

**Drama-Based Approach as a Strategy to Strengthen EFL learners' Speaking
Proficiency**

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Licenciatura en Lenguas Extranjeras con Énfasis en Inglés

2025

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my mom. She inspires me because she is a great educator and always encourages me to be brave and responsible. I also dedicate this to my father, because of his good example, I strive to be a better person every day. He provides me with many tools and values to face life. Additionally, I want to thank my siblings for their help and company. Finally, I thank God for enlightening me daily and providing me with the strength to fight for my ideals.

Specialized Analytical Summary	
Title	Drama-based Approach as a strategy to strengthen EFL learners' speaking proficiency.
Author	Liliana Soler Sarmiento
Editorial	Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia
Date	October 2, 2025
Keywords	Teaching EFL, Emotional Intelligence, Drama-based approach, Learner-centered approach, Virtual EFL teaching and learning.
Description	Monograph
Sources	Databases, indexed magazines, and university repositories such as: https://repository.unad.edu.co/ , https://stadium.unad.edu.co/ , https://dialnet.unirioja.es/ , https://revistas.ucc.edu.co/ , https://www.proquest.com/ , http://www.scielo.org.co , among others.
Contents	El propósito de esta Monografía es alentar la incorporación de actividades dramáticas para mejorar la competencia comunicativa, principalmente habilidades orales de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL por sus

siglas en inglés), acorde con los estándares de competencia nacionales e internacionales.

Esta monografía se construyó con los resultados obtenidos del análisis de documentos como artículos científicos y trabajos de investigación relacionados con el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje y adquisición de una lengua extranjera y sobre la efectividad del uso del método basado en el teatro/drama (drama-based approach) para fortalecer la competencia comunicativa de los estudiantes en general (niños, jóvenes y adultos). La información encontrada se clasificó según el contenido y la fundamentación teórica relacionada con el tema abordado.

En este documento se exponen factores internos como el manejo de las emociones, la personalidad y la actitud de los aprendices que influyen positiva o negativamente en el aprendizaje y adquisición de EFL. Así mismo, se reconocen factores externos como la metodología, las estrategias usadas y los ambientes de aprendizaje que también influyen en este proceso.

En otro apartado se describen actividades performativas como *Juegos de rol, Improvisaciones, Simulaciones*, entre otras y los beneficios que ofrecen para mejorar la pronunciación y la fluidez.

	<p>Finalmente, este estudio revela que gracias a las plataformas tecnológicas que ofrecen las TIC es posible realizar algunas actividades performativas de manera virtual.</p>
<p>Research Line</p>	<p>Education and Human Development (Functional): This line focuses on the development of communicative competencies, language, didactics, and educational practices that enable human development. One purpose of this line is the construction of new paradigms related to contemporary alternative models of education and pedagogy.</p> <p>This monograph aims to encourage the implementation of drama activities, which have the potential to involve all aspects necessary to improve EFL learners' communicative competence. Even in virtual environments, it is possible to apply. Contributing to human development.</p>
<p>Conclusions</p>	<p>After analyzing the information, this monograph concludes that implementing drama techniques as a didactic resource in EFL classes has more advantages than disadvantages since it contributes to developing communication and social skills.</p> <p>Reviewing the theories related to teaching, learning, and acquiring foreign languages, it was found that drama techniques have the characteristics necessary to develop the four basic English skills and communication proficiency.</p>

	<p>Important findings were obtained with the literature review on the aspects that influence the learning process of a foreign language, whether internal or external. Internal student factors such as emotion management, personality, and attitude toward EFL learning were identified. Likewise, external factors such as methods, strategies, and learning environments also influence learning.</p> <p>Thanks to technological platforms on the Internet, some performative activities can be conducted in virtual environments, enabling a synchronized remote group connection through video calls or group discussion chats.</p>
Advisor	Daniel Moreno Reina

Abstract

The purpose of this monograph is to present the obtained results from the literature review about the effectiveness of implementing drama activities in English language teaching (ELT) to strengthen four basic EFL learners' communicative skills, and mainly oral skills (pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy) through the analysis and interpretation of the collected information.

This document encourages the use of drama techniques (alternating with traditional activities) to develop communicative competence and achieve the objectives of teaching EFL in accordance with national and international standards of competence.

Among the findings, it was identified that internal factors such as students' emotion management, personality, and attitude influence the process of learning and acquiring EFL positively or negatively. As Krashen (1982) states, both lack of motivation, anxiety level, and stress are affective variables that influence foreign language acquisition (this means high affective filter). Different types of intelligence and learning styles can apply in ELT. Also, external factors such as methodology, strategies used, and learning environments, which also influence learning, can be recognized.

For these reasons, literature was reviewed about the drama-based approach and the benefits it offers to foster communication, collaboration, the development of creativity, memorization, self-confidence, etc. Documents about the Learner-centered approach to

enhancing speaking in EFL lessons were reviewed. Finally, it was identified that some drama activities can be performed virtually, thanks to current technology platforms.

Keywords: Teaching EFL, Emotional Intelligence, Drama-based approach, Learner-centered approach, Virtual EFL teaching and learning.

Acknowledgments

First, I must thank my parents, Carmen Sarmiento and Jose Soler, for their spiritual support, dedication, and good example. I thank the rest of my family for their company and support.

Second,

I would like to thank the professors who supported me throughout my career with their guidance and empathy.

I express my gratitude to my advisor, Teacher Daniel Moreno, for encouraging me and giving me great support and help.

Finally, I would like to thank God for permitting us to be in the world.

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Introduction

This document analyzes works about how individuals learn and acquire a foreign language, and how to improve English Language Teaching (ELT) process, with a focus on oral skills. One reviewed way to improve this process is to implement performative activities in EFL lessons. These activities enhance students' communicative competence, including better pronunciation, accuracy, and fluency, which in turn improves self-confidence and reduces shyness in public speaking, and contributes to the acquisition of social skills.

The implementation of drama techniques as a didactic resource is convenient due to its features and benefits. Since it has the qualities to develop the student's communicative proficiency. These activities not only improve linguistic skills but also creativity, memorization, and social skills such as teamwork. Also, it serves to create a motivating, comfortable environment without pressure, applicable to both face-to-face and virtual settings. By its nature, the drama-based approach allows students to participate in situations near real life in a context that encourages the use of the target language most of the time during class.

The literature on theories and hypotheses was reviewed to construct a study that will explain how individuals learn and acquire a foreign language. Among the findings, it was found that there are internal and external factors that influence this process.

Regarding internal factors, Gardner (2008), in his book "New Horizons in Theory and Practice," explains that intelligence cannot be measured as a single overall score because each person uses different types of intelligence and has diverse learning styles that also involve creativity, expertise, and other human cognitive capacities. To learn and acquire a new

language, everyone has their own learning style and utilizes a specific type of intelligence, which can be intrapersonal, interpersonal, bodily-kinesthetic, linguistic-verbal, musical, etc. Likewise, Emotional intelligence is also a decisive factor in learning.

In the same way, the Affective Filter Hypothesis by Krashen (1982) is also related to internal factors such as emotional management, personality, and the student's attitude toward learning a foreign language. Additionally, emotional intelligence represents a crucial aspect of foreign language acquisition due to the basis of communication is empathetic interactions among individuals.

Moreover, the literature reviewed is useful to recognize external factors such as the methodologies, strategies, or techniques used and learning environments, both in situ and virtual, that also influence the learning of a foreign language.

This research demonstrates that learning and teaching a foreign language have been a challenge throughout history. Different methods have been used, some more effective than others, for the new language proficiency. To enhance EFL linguistic and oral skills, this work considers the use of performative activities as a valuable didactic tool, which is convenient to boost the use of English in real contexts.

For this reason, this Monograph encourages the use of performative activities such as *Role-playing, Simulations, Mimes, Improvisations*, etc., to motivate participation and improve EFL learners' proficiency. Thanks to ICT, it is possible to develop some of these activities in virtual environments through online platforms.

Significance of Study

English is considered a lingua franca because it is the most widely spoken language in today's world, due to the development of economic, political, cultural, and scientific fields. For this reason, the educational system of Colombia and other countries promotes bilingual education from primary to higher education, to train competent individuals proficient in English, according to national and international standards.

This research seeks to reflect on the implementation of drama activities into the teaching, learning, and acquisition of a foreign language process, mainly with students who have emotional and affective shortcomings that impede their learning. By its nature, a drama-based approach allows students to improve not only linguistic abilities but also intrapersonal and interpersonal abilities since it promotes interaction, collaboration, and creativity.

