)	7 (33%)	11 (52%)	10 (48%)	15 (71%)	5 (24%)

Note. N=21

The results of Table 3 show that the subcategories *fluency* and *vocabulary* are the most common components developed when using drama-based instruction, followed by *comprehension* found in 11 out of 21 studies and *accuracy* in 10 studies.

According to Pishkar, Moinzadeh, and Dabaghi (2017), "one of the most challenging difficulties in learning a foreign language is finding ways to improve one's oral fluency" (p. 69). However, 15 studies (71%) show that students can achieve or increase their fluency after using drama-based instruction because they become interested in the activities and are willing to participate in the class using the TL, which helps them to practice their oral skills (Lee and



Kang, 2017). Daif-Allah and Khan (2016) showed that students could increase their fluency, gain knowledge in various topics, and improve their vocabulary while using drama instruction. These results made students participate in long conversations and exchange information and ideas with their peers. Authors like Cho (2015), Galante and Thomson (2016), Dyson et al. (2016), and Sweeney (2017) showed that using drama-based instruction in an EFL classroom can help students to improve their fluency and, as a result, their speaking skills.

Similarly, 15 studies also show that vocabulary is an important skill that students can increase and develop while using drama-based instruction. Donnery (2014), Sinambela and Simanjuntak (2017), Sirisrimangkorn (2018), and Rahman and Maarof (2018) noticed that when students start participating and talking to their peers, they learn new words that will be useful for them. Fluency and vocabulary are connected since new words will help learners use the language more confidently; thus, learners will become more fluent in the language they are learning (Donnery, 2014; Cho, 2015; Daif-Allah & Khan, 2016; Nurhayati, 2016; Krebt, 2017; Sweeney, 2017; Araki & Raphael, 2018; Akyüz & Taniş, 2020). Learning new vocabulary helped learners to be involved and active participants in the English class. Cho (2015) explained that acquiring new vocabulary made students have a positive attitude towards the TL and increased English use in the classroom.

Moreover, by using drama-based instruction, students can increase their comprehension abilities. For example, Akyüz and Taniş (2020) showed that after using drama strategies, the students understood more words and topics, which allowed them to participate in different simulations and conversations in which they had to act or pretend to be someone else. Comprehension is important when learning a new language since it allows students to



understand what is happening around them, how they should react to certain situations, and how to reply to specific questions.

Lastly, another component found in 10 studies is accuracy, which refers to how correct EFL learners use the language. Acquiring accuracy can be a challenge for learners; however, the students improved their accuracy after using drama-based instruction. Pishkar, Moinzadeh, and Dabaghi (2017) considered that fluency and accuracy are two components that students can learn simultaneously. By mastering these components, students will be able to improve their oral abilities. Sinambela and Simanjuntak (2017) noticed that students acquire accuracy when talking to their peers and participating in class, also through feedback from their classmates and teacher; however, the authors advise teachers not to correct students when they are participating or in the middle of the task but at the end of the activity when giving feedback.

5.4. Drama-Based Strategies

Based on the 21 studies, *role-play*, *miming*, *scripting*, and *improvisation* were the most repeated and common strategies.