Due to the urgent need to communicate effectively in English in today's globalized society, the demand for mastery of this language has been increasing. As mentioned by Gómez, A. (2015):

“As modernized Western society increasingly values and appreciates the knowledge of foreign languages as the most significant tool to overcome communication barriers across the world, language instructors now face the challenges of teaching students in a helpful and nurturing way which will enable them to possess a good understanding of the language, if not the possibility to master it”. Gómez, A. (2015).

Mastering four basic skills is important, but oral skills should be emphasized the most in ELT to face today's challenges and needs. As mentioned by Bailey & Savage (1994), cited in Nguyen (2023), "Among all four language skills, speaking skill is considered as the most important skill in order to communicate well in this global world". Thus, English teachers must face the challenge of helping students achieve speaking proficiency with meaningful learning strategies.

Various methods and techniques are employed to enhance English teaching and learning; however, some do not emphasize speaking. Moreover, traditional EFL teaching methods fail to promote the use of the language sufficiently during class. A lack of proficiency can diminish students' self-confidence and increase shyness stemming from poor pronunciation.

Moreover, effective EFL learning and acquisition involves intrinsic and extrinsic motivation related to internal and external factors that influence this process. External factors, such as the methodology and techniques used, could determine success or failure. In the same way, internal factors such as personality and the student's attitude can affect their English proficiency.

For these reasons, it is important to create an environment where learners have the chance to interact instead of being passive receivers of information. Students become protagonists when teachers allow them to express themselves and participate more actively. Engaging learners in performative activities can create a motivating environment that helps them feel more confident speaking publicly and thus achieve their EFL proficiency goals.

To examine if a drama-based method improves elements of speaking skill, including fluency, comprehensibility, grammaticality, and willingness to communicate in learners with a lower level of language proficiency, Barekat & Nezami (2020) implement various activities:

“The activities are student-centered and give more time to students for communication in English. The chance for speaking is provided through dramatized activities, including improvisation, role plays, mime, and simulation. The topics are meaningful and related to students’ needs and real-life communicative activities, speaking skill included”. (p.58).

Hence, implementing drama techniques makes it possible to encourage students to speak, even in virtual settings, through technological platforms that allow synchronous and asynchronous interaction. As mentioned by Luthra (2024), “The learners' LSRW abilities can be enhanced through the application of several activities, such as role playing, simulation, storytelling, enactment, and other methods. These activities can be conducted both online and offline”. (p.521).

Although there are few studies on how to implement virtual drama-based instruction in EFL teaching and learning, it is possible to conduct performative activities in remote education using technological platforms such as Zoom, Teams, and Meet, among others.

This document attempts to contribute to virtual ELT by describing some performative activities that can be implemented in both face-to-face and virtual settings.

Statement of the Problem

It is quite recognized that in most EFL lessons, mechanical grammar drills are very common, alongside writing and reading activities rather than listening and speaking exercises. Some pedagogical experts (e.g., Minasyan, 2014; Gutierrez-Colon & Alameh, 2024; Shengnan, 2021) believe that students' poor English communicative proficiency is due to the methodology used, as it does not provide them with opportunities to practice their oral skills.

This means that the methods used are teacher-centered rather than learner-centered. This highlights the need to shift to a more effective approach, aiming to enhance students' oral competence. Minasyan (2014) emphasizes that “Learners’ achievements in acquiring and practicing the second language are tightly interconnected with teaching methodology”. (p.14).

Despite the Colombian educational system seeks to enhance the level of communicative competencies in English through programs such as PNB (Plan Nacional de Bilingüismo) since 2004, the reality shows that students still have low proficiency, as indicated by test outcomes. Therefore, it is important to examine what stakeholders (including policymakers, curriculum designers, as well as teachers' practices) are doing to strengthen students' oral skills to achieve high standardized test scores and face today's challenges.

In this regard, Benavides (2021) states that:

“This article analyzes the results of the Saber Pro, the state exam for students completing higher education, during 2007–2017, concerning the English

language section. [...]. The results warn of a quite worrying picture between the goals established by the Ministry of Education and the final achievements”. (p.57)

Similarly, Benavides (2021) mentioned:

“The level of English of future Colombian professionals is not only very low but also without improvement from its beginnings in 2007 to 2017. As a conclusion, it would be necessary to review, from the universities’ perspective, the language educational policy and propose bottom-up structural alternatives that allow a sustained impulse in teacher training, methodology, and curricular and pedagogical organization” (Benavides, 2021, p.57).

“Therefore, a relative stagnation is evident in the development of the level of English as a generic core from the results of the ECAES and Saber Pro exams for higher education” (Benavides, 2012, p.68).

Gutiérrez-Colon & Alameh (2024), regarding the teacher-centered methods, state that:

“These methods typically emphasize rote learning and the mastery of grammatical rules without providing sufficient opportunities for students to practice these skills in real-life communication contexts. As a result, students may have a theoretical understanding of grammar but struggle to apply it effectively in spoken English”. (Gutiérrez-Colón & Alameh, 2024, p.915).

If EFL classes do not adopt a student-centered approach, the communicative competence goals can be more difficult to achieve. Moreover, obstacles such as the insufficient number of EFL training hours included in the curriculum and the large number of students per classroom, principally in public schools, also make it difficult. Bessadet (2021) states, “EFL learners usually fear the challenge of speaking formally in front of an audience. Nevertheless, teachers can help reduce such fears by maintaining a friendly atmosphere in the class, encouraging students to engage in peer communicative tasks ...” (p. 526).

The aforementioned issues occur not only in face-to-face sites but also in virtual environments. When the world was hit by the COVID-19 outbreak, all human activities were affected, including the delivery of education. Education had to be completely shifted to virtual settings, including English language teaching.

As mentioned by Stanton (2024), “...when the world of education moved almost entirely to virtual platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of best-practice research in theatre was made abundantly clear” (p.7). In fact, there is limited research on implementing a drama-based approach in virtual environments. As Luthra (2024) noted, "Nevertheless, the literature lacks an exploration of how drama might be effectively utilized in virtual settings and the potential impact it may have on online teaching and learning."

Although there is still a reluctance to implement drama activities for ELT in online environments, even virtual theatre has benefits, such as boosting learners' motivation, e-community building, and greater opportunities for nontraditional and neurodivergent students, as Bay-Cheng (2007), Oram (2020), cited in Stanton (2024), pointed out.

However, some English teachers may hesitate to implement this kind of activity due to personal anxieties or perceived obstacles (Le, T.Q., 2024). Dealing with drama techniques can represent a significant challenge for teachers and students in EFL classes, whether in face-to-face or virtual settings, due to factors like a lack of teacher training and students' unwillingness. Therefore, this monograph recommends incorporating drama activities in both in-person and online environments to create a more supportive atmosphere and reduce the fear of speaking English publicly. Hence, these questions arise:

How do performative activities in ELT foster learners' cognitive development and soft skills acquisition, both in virtual and face-to-face settings?

Can students overcome their fears and anxiety about speaking publicly in a foreign language through dramatic activities?

How do dramatic techniques help students overcome their fears and anxiety about public speaking in a foreign language?

The findings of this research demonstrate that performative activities present a viable and engaging didactic alternative, successfully implementable in both in-situ and virtual EFL classes to help students overcome emotional barriers. Bearing in mind that both affective and cognitive skills are involved in enhancing EFL proficiency, it is necessary to motivate students.

Objectives

General Objective

To reflect on the benefits of using drama-based techniques as a didactic resource to enhance EFL learners' communication skills in both face-to-face and virtual settings, through a comprehensive literature review.

Specific Objectives

To analyze relevant scholarly sources related to the drama-based approach as a strategy to strengthen EFL learners' speaking proficiency.

To identify the main advantages of performative activities in overcoming emotional and communication barriers in EFL learning and acquisition.

To describe how various performative activities applied in both virtual and face-to-face settings enhance EFL learners' speaking proficiency.

Literature Review

This chapter will present the findings obtained from the literature regarding foreign language teaching and learning and the current state of using a drama-based approach in EFL lessons. First, it will explore the main aspects of the foreign language teaching and learning process, for example, how the affective filter and emotional intelligence influence learning, and discuss the importance of learner-centered lessons implementation in ELT.

Secondly, a background on the use of a drama-based approach and the skills that this method enhances will be presented, along with descriptions of some performative activities in EFL learning environments. This monograph attempts to explain the use of drama-based activities in virtual environments and will describe how those activities can be applied to remote education throughout technological platforms.

Thirdly, since the main goal of the Communicative Method is the use of the target language, this section presents a relationship between a drama-based approach and the students' oral skills development.

Background

Emotional Intelligence in EFL Acquisition

Degirmenci, G., & Yavuz, M. (2024) mentioned that “Emotional Intelligence (EI) encompasses a broad spectrum of abilities, including the capacity to perceive, comprehend, regulate emotions, and navigate intricate social interactions”. (p.106). To manage one's emotions and feelings in personal and social situations related to study or work success, it is necessary to achieve a high level of EI.

These good interactions could be face-to-face and virtual, as many educational institutions today offer remote courses and programs. Even more so after the Covid-19 pandemic, many human activities were forced to be carried out through social media and other Internet platforms. Regarding education, both teachers and students probably feel anxiety when communicating through a video call or chatting for the first time. For this reason, it is important to encourage students with activities that allow them to feel confident.

There is a direct correlation between emotion management and language learning outcomes. Degirmenci & Yavuz (2024) note that “Language learning is not merely a cognitive endeavor but a complex interplay of emotions, perceptions, and social dynamics”. (p.105). As mentioned by Duman (2003), cited in Degirmenci & Yavuz (2024), “The research revealed that addressing students’ emotional challenges enhances the effectiveness of English learning and teaching”. (p.107).

Specifically, to acquire a foreign language effectively, it is crucial to maintain high motivation and not be discouraged by failures, as well as to have good interactions with people. “EI encompasses a range of skills and abilities related to understanding and managing emotions, influencing interpersonal interactions, and achieving success” (Tehranipour & Bagheri Masoudzade, 2024, cited in Wang et al., 2024).

Wang et al. (2024) pointed out that:

“More precisely, students with a greater EI are able to control their emotions better, which improves their ability to speak clearly and fluently. Encouraging critical thinking (CT), emotional intelligence (EI), and academic enthusiasm (AE) in language learning settings can greatly improve learners’ speaking ability”.

Language teachers have the responsibility to help students strengthen their emotional intelligence (EI) through psychological tools such as stress management, critical thinking, problem-solving, and academic enthusiasm. When learners participate in a performative activity, specific personality traits are developed, which improve self- confidence and interpersonal relationships.

Rudolfova (2015) states that intelligence cannot be measured only by the level of Intelligence Quotient (IQ). Today, it is essential to rethink this belief, as each individual possesses unique learning abilities that encompass cognitive and emotional factors. Thus, Emotional Quotient (EQ) is also necessary in learning and acquiring any new language.

According to Gómez (2015), traditionally, students’ affective dimension is neglected, but now it is well known that affective components have a strong connection with learning and

acquiring a foreign language. As Lin (2000), cited in Chen (2005), and Gómez (2015) argue, [...] educators started paying more attention to the impact of affective factors, such as feelings, emotions, anxiety, frustration, motivation, and confidence, on the process of learning.

When placed in their *comfort zone*, students are less likely to take risks speaking in public or interacting with others in a foreign language. Perhaps students fear this challenge for different reasons; thus, language teachers have the task of finding strategies that help them recognize learners' capabilities and support them in overcoming their fears.

Rudolfova (2015, p. 18) points out that the key skills, or elements of emotional intelligence that were selected for their potential to make a difference in foreign language acquisition, fall into the three following categories as follows (though they often intertwine):

Table 1

Key Elements of Emotional Intelligence

1. Emotional awareness	- Acknowledgment of the aforesaid system is a fundamental precondition.
2. Access to this system	- the ability to identify emotions in oneself and other people (verbal or nonverbal cues), distinguishing individual emotions - how they blend together and change, and acquiring the relevant vocabulary.
3. Managing and regulating emotions	- Learning techniques for calming down before an exam or presentation that makes students nervous, awareness of the fight-or-flight reaction, motivating oneself during

strenuous, repetitive, demanding, or seemingly irrelevant tasks, engaging other people in a discussion, problem-solving sessions, or study support groups; in short, using the emotions and the information provided by them for production or something creative.

Note. This table shows the key elements of emotional intelligence.

In the same way, Rudolfova (2015) considers that it is crucial to encourage students' self-reflection along with self-assessment because this provides students with information about themselves and their learning. Also, enhancing the ability to concentrate and working memory is necessary to avoid internal or external distractions and reduce hesitations.

Each step in the teaching and learning process is important; even mistakes are necessary to learn. Finally, Rudolfova (2015) mentioned that:

“Positive attitude might be considered the obvious element of emotional intelligence, and is practically taken for granted, but it is still not regularly made effective use of. Students learn more effectively if they are positive about what they are studying”. (p.21)

In sum, most of the elements of EI can be learned and improved to perform any new task, including learning a foreign language. “When it is used, emotionally intelligent strategies, every student can succeed” (Rudolfova, 2015).

Many drama activities and strategies can be used to improve students' emotional intelligence and benefit their intelligence quotient. Boudreault, C. (2020) considers that:

“Drama gives an excellent method for studying human nature and working in harmony. The play acting provides the opportunity for a healthy release of emotion in a safe setting, which can work to relieve the tension of learning in a second language”. (p.49)

Affective Filter in Acquiring EFL

One of the primary concerns for students is their fear of learning something new, which seems difficult, such as learning a foreign language. Students with a high affective filter often can lose interest in learning a new language, and they fear making a fool of themselves in front of others. The Affective Filter is also known as the students' emotional stress level.

Kun-huei Wu (2010), cited in Al Shehri (2012). claim that:

“Language learners who are free from pressure show more confidence and willingness to practice in the classroom. In other words, language must be acquired naturally, just as a child who picks up her/his first language.

Krashen (1985) promotes the Affective Filter Hypothesis to stress the importance of building a classroom environment that is less threatening to anxious students. It is particularly important to reduce anxiety for learners with low proficiency and confidence”. Kun-huei Wu (2010).

Since language learning encompasses a set of personal, cognitive, and affective elements, it is necessary to train students holistically. Gomez (2015) notes that: “The main theoretical aspect to consider throughout this thesis is how the personal and affective

components of individuals are now considered to have a strong and direct correlation with a person's facility for learning and acquiring a new language". (p. 7)

As Pishghadam (2009), cited in Gómez (2015), states, "Among so many factors contributing to second language learning success, including motivation, attitude, or personality types."

Gómez (2015) notes that "Nowadays, in this era of individualism, it is already accepted that students can be intelligent in many different ways". Three types of intelligence influence students' learning are: - Interpersonal Intelligence (the ability to interact with others), - Intrapersonal Intelligence (the ability to know oneself), and - Emotional Intelligence (which involves both intrapersonal and interpersonal abilities).

Thereby, English teachers might enhance students' affective dimension through activities that encourage their motivation to participate, as each individual possesses different emotional and personal qualities and capacities. As Cisneros (2024) explains:

"The teacher's goal is to lower students' affective filter (level of stress) to have a more relaxed environment, where the different learning stages can happen easily. Addressing the variables of motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety properly can foster better learning processes as well". (p.169).

Therefore, if a constructivist learner-centered approach is applied in EFL lessons to strengthen the cognitive and affective students' dimensions, the proposed communicative goals can be achieved. Hence, this document declares that by implementing any performative activity in EFL learning environments, teachers can help to reduce students' affective filter and diminish stress levels, even in virtual settings.

Learner-Centered Approach in ELT

For a long time, in almost all educational systems, most teaching lessons have been teacher-centered, including language teaching, where learners maintain a passive role and the teacher is at the center, trying to capture their attention.