Figure 1

Drama-based strategies

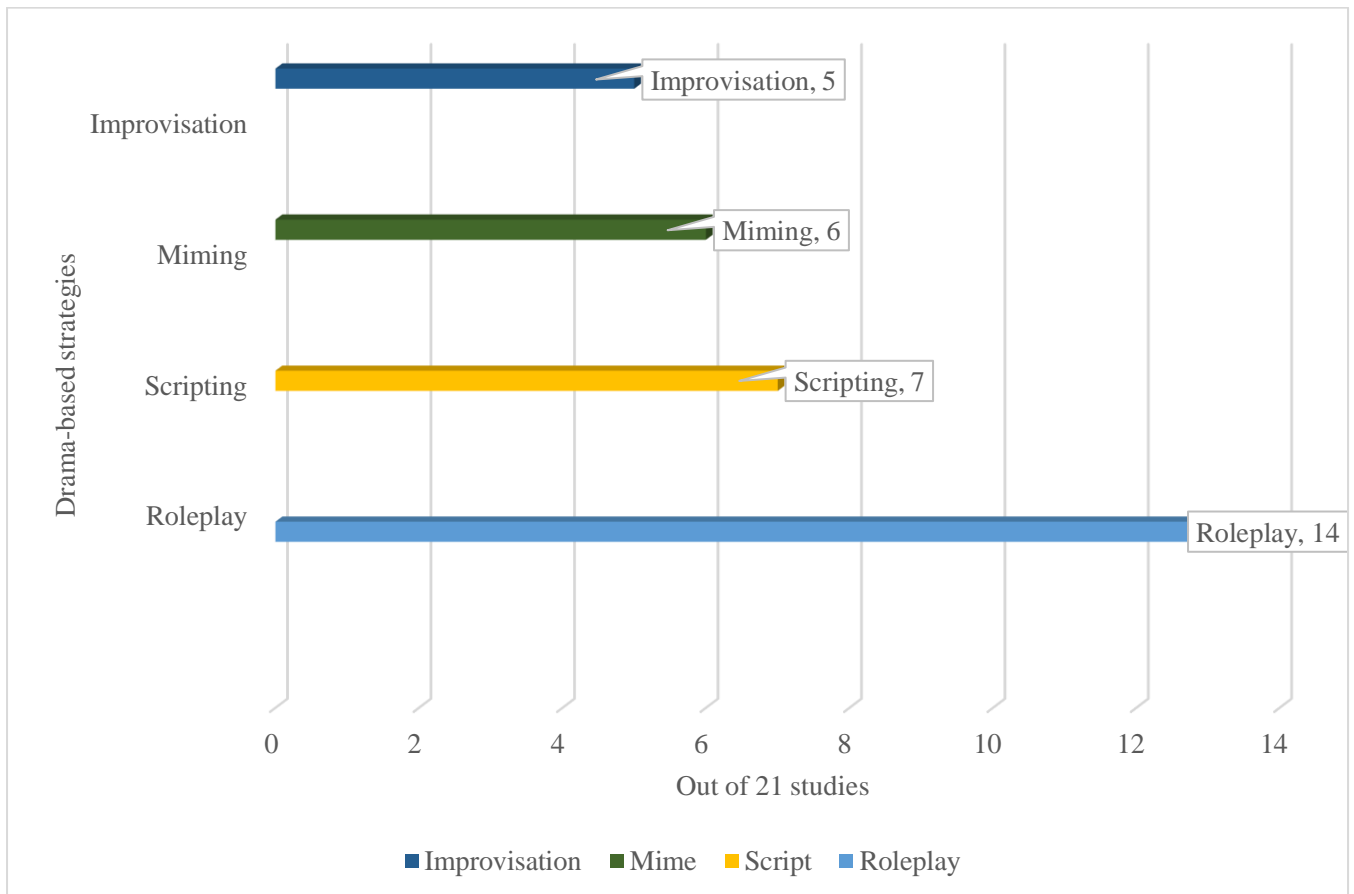


Figure 1. Most popular strategies used in drama-based instruction.

Figure 1 shows that *role-play* was used as the main strategy in 14 studies, followed by *scripting* found in 7 studies.

Araki and Raphael (2018) considered role-playing a strategy that can help students develop their confidence, decrease anxiety, and increase their oral skills since it allows students to use the language more realistic. Roleplay also allows students to increase vocabulary since they can learn words from the interaction with their classmates (Cho, 2015; Nguyen, 2017; Krebt, 2017). Nurhayati (2016) used role-play to improve students' productive skills: speaking and writing. The results showed that students enjoyed using role-play, and as a result, they improved their speaking and writing skills. Role-play is a strategy that allows students to



practice the language without feeling pressured or forced; instead, learners are free to use English. According to Rahman and Maarof (2018), role-play allows learners to "react and communicate spontaneously, and it really builds up their confidence level" (p.69). These findings support Nurhayati's study and show the importance of role-play strategies in an EFL classroom to enhance speaking skills.

Additionally, the strategy *scripting* was found in 7 studies. Nurhayati (2016) noticed that by creating their scripts, learners were able to improve their speaking and writing skills, and they also improved their intrapersonal skills since they created the scripts in groups. The author also considered that creating their own scripts allows students to show their creativity, motivation, and self-confidence. Finally, Krebt (2017) considered it important to use scripting after analyzing students' needs and English level since it can be complicated for beginners to create dialogues independently.

5.5. Location

Figure 2

Places where the studies were carried out

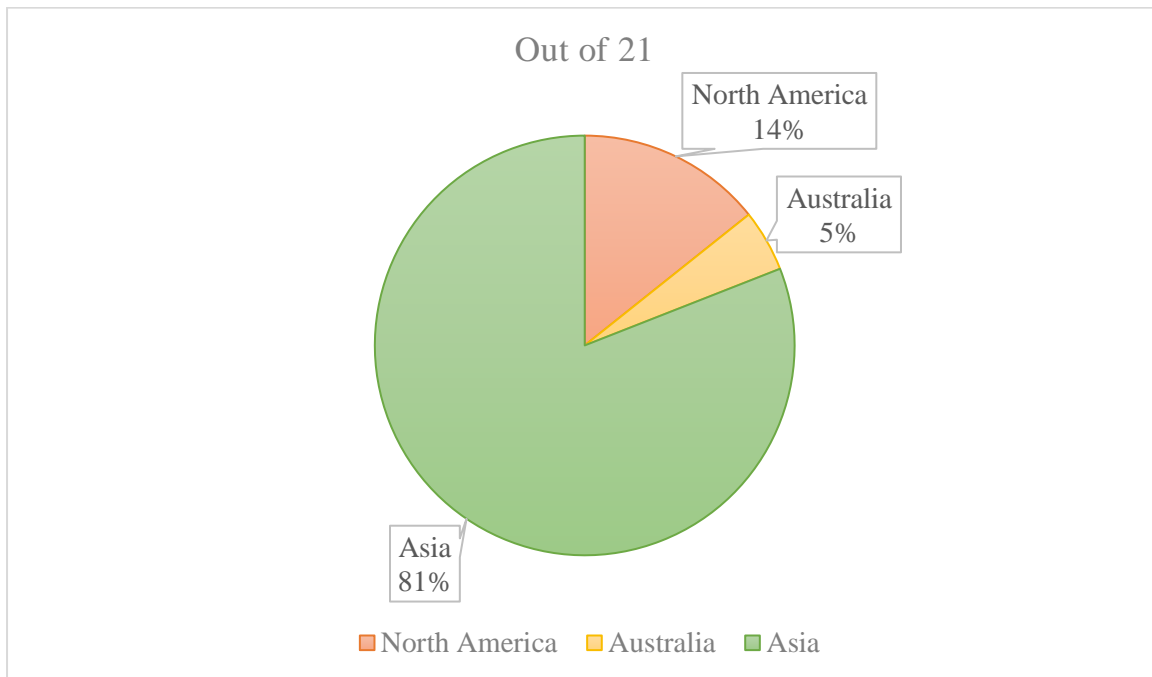


Figure 2. Location

Figure 2 represents the setting of the studies. Asia is the continent where most studies were developed, followed by North America and Australia. Figure 3 shows that no study has been conducted on South America. Even though drama-based instruction is not a new topic in education, studies about this topic carried out in Chile and Colombia are directed to children's education and not to university students. Therefore, more studies about this topic in the Ecuadorian context could help to improve English learning for university students.

In this chapter, studies were grouped and classified into five categories (*positive effects of drama-based instruction, negative effects of drama-based instruction, enhancing speaking skills, drama-based strategies, and location*), which were analyzed thoroughly in order to find significant connections between the studies. Based on this analysis, some conclusions and recommendations are stated in the next chapter.

Chapter VI: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

This research synthesis aimed to discuss the effects of using drama-based instruction to teach oral skills in an EFL classroom as well as its advantages, disadvantages, and most used teaching strategies. Accordingly, 21 published studies were analyzed.

Regarding the effects of drama-based instruction, students who used this type of instruction and strategies such as role-play, miming, scripting, and improvisation were able to increase their vocabulary, fluency, and confidence while using the English language (Nurhayati, 2016; Lee and Kang, 2017; Nguyen & Do, 2017; Araki & Raphael, 2018; Hişmanoğlu & Çolak, 2019). In addition, students learned slang words, everyday expressions, and idioms, which helped them improve their English fluency and understanding of English expressions (Pishkar, Moinzadeh, and Dabaghi (2017). Moreover, students were able to use real-life expressions, which are important when learning a language because learners will be able to participate in conversations with other English speakers and understand slang words or expressions that are not introduced to them by textbooks. In addition, drama-based instruction allowed students to learn about various topics since they shared their opinions, experiences, ideas, and personal stories (Araki & Raphael, 2018).