Duckworth (2009), cited in Kassem (2018), notes that “Teacher-centered instruction is now admitted to lead to poor language performance. It is said to prevent students’ educational growth, because in teacher-centered classrooms, teachers do most of the work and learners are always passive recipients of knowledge”. (p. 134)

Shengnan (2021) mentioned that: “With a development history of more than half a century, the learner-centered approach has become a new teaching paradigm worldwide. The approach can produce effective and significant learning, focusing on learners’ development, learning, and learning outcomes”. (p. 23)

In foreign language teaching, students often lack sufficient opportunities to participate and do not develop their oral proficiency, which contributes to poor performance in the foreign language. As Campbell et al. (1996), cited in Gomez (2015) state:

"Teacher-centered instruction predominated in the English language classrooms for many decades. This is a teaching methodology which gave a primary and principal role to the figure of the teacher, and confined students to play a minor role by only making them receptors of the knowledge transmitted in the classroom". (p. 4)

Similarly, Fleming (2006, cited in Bessadet 2022), mentioned that implementing literature in the language classroom and mainly “drama texts promotes a learner-centered

classroom practice, which enables learners to perceive, think, act, and interact during the learning process instead of being passive receivers of knowledge” (p. 527)

Experts believe that learners’ motivation is the most critical affective factor that influences learning, as the techniques used to encourage them to participate. Nowadays, it is crucial to change the educational paradigm of teacher-centered classes. Especially for ELT, learners need high motivation to reduce their fear of communicating in a different language.

A Work American Psychological Association (APA) Group researched the importance of psychology in education (1997). They believe that psychological elements such as thinking, memory, motivation, and cognitive aspects contribute directly to the learning process.

Learner-Centered Psychological Principles developed by the American Psychological Association (APA, 1993) in a collaborative partnership with Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McRE), are the result of a century of research. This constitutes a guide that covers the factors associated with teaching and learning that arise with the study of various areas of psychology. Moreover, it also includes cognitive and metacognitive factors such as motivation, developmental constraints, and opportunities, as well as personal and social factors.

According to McCombs and Whisler (1997), motivation is one of the most important psychological aspects affecting foreign language learning. They suggest that learner-centeredness creates a learning environment that promotes the highest levels of motivation and achievement for all learners.

For this reason, engaging students through strategies that involve them in their learning process is essential to strengthening social skills even in virtual settings. According to Jones (1999), cited in Malmir, A. & Sarem, S. (2015), it suggests that drama is inevitably learner-centered because it can only operate through active cooperation.

Currently, young people are technological natives, but adults who need good technological management in remote education can also become experts. Some universities and institutions offer virtual programs and remote courses, such as the UNAD (Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia), among others. Furthermore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, educational environments shifted to virtual due to mandatory health laws. In virtual teaching and learning, it is also essential to have learner-centered lessons to keep students motivated.

Additionally, what Matukhin & Bolgova (2015) declared regarding Foreign Language Teaching (FLT):

"As an important characteristic of foreign language teaching, is continuity, one of the most effective ways to deal with the personal development of students in the process of foreign language learning can be the integration of mainstream and supplementary education in the implementation of a learner-centered approach that can play a significant part in reaching by the students the acme of their creative and professional development". (p. 153).

This means that almost all subjects can be taught in English, along with encouraging learners to use the foreign language most of the time, both in and outside the classroom.

This is possible thanks to ICTs and individuals' potential to manage academic technological platforms.

Drama-Based Approach in ELT

The Theatre in Education is not a new concept; in fact, Jesuit schools in the 1600s used it as a means of teaching languages and Catholic doctrines (Eickmeyer, 2018, cited in Le T. Q. et al, 2025). In the early years of the 20th century, new linguistic methodologies emerged, such as communicative competence, which involved role plays and drama games as didactic strategies and techniques (Coso, 2016, cited in Yan Yan, 2020).

TiE (Theater-in-Education) in the twentieth century was born as a method of learning in Britain (Le, T.Q. et al, 2025). Moreover, TiE includes educational elements that establish it as a valuable tool for enriching EFL lessons, making lessons more dynamic and motivational.

Also known as the Drama-Based Approach in ELT, despite a close similarity, some concepts and foundations explain the differences and relationships between Theater, Drama techniques, and Performative activities. According to experts, each has a different level of complexity. Holden (1982), cited in Davis (1990), takes drama:

“[...] to mean any kind of activity where learners are asked either to portray themselves or to portray someone else in an imaginary situation: "In other words, drama is concerned with the world of 'let's pretend'; it asks the learner to project himself imaginatively into another situation, outside the classroom, or into the skin and persona of another person".
(p. 87)

Davis (1990) declares that:

“In more specific, concrete terms, drama includes mime, role-playing, extended role-playing (or improvisation), simulation, interaction activities

such as various forms of dialogues, and dramatized story-telling. So, drama can take several forms in the language classroom, but above all, it should be a communicative activity where the student makes the choices”. (p. 88)

As Bessadet (2022) points out:

“Dealing with drama in an EFL context was a big challenge for the teacher. In addition to the complexity of text and performance techniques, Algerian students lacked the potential to be exposed to a theatre context; this fact comes back to socio-cultural reasons. However, using theatre as a means to learn the English language and discover its aesthetic values helped students transcend their fears of expressing themselves in front of an audience.”
(Bessadet, 2022, p. 530).

Among the benefits that the TIE approach offers, according to Le, T.Q. (2025, p.11), are:

Table 2

Benefits of TIE in L2 Teaching and Learning:

In Language	There is a convergence between theatre for ELT and the CEFR’s goals since it enhances various aspects of language learning, including multiculturalism, communicative competencies, reading and writing skills, speaking, sociolinguistic awareness, paralinguistic, and pragmatic factors.
Social Competence	Help to develop soft competencies, such as teamwork, empathy, and overall social skills. At the university level, drama activities

	can be used for English for Specific Purposes (ESP), since contribute to enhancing specialized vocabulary and grammar. At the same time, improve social competencies using feelings and body language.
Psychological Benefits	Including: increased motivation, pride in achievement, and enhanced self-confidence from collaborative work.
Social Life	Students' social experiences in any EFL context have a positive impact through the drama and theatre method. Create a supportive learning environment and establish friendships to build relationships.
Individuality	Drama and Theatre activities help students to recognize their individuality and develop students' interests and talents across various roles. In general, it serves to foster personal growth and enhance students' unique aptitudes.
Creativity	Drama and theatre activities stimulate students' creativity, helping to develop their creative skills such as improvisation and adding a personal touch.

Note. This table shows the benefits of TIE in L2 teaching and learning.

In this sense, engaging EFL learners in performative activities serves as a relevant component of holistic training, as it contributes to the development of learners' affective and cognitive abilities. When learners feel comfortable, they lose fear of speaking in front of others and gain self-confidence, which enhances their cognitive processes for acquiring a foreign language. In other words, a drama-based approach helps to develop not only cognitive skills but also soft skills such as critical thinking, creativity, self-esteem, empathy, collaboration, and so on.

The use of theatre, drama techniques, or any performance activities in teaching a foreign language has been a topic of research for quite some time. Some studies reveal the possibilities that artistic manifestations (music, dance, theater) offer for learning a foreign language and the application of teaching resources that derive from these (Corral, 2012). The drama-based approach can offer numerous advantages to EFL teaching and learning because it enhances personal and social skills due to its communicative and cooperative nature, which is essential in this process.

A group called “The E-Theatre”, supported by theater and language professionals, has been operating at the National University of Colombia since 2008. The positive results obtained from the workshops held by the E-Theatre group, which promote EFL learning, demonstrate the effectiveness of theater as a holistic methodology. Participants report a reduction in the affective filter and an enhancement of EFL proficiency, as well as intercultural competence, and improvements in the cognitive process of language acquisition, thanks to the methodology implemented. (Castillo & Gualdron, 2018).

According to (Maley & Duff, 1978, cited in Malmir & Sarem, 2015), drama activities help students overcome shyness and boredom when they are forced to stay passive most of the time in EFL classes. Le, T.Q. (2025) mentions that Theatre stimulates simultaneously thinking, elicits emotions, and collaborative work, aligning with the principles of holistic education. Thus, emphasize social aspects alongside cognitive development (Miller, 1999; Nasrollahi et al, 2020, cited in Le, T.Q., 2025).

In addition, through the implementation of performative activities such as Role- plays, Simulations, Improvisations, or any drama games, integration of multiple students' intelligences occurs since it develops communication and collaboration, enhances

intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, performing any drama activity, students work on their kinesthetic, spatial, and linguistic intelligence, among others.

Thanks to technological platforms such as Google Meet, Teams, Zoom, and so on, it is now possible to carry out some performative activities in a virtual environment synchronously.

EFL Oral Skills Enhanced Through Drama Techniques

It is well known that interaction and communication form the foundation of theatre projects and drama activities. The use of language in these authentic contexts develops oral skills. When learners engage in any drama activity, thanks to rehearsals, script memorization, improvisations, or repeated phrases, they improve their speaking proficiency.