Furthermore, motivation and confidence while using EFL can be considered as an advantage of drama-based instruction. Students exposed to drama-based instruction improved their oral skills when they started feeling confident with the language, while students exposed to traditional instruction did not show the same improvement (Tanner & Chugg, 2018). Motivation when learning a new language can be an important advantage since motivated students are more willing to use the FL and to participate in the activities proposed by the



educator. In addition, students were able to talk to each other without worries about their pronunciation; instead, students were willing to learn new words or phrases from their classmates (Araki and Raphael, 2018), since motivation and confidence are key factors for the "affective filter hypothesis," which explains how students' emotions (motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety) can determine if the acquisition of a new language can be successful or not (Krashen, 1982), it can be said that drama-based instruction can contribute to lower learners' affective filter increasing the emotions that can have a positive effect in acquiring oral skills and decreasing anxiety, nervousness, and stage fright. However, some studies also showed that students' personalities should be considered since what is an advantage for some students might be a disadvantage for others with shy and introverted personalities.

Teamwork is another advantage of using drama-based instruction; since when working in groups, students can interact and learn from each other (Donnery, 2014; Fauzan, 2016; Nurhayati, 2016; Nguyen & Do, 2017; Sinambela & Simanjuntak, 2017). While working in groups, students showed interest and desire to participate in the tasks and became self-critical of their mistakes, which resulted in a general improvement of their speaking skills (Akyüz & Taniş, 2020). The interaction between two or more students can help them improve their oral skills since they are forced to communicate with each other and make sure that the receptor understands the message they are trying to convey. The importance of this interaction can be supported by the sociocultural theory, which explains how people can learn better while interacting with others. Therefore, this interaction between two or more students can contribute to oral skill improvement. However, students' attitudes and personalities can play a significant role in their learning since some may not like working with others. For instance, Lee and Kang (2017) noticed that some students did not like working with others because of shyness or



nervousness, which caused them not to improve as much as their classmates who liked working in groups.

Drama-based instruction is considered a spontaneous practice in which the foreign language can help students to learn it. By using drama-based strategies, students can act and react to different situations while using the English language (Dawson & Lee, 2018). Students are allowed to use words or expressions that they understand; additionally, the teacher can create various situations and contexts that can help students improve their oral skills. However, it is important to clarify that drama-based instruction should be a controlled, guided, and free practice (Scott & Ytreberg, 1991, pp. 37-47); teachers can decide if they participate actively in the development of the activities or if students develop the activities by themselves.

Finally, drama-based strategies can help develop other language and social skills, such as listening, reading, writing, and interpersonal skills. In the case of language skills, students can improve their writing skills while creating dialogues and scripts. In the case of listening, by participating in dialogues and role-play tasks in which they have to listen to their classmates, they can learn new words and correct their pronunciation. When students are assigned a task in which they have to look for information to develop their character, script, or dialogue, they develop reading skills. In addition, other skills can be developed through drama-based instruction. These skills are related to multiple intelligences (MI) (Gardner, 1983). For example, while working in groups, students have to interact with their peers to create their role-plays and scripts; consequently, they acquire social skills related to interpersonal intelligence.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the results of the studies, some recommendations can be established. EFL teachers should give drama-based instruction a try since it can help students improve their



speaking skills while using the TL. However, it is recommended that teachers change to drama-based instruction slowly and inform their students beforehand to avoid confusion and frustration between teacher and students. Nevertheless, teachers need to understand that each student is different and that some drama strategies will not be appropriate for certain students,

Second, teachers need training related to drama instruction and how to implement it in an EFL classroom to create a comfortable environment for their students. However, this training should not be limited to teachers only. Students should also be trained about how to use drama instruction to acquire the TL. Once students and teachers know how to use drama, they can implement this instruction in their classrooms; if teachers and students know how to use drama, they will be able to participate in creating material and activities according to their preferences and needs.

Third, it is important not to limit drama-based instruction to speaking skills only since it can foster the development of other language skills. For example, while learning speaking skills using role-play, students need to listen to their classmates, and as a result, they can develop listening skills. Besides, students can improve their interpersonal skills since they are talking and interacting with their peers. Thus, drama-based instruction is a strategy that can help to improve and develop various skills if used correctly.

Finally, since drama-based instruction seems to be applied more to children than adults, more studies about this type of instruction with university students should be carried out. Moreover, as most studies analyzed for this research synthesis were conducted in Asia, studies related to drama-based instruction in a Latin American context are needed.



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Appendix 1

Primary Studies for the Analysis

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