Additionally, they develop personal and social skills, as this method also enhances emotional intelligence management. Wang et al. (2024) demonstrate in their study analysis that: “the results showed a strong positive association between better speaking accuracy and fluency and greater levels of CT (Critical Thinking), EI (Emotional Intelligence), and AE (Academic Enthusiasm)”. (p. 1)

Wang et al. (2024) state that:

“More precisely, learners with greater EI were able to control their emotions better, which improved their ability to speak clearly and fluently. Speaking performance was improved by those with higher CT because they showed improved problem-solving abilities and linguistic originality. High AE was also associated with better language practice and competence due to higher desire and involvement.” (p. 1)

When students' motivation, self-esteem, and adequate methodologies have a positive impact, a great increase in their oral performance occurs. Moreover, through drama techniques, students have the chance to practice and achieve better pronunciation, intonation, fluency, and word usage stress, as well as grammar accuracy.

“Fluency, defined as the ability to articulate ideas smoothly and coherently, utilizing all available linguistic resources with spontaneity and ease, is recognized as a cornerstone of effective communication” (Gower et al. 2005, cited in Wang et al. 2024, p. 1)

To Shevelyova (2024), cited in Wang et al. (2024), fluency is achieved when an individual can effectively employ language's structure, prioritizing content over form, and utilizing units and structures naturally at conversational speed when necessary.

Marekova (2024), cited in Wang et al. (2024), defines fluency “as the ability to use pausing, intonation, stress, speech speed, and speech interruptions in a native-like manner”. Accuracy, as characterized by Skehan et al. (2024), cited in Wang et al. (2024), “pertains to the extent to which the target language (TL) adheres to its regulatory structure”. In short, the following can be explained from all those definitions:

Pronunciation: stress and rhythm, clear articulation, good diction, and correct use of patterns such as questions, surprise, anger, etc.

Intonation: refers to paralinguistics, treats, and addresses word stress and pauses.

Fluency: spontaneous and correct oral output, and speaks naturally like a native speaker.

Accuracy: correct use of grammatical structures and specific modes (politeness or informal).

Performative Activities for ELT

Also, it can be named Drama Techniques for ELT, since both involve acting, chatting, speaking, performance, and listening skills, as well as emotion management and good interactions in a foreign language. P B Early (1977), cited in British Council (1977), points out that “Simulation, role-play, and dramatic techniques are terms which tend to be used interchangeably by many foreign-language teachers”. Engaging learners in these activities enhances their holistic training in the English language learning.

The value that performative activities impart to ELT lies in enhancing learners’ oral EFL skills (British Council, 1977). Maley & Duff (1977), cited in British Council (1977), mentioned that:

“... In other words, the learning of a foreign language remains for most people an intellectual affair from which real emotions are excluded. [...] The dramatic techniques described here attempt to tap the affective resources of the learners to restore the emotional content of language learning, and to put back the body too!” (p. 21).

As Bessadet (2022) notes:

“Most importantly, drama techniques are a valuable means to strengthen students’ active involvement in the learning process. It involves excitement, fun, and laughter into the language classroom and encourages cooperation and collaboration in a creative context. Undertaking this

method puts students into real-life discourse models that will assimilate through imitation and performance”. (p. 528)

According to Le, T.Q. (2024), the Theatre/Drama-based approach benefits ELT at the university level because it can be used for specific purposes, since it contributes to the enhancement of specialized vocabulary and grammar. This can be possible, utilizing various types of dramatic activities that allow students to practice vocabulary and grammar in focused, simulated situations.

There are various types of drama techniques (performative activities), such as simulations, role-plays, drama games, mime, and improvisations. The following drama techniques can be applied from basic to higher education, both in face-to-face and virtual environments:

Simulations

As aforementioned, this technique is suitable for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at the university level because it allows training and rehearsal situations that learners need to face later. Sturtridge (1977), cited in British Council (1977), pointed out that: [...] the structure of a simulation makes it attractive to the materials designer and teacher, as it allows for the integration of different types of learning materials and the practice of different skills. (p. 10)

Learners simulate a situation that they have experienced or may face in the future, as well as any daily situation. Le, T.Q. et al (2025) note that:

Simulation Gaming: “It involves highly structured and packaged games designed for educational purposes without professional actors’ participation.

These organized activities require participants to take on predetermined roles to solve problems and make decisions in simulated real-life situations. While problem-solving and decision-making skills are trained, acting skill is not required". (Le, T.Q. et al, 2025, p. 10).

Early (1977), cited in The British Council (1977), notes that:

“Simulated activities in foreign-language learning are good for motivation and for developing complex and coordinated performance skills (such as listening to a verbal message in order to respond). To be fully effective, however, they need to be carefully integrated into the teaching/learning cycle”. (p. 34).

Similarly, Davies (1990) makes the point that:

“*Simulation* activities are also interaction activities with various categories of dialogues. One category would be social formulas and dialogues such as greetings, partings, introductions, compliments, and complaints. Simulation exercises can teach students how to function in a social situation with the appropriate social niceties; for example, students could practice how to turn down a request for a date”. (p. 91).

Role Plays

Students can portray any real-life character, regardless of age, gender, or sociocultural level, to practice the language. Some experts consider using role-play to identify students' linguistic difficulties (early stage) and thus determine what learning or

reinforcement is needed. Instead, P B Early (1977), cited in British Council (1977), mentioned that:

“A second approach, adopted by Johnson and Morrow (197?), situates role-play at a late stage in the practice cycle, where the student practices language in whole interactions that he has previously practiced in isolation. In a functionally arranged syllabus, covering, say, Greetings, Introducing, Giving Directions, and Farewells (in turn), it is not difficult to set up a role-play using all these functions in sequence”. (p. 35)

Minasyan (2015) explains that role-play activities entail an imaginary or real situation or setting where participants are exposed to spontaneous interaction and are supposed to come up with a conclusion to the problem stated in for that particular setting. (p. 16).

J Y K Kerr (in British Council 1977), described:

The element of role-play is clearly present in some games, for example, in Monopoly, where the players assume the role of financiers or property speculators, or in the ancient war games such as chess. The participants are required to act ‘as if’, as if they found themselves in a hypothetical situation, and perhaps also as if they were people different from their real selves. (p. 5)

In addition, role-playing is an effective teaching strategy for encouraging active student participation in communicative contexts in situ and virtually. According to Mugglestone (1977), cited in British Council (1977), this technique can be applied in both

everyday situations, where students play themselves, and in more structured scenarios, where students are assigned defined roles with specific ideas and attitudes.

Drama Games

There are many types of drama games, such as ice-breakers, warm-ups, cool-downs, verbal and vocal activities, fillers, concentration games, etc. All of these activities encourage active participation, develop imagination, and “permit the expression of emotion” (Wessels, 1987, cited in Minasyan, 2014). According to Aldavero (2008), cited in Minasyan (2014), “Drama activities enable even learners with limited vocabulary to communicate successfully in a second or foreign language”.

This type of technique is important because it allows a mix of linguistic abilities, such as reading, listening to commands, and taking part in oral interactions among participants. Additionally, it offers a different, funny way to learn in contrast to traditional grammatical drills.

Nevertheless, the drama game should be attractive to children, young people, and adults alike so that they can identify with it, and the linguistic content should be suitable to their needs and interests. J. Y. K. Kerr (1977), cited in British Council (1977), states that both children and adults quickly lose interest in a game or simulation if the conceptual level is inappropriate; furthermore, the theme should be one with which participants can easily identify. (p. 6).

Mime

Dougill (1987), cited in Minasyan (2014), notes that *Mime* involves the process of acting out of a story or idea without saying a word and is accompanied by body movement, gesture, or facial expression. (p. 17). Rose (1985), cited in Minasyan (2014), states:

“During miming, paralinguistic features of communication are put into action. The fact that miming is done without saying a word creates a vital stimulus for language learners, for whom language builds barriers and hinders communication. However, the fact that no language is used in miming doesn't mean that language is not developing. On the contrary, miming helps to recall and reinforce language items, associating them with visuals and images”. (p. 17).

Improvisations

According to Davies (1990, p. 94) cited in Bessadet (2022):

Improvisation is another salient drama technique that can be used in English teaching, in which learners are presented with a situation and challenged to respond to it. Students can create their script and agree on developing its idea and shaping its structure, but without any speech construction, the acting must be spontaneous and improvised. (p. 530)

Davies (1990, cited in Bessadet 2022) proclaims that “Thoughts and feelings are emphasized in *improvisation*, in which learners create people and relationships by acting out situations using speech and movement, but without a preconceived plan”.

Improvisation is defined as “an unscripted, unrehearsed, spontaneous set of actions” where the teacher gives directions or proposes a setting and the learner responds by acting out the situation. (Landy 1982, cited in Minasyan 2014, p. 17)

Virtual Drama-Based Approach for ELT

With the advancement of information and communications technologies (ICTs), changes in all areas of human existence are becoming increasingly palpable. Education is no exception to this transformation, to the point that in-person learning is no longer necessary, which was evident during the pandemic lockdown.

Nevertheless, for some English teachers, it can be challenging to embrace virtual platforms for implementing virtual drama techniques in ELT due to personal or professional reasons. Aedo & Millafilo (2021) claim that “the pandemic and online classes highlighted the need to continue learning and stay ahead of the curve with technological tools and their potential pedagogical uses. Continuous learning is part of the professional role of teaching”. (p. 230)

In this sense, Virtual Education is broadly defined by Parlakkilic (2014, cited in Stanton, 2024):

“This term refers to an educational model where the teacher and student are separated and content is provided through a course management application, generally through the Internet or videoconferencing. Students then communicate with their teacher via the same technologies. Virtual lessons can be delivered synchronously or asynchronously”. (p. 10)

Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic necessitated the implementation of virtual classes, which became the primary option for students worldwide. It also popularized distance education at all educational levels, changing traditional education. The founding principle of distance education is a commitment to disadvantaged groups who were unable to access universities (Morena et al. 2022).

In the same way, Luthra, S., & Kumar, A. (2024), (within the framework of the new National Education Policy, 2020, which recognizes technology as a crucial tool for improving various educational processes and outcomes), point out that:

“Due to the extensive dissemination of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a notable shift in recent times from conventional in-person teaching to remote learning facilitated by the internet. Although the teaching and learning process has transitioned to an online medium for a limited period of time, virtual classes have become the existing reality in various contexts, making it imperative to examine the potential effectiveness of including drama activities into online classes”. (p. 520).

As Coicaud (2010, cited in Morena et al. 2022) mentioned that:

“A pioneering institution in the task of providing access to education for marginalized groups is the Open University of Great Britain, established in 1969. Since its inception, and encouraged by technological advances, universities in several countries have offered distance learning programs. The terms ‘distance education’ and ‘virtual education’ are used interchangeably in several countries to describe teaching and learning mediated by electronic technologies”. (p. 161)

In Colombia, some universities such as Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD), recognized for its educational modality (open and distance), for the innovative quality and relevance of its programs, aims to educate a large part of the Colombian

population that requires an educational modality different from the traditional one, having as premises "education for all" and "social equity" (Tellez, 2009).

Now is the prime time to leverage the technological skills of young people and adults who need remote learning to maximize the potential of internet technology platforms. As mentioned by Sharma et al. (2023):

Since the young learners are technologically proficient, they favor working together on projects with their peers where they can use their creativity, inventiveness, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Foreign language learners today frequently have diverse perspectives on communication, literature, language, and society due to their constant social media usage. (p. 19)

For McCombs (2004, cited in McCombs & Vakili, 2005), educators, researchers, and policymakers continue to argue for updated learning and schooling models and the increased use of new and emerging electronic learning technologies (e-learning) that can better prepare students for an increasingly global, changing, and complex world. (p. 1582).

Even with today's technological advances, which allow remote connection, there is still reluctance for some teachers and students to build a drama-based online community for ELT. Cameron et al. (2017, cited in Stanton 2024) considered that:

“A shift from traditional to online education at the secondary level often excludes performing arts disciplines such as theatre, music, and choir. These elective offerings are often either set aside for the in-person side of blended

learning or completely removed from course offerings of entirely virtual schools”. (p. 1)

As Inderawati et al. (2023) mentioned:

Based on the result of the needs analysis of this study, it is suggested to explore their proficiency of English through drama performance of Literature in ELT and used online application as a tool in learning Literature in ELT. [...] By employing an internet tool, that knowledge can serve as a grounded consideration while creating virtual drama performances. (p. 559)

Virtual Performative Activities

Now it is possible to adapt some of the dramatic techniques aforementioned in virtual settings, thanks to the Internet technological platforms. In online environments, the lessons must also be learner-centered to maintain motivation for EFL e-learning and teaching. Thus, English teachers must take maximum advantage of ICTs for the benefit of the whole e-community of learners, in turn fostering technological skills.

Guichard (2007, cited in Stanton 2024) mentioned that: “As a discipline, there has long been a reluctance to consider virtual learning options in theatre”. However, there are benefits of virtual theatre programs, many of which have been discovered during the widespread move to virtual theatre education during the Covid-19 pandemic. Once teachers and students build a strong virtual community free of pressure and anxiety, both will feel comfortable and motivated to engage in these types of dramatic activities virtually.

Bonk and Cunningham (1998, cited in McCombs & Vakili, 2005) stress the importance of reviewing learner-centered principles, constructivism, and socio-cultural

theories and applying them to the e-learning environment. Education must engage in a paradigm shift that focuses on “learners and learning” in order to meet the needs of the changing world. (p. 1583)

In this regard, McCombs & Vakili (2005) claim “That is our challenge: how to design educational systems where technology is in service to values, and supports diverse learners and learning context” (p. 1583).

Through technological platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, and even through WhatsApp, it is possible to make a group video call so that many students can participate. On the other hand, it may be possible to pre-create presentations in Genially, Prezi, Canva, PowToon, etc., or self-videos and then share them in the virtual community. Thereby, synchronous and asynchronous meetings can be held.

Sezgin (2020, cited in Inderawati, 2023) asserts that educators who work with digital tools like Zoom have given their pupils access to improved drama or theater lessons that include video discussions, presentations, and videos. Some performative activities that can be adapted for virtual environments include:

Simulations

Engaging learners through technological platforms, asking them to perform real-life situations like job interviews or schedule travels. J Y K Kerr (1977, cited in British Council 1977) notes that “When selecting games or simulations for inclusion in an ELT program, one important consideration must be the nature of the language to be employed and its usefulness to the students.” (p. 7).

Moreover, drama activities possess the capacity to engage pupils in situations that mirror real-life experiences. In addition, via the use of multimedia expertise, game technology, and artificial intelligence advancements, it becomes feasible to provide heightened levels of authenticity in simulations. (Luthra, S. & Kumar, A. 2024, p. 521).

Role plays

Learners in role-playing can represent any real or imaginary situation that they might have, in and outside the classroom, e.g., planning a party, shopping, a medical appointment, or a daily commute; they can also embody an imaginary character. This performance can be prepared through a scripted plan or an improvised speech; they can perform individually, record a video, or perform in pairs through a video call.

The teacher can help students by providing ideas, encouraging creativity, assigning roles, and giving them feedback. Moşteanu (2021, cited in Inderawati et al., 2024) emphasizes that maintaining student attention in a virtual environment is critical, highlighting the need for engaging methodologies that virtual drama can provide.

Drama games

In this kind of activity, the teacher can utilize a *Warm-Up* activity, such as asking students about their greatest trip, party, or the last book they read, and so on. Another interesting drama game is *Mime*, in which one student acts out a word without voice, and the others try to guess it.

In this regard, J Y K Kerr (1977, cited in British Council 1977), notes that in communication games, however, the exact language that the student will need in order to

express himself is much less predictable, though broad semantic areas can usually be anticipated.

The teacher can organize students into private rooms in pairs or small groups to prepare a script or improvise a performance within a video call. Using the screen-sharing feature and chat, participants can perform and contribute some ideas.

Improvisations

Alike in face-to-face settings, through online platforms, it is possible to ask students a spontaneous question about any personal experience. As Minasyan (2014) states:

“The most significant part of improvisation activities is the level of freedom, which gives learners a chance to be initiators rather than passive respondents. As improvisation is done spontaneously, without preliminary preparation, no memorization takes place, therefore, learners rely on their imagination and creativity to shape ideas and act appropriately in a given situation”. (p. 17)

Communicative Approach in Drama Techniques for ELT

In today's globalized world, significant changes are taking place in all areas, including education, particularly in the teaching and learning of foreign languages, due to the need for communication between countries. The approach known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), in which the use of the target language becomes more necessary than learning its structure, is used to achieve language speaking proficiency.

As Sayera (2019) claims:

“In today’s knowledge-based, types of skills and competencies that students need to gain are different from in the past. Emphasizing communicative competence is one of the most influential developments in language education. The implementation of communicative activities in EFL/ESL classrooms prepares learners to use English in the world beyond, based on their own needs, interests, and opportunities”. (p. 471)

Nguyen (2023) notes that, particularly, communicative competence in English is one of the most crucial criteria for students to integrate with the globe effectively. As Bailey & Savage (1994, cited in Nguyen 2023) also state, “Among all four language skills, speaking skills are considered the most important skill in order to communicate well in this global world”. (p. 991).

Hence, speaking and listening are a main part of language education settings since they address effective oral communication. Therefore, this monograph presents the drama- based approach as a powerful tool that can be alternated with other types of more formal activities in both face-to-face and virtual environments to enhance learners' not only

linguistic skills but also affective and social ones. Drama techniques provide learners with authentic language use in performing real-life situations, which is the foundation of the CLT approach.

Fonio and Genicot (2011), cited in Le, T.Q. et al. (2024), provide a theoretical rationale for using theatre projects in foreign language teaching. They examine the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) to legitimize theatre projects as an effective teaching method. Their findings reveal the convergences between theatre projects and the CEFR. Fonio and Genicot (2011, cited in Le, T.Q. et al. 2024) remark that:

“By analyzing the CEFR objectives and drawing on their first-hand experiences in teaching Bachelor’s and Master’s degree students at Grenoble University in France, they argue that product-oriented theatre projects enhance various aspects of language learning, including multiculturalism, communicative competencies, reading and writing skills, speaking (pronunciation, stress, and intonation), sociolinguistic awareness (registers, social relations, politeness conventions), and paralinguistic and pragmatic factors (irony, humor, body language)”. (p. 11).

Developing Communicative Competence in ELT Through Drama Activities

The main objective of the CLT approach is to develop learners’ communicative competence through methods that promote language use in contexts as close to real-life situations as possible. Sayera (2019) tackles this topic as follows:

The origins of the Communicative Approach are to be found in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The communicative approach is the product of some linguists and educators who had grown dissatisfied with the previous two methods used for foreign language teaching: the audio-lingual method and the Grammar-translation method. These great linguists and educators who contributed to the rise of this worldwide used approach are Hymes, Chomsky, Wilkins, Van Ek, and Alexander, and the Council of Europe. (p. 472)

In this sense, Sayera (2019) considers that at that time, students did not learn a foreign language completely because they only learnt the language structure, but they did not acquire enough communicative proficiency to communicate outside the classroom in real-life situations.

The drama-based, also known as theatre-based approach, is considered by teachers a holistic method because it involves the development of both affective and cognitive dimensions. Beatty (2015), cited in Bessadet (2022), points out that:

Of all other forms of literature, drama can be the shorter path that leads the teacher towards the goal of developing students' receptive and productive skills, mainly communication skills. "Drama provides an authentic arena for natural language use in real situations with an emphasis on reciprocal, synchronized, unpredictable audience interactions". (p. 526).

Encouraging learners to participate in any drama activity fosters their oral skills, such as fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and intonation, alongside soft skills, due to their communicative and collaborative nature. After everything, these performative techniques help learners improve their communicative competence through script memorization, rehearsals, character imitations, read and write scripts, etc. Thereby, EFL learners overcome their fears or insecurities when they need to speak in front of an audience or interact with other people.

Methodology

According to Alfonso (1995), cited in Morales (2003), documentary research is a scientific procedure, a systematic process of inquiry, collection, organization, analysis, and interpretation of information or data around a certain topic.

This documentary research was founded on a comprehensive review of academic sources, including scientific articles, theses, and previous case studies, that address how individuals acquire a foreign language more effectively. The use of dramatic techniques is also explored for improving EFL learners' oral skills, which in turn contribute to the development of personal and social skills. Morales (2003) notes that:

“Since the documentary research process essentially consists of documents that are the result of other research and the reflections of theorists, which represent the theoretical basis of the area under investigation, knowledge is built from the reading, analysis, reflection, and interpretation of said documents”. (p. 2).

The analysis and interpretation of the data collected in this monograph were done based on a qualitative approach that seeks to make a description of how individuals learn a language, the main aspects of the language teaching process, and also to reflect on the benefits of using a drama-based approach in EFL classes. This research focuses on gaining a deep understanding of how dramatic activities contribute to enhancing EFL proficiency in both face-to-face and virtual settings.

As Diaz & Sime (2009), cited in Revilla (2020), explain: The documentary research method is primarily used in qualitative studies. It involves an indirect approach to reality,

based on secondary sources. Therefore, data available in written or visual sources generated by individuals, researchers, or institutions for various purposes are accessed. (p. 7)

Method

The findings of this monograph were gathered through a documentary method and examined and interpreted using a qualitative approach. As Tancara (1993) states:

“[...] we can attempt a new definition of documentary research, as a series of methods and techniques for searching, processing, and storing information contained in documents, in the first instance, and the systematic, coherent, and sufficiently argued presentation of new information in a scientific document, in the second instance”. (p. 94)

In this monograph, the data were interpreted qualitatively to explain and argue the effectiveness of the drama-based approach implementation in ELT, as well as to identify the principal elements that influence learning and acquiring foreign languages. The purpose of this research is to get a better understanding of how this approach works and how to successfully implement it in both face-to-face and virtual settings.

Among the search criteria considered were: - language scholars wrote the documents, - relevant content, - the date of preparation and publication, and - that they came from reliable academic sources. The information contained in this monograph comes from various academic libraries (open access platforms) and databases, including ScienceDirect, Scielo, Redalyc, EBSCO, ERIC, ProQuest, Dialnet, Redined, Dspace, ResearchGate, and Academia.

The data collected were classified (into categories) according to the main elements that influence learning, teaching, and acquiring a foreign language, both internal and external factors. Likewise, to identify theoretical and methodological approaches, and analyze the opinions and researchers' experience from their scientific papers, theses, and case studies that support the research topic.

Research Line

This monograph is based on the research line of the School of Educational Sciences (ECEDU), Education and Human Development of Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD). Since the topic addressed is in line with learners' development of EFL linguistic skills and soft skills, it also involves general aspects of language education quality and improvement.

This line seeks to understand the relationship between human development and education. It is expected to generate new knowledge on pedagogy and learning for human development; for this, educational practices and social representations that enable human development are analyzed and systematized.

This functional line of research focuses on the development of competencies: Language, communicative competencies, and Didactics: training in ethics, values, and democracy (UNAD, 2020).

Research Phases

Phase 1 – The topic delimitation:

At this stage, several issues related to teaching and learning English as a foreign language were examined, including enhancing students' communication skills, as well as

identifying the best teaching practices of English teachers. The author's previous experience with EFL learning and teaching, including conducting face-to-face and virtual performance activities, was also taken into account.

This led to the election of a topic that involves encouraging teachers and learners to adopt a motivating learning and teaching EFL method, which contributes to strengthening linguistic, social, and personal skills, which can be alternated with other traditional activities.

For these reasons, this monograph examines the implementation of the drama-based approach in both face-to-face and virtual environments for ELT. Moreover, it considers the factors that influence effective communication in EFL, which can be internal and external.

Phase 2 – Literature Review

This phase involved searching for documents, selecting them, and collecting relevant information on the addressed topic from academic databases and indexed journals such as ScienceDirect, Scielo, Redalyc, EBSCO, ERIC, ProQuest, Dialnet, Redined, Dspace, ResearchGate, and Academia to analyze and interpret them.

Documents such as scientific articles, monographs, undergraduate theses, doctoral theses, and case studies related to the chosen research topic were gathered according to the author's criteria. It was considered that the articles and research papers were written or developed by professionals in education (language teachers) and that the publication date preferably not exceed fifteen to twenty years from their creation to the present.

Thus, this data analysis will serve to identify gaps in the available literature and issues that likely require further research, such as the incorporation of role-playing learning

into virtual EFL environments. Further research might also explain how to develop role-playing virtual techniques in detail.

Phase 3 – Critical Analysis

Once the data was gathered, the information content in those documents was analyzed and organized to categorize and contextualize concepts and important ideas for the construction of this work. This literature review analysis allowed for a comparison and contrast of information to determine the current status of the use of a drama-based approach in EFL teaching in face-to-face and virtual environments. Likewise, this documentary research served to set the main categories that comprise the Theoretical Framework, which was organized in a Matrix. (See Annex.1 *Document Analysis Matrix*)

This Matrix presents the selected sources to construct the theoretical basis of the drama-based approach, its successful implementation in ELT, and communication competence enhancement. The documentary material sought was consistent with the categories considered relevant and cross-cutting to the main topic, which helps to enhance understanding of it and explain it better. These categories are closely related and evidently are part of the main topic, and help in the theory's interpretation process, are the following:

Table 3

Study Categories and Subcategories

Category	Subcategory
Emotional Intelligence in FL Acquisition	
Affective Filter in FL Acquisition	
Learner-Centered Approach in ELT	

Drama-Based Approach in ELT	- EFL Oral Skills Developed through Drama Techniques - Performative Activities for ELT Enhancement - Simulations - Role-plays - Drama Games - Mime - Improvisations
Virtual Drama-based Approach for ELT	- Virtual Performative Activities in ELT
Communicative Approach in Drama Techniques for ELT	- Developing Communicative Competence in EFL through Drama Activities

Note. Explain the Study Categories and Subcategories.

In this phase, an argument is developed from the author's perspective after reviewing and assessing the content, purpose, and validity of each document.

Phase 4 – Classification and Organization

In this stage, the collected data were classified according to each category that constitutes the Theoretical Framework. After identifying the main variables of the central theme, the documents were organized logically to draw conclusions and develop an argument, providing a sense of the information found.

Phase 5 – Report Writing

In this final phase, writing up the findings was done in order to present them coherently and clearly. Through trial and error, it was written and rewritten to obtain a final product at the level of a monographic document. Firstly, a conceptual scheme was designed

taking into account the central idea and the subtopics involved in the process of teaching and learning a foreign language. Then, the organization of the Framework items was done to establish the theoretical foundation and argue it, as well as to review scholars' beliefs through a comprehensive literature review.

Similarly, during this writing phase, additional reports were prepared, including Conclusions, Discussion, Results, and further Recommendations, to provide a personal point of view and review arguments. Furthermore, Acknowledgments, Dedication, and Abstract were written in this phase.

Results and Discussion

After reviewing the collected documents on the teaching and learning of foreign languages, it is evident that throughout history, educational systems worldwide have faced challenges in achieving learners' foreign language communicative proficiency. There is a concern among governments and academic institutions about the urgent need to prepare all learners, from basic education to higher education, in acquiring English as a foreign language, due to its global importance today.

The findings of this documentary research show the important contributions that the drama-based method has made to the improvement of EFL learners' communicative competence. As Esteban (2015) states:

“Theatre encourages students, and it also provides many advantages to them, such as the improvement of the communicative competence, the acquisition of new vocabulary and new expressions, because students read a lot of books to create a play, the improvement of the pronunciation caused by the continuous repetitions of rehearsals, they also get to overcome the shyness because they have to speak before the public, and it also reinforces the relationship between teachers and students”. (Esteban, S. 2015, p.28)

So, this method contributes to the development of oral skills such as pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy, and also enhances listening, reading, and writing. Likewise, the reviewed papers demonstrate that drama techniques also enhance learners' motivation, creativity, teamwork, and, consequently, self-esteem due to their communicative and collaborative nature. In this regard, Gómez (2015) proclaims, “Moreover, in language

learning environments, it is vital that teachers include activities that boost students' confidence and enhance their self-esteem”.

Considering these points, the results of this literature review reveal that language teachers can incorporate some dramatic activities, such as improvisations, simulations, role-plays, and other drama games, to inject energy into students and prevent boredom equally in face-to-face and virtual environments, obviously not all the class time, but alternating with more formal activities.

However, some English teachers prefer to carry out other traditional activities, probably because they do not consider this kind of activity a serious resource, or because learners lack concentration and willingness, or the teacher may lose control over the group. Additionally, while some educators are passionate about integrating theatre activities into their teaching practices, they may hesitate to begin due to personal anxieties or perceived obstacles (Le, T.Q., 2024).

In this regard, Minasyan (2014), after applying the drama course, observed that: “During the lesson, I could also notice that many of students didn't take drama education in language class seriously, considering that “no serious” learning is happening”. Additionally, this author also mentioned that:

“It is possible that one of the factors for learners rejecting to take the drama course was the fact that most of the students did not want to come out of their comfort zone and to appear in embarrassing or funny situations that will make them feel uneasy”. (Minasyan, 2014, p. 36)

To prevent the unwillingness or hesitation of some students and teachers to participate in these kinds of dramatic activities, it might be necessary to include them in the ELT curriculum. As Minasyan (2014) proclaims:

“In order to be able to pilot the course and have practical implications about the drama pedagogy and its effectiveness, as well as to ensure students’ participation in the course, an agreement between graduate committee was made to change the rationale of the course. It was decided to incorporate Drama techniques into already existing curriculum”. (p. 37)

One of the findings of this documentary research serves as a basis for future research on how to successfully implement dramatic activities in virtual environments due to the lack of teachers' training in online pedagogic drama management. Stanton (2024) expresses that: “Teaching theatre virtually required a reevaluation of the idea of rigor in the curriculum and required teachers to shift their methods of theatrical production and student engagement. Researchers can use this study to further the application of CoI theory to virtual arts education, to determine best practices for virtual theatre educators, and to emphasize the importance of training and support for virtual educators”. (Stanton, 2024, p. iv)

Conclusions and Recommendations

After the documentary revision, the analysis and interpretation of the found information, this monograph concludes that:

The results obtained with the revision of some information found indicate that in today's world, the accurate management of the English language is almost a mandatory need, since it is considered a lingua franca. According to Education First (EF, 2019), "In today's world, the English language demonstrates a strong network effect: the more people use it, the more useful it becomes" (p. 4), making it imperative to implement methods that prioritize an authentic language use.

Learning, teaching, and acquiring a foreign language is a process that involves a set of cognitive and affective elements. Therefore, the Cognitive Quotient does not work alone; it is necessary to consider the Emotional Quotient and a high level of Emotional Intelligence, which together address learners' success in learning a foreign language.

To help students develop communicative competence in a foreign language, in all four abilities: reading, listening, writing, and speaking, it is necessary to utilize diverse types of methods and techniques, as well as create a suitable learning environment. Since today, it is urgent to communicate in the English language, teachers must engage learners in activities that reinforce their speaking proficiency through active participation.

This monograph reviewed the foundation of the learner-centered approach because, in learning a foreign language, students must be at the center of the process as they need to be protagonists of their own learning. The theoretical review confirms that when learners engage in activities on their own with teacher guidance, more meaningful learning and improved learning outcomes can result.

Drama-based approach in ELT provides the possibility to put students at the center of the process as it promotes enhancement in speaking skills, through the language use in real-life situation simulations. Encourage learners, even in virtual environments, to perform some dramatic activities, such as Improvisations, Role- plays, and Simulations enhance oral skills, such as pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy, among others. Moreover, this method also contributes to emotion management due to learners' welfare is crucial for language learning.

Despite some language teachers' reluctance to the integration of performative techniques into the EFL lessons, this study trusts in this method's growing adoption in teaching practices. At the same time, this monograph recommends further research on how to implement performative techniques in virtual environments, as well as suggesting conducting studies on language teachers' training related to integrating the drama-based approach.

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[com.bibliotecavirtual.unad.edu.co/science/article/pii/S2405844024136511?via%3Dihub](https://www-sciencedirect-com.bibliotecavirtual.unad.edu.co/science/article/pii/S2405844024136511?via%3Dihub)

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Appendix

Appendix A

Document Analysis Matrix

Document Analysis Matrix				
Analysis Category	Title	Link	APA	Type of source
Emotional Intelligence in Language Learning	Addressing Emotional Aspects in the Second Language Learning Processes.	https://doi-org.biblioteca.virtual.unad.edu.co/10.19183/how.31.1.704	Cisneros, L. (2024). Addressing Emotional Aspects in the Second Language Learning Processes.	MAGAZINE ARTICLE (HOW Volume 31, Number 1)
	The impact of emotional intelligence on language learning achievements in university EFL students.	https://oapub.org/edu/index.php/ejel/article/view/5296/7928	Degirmenci, G., & Yavuz, M. (2024). The impact of emotional intelligence on language learning achievements in university EFL students. <i>European Journal of English Language Teaching</i> .	MAGAZINE ARTICLE (European Journal of English Language Teaching, Volume 9, Number 3)
	Exploring Affective Variables in the EFL Classroom: An Educational Proposal for the Development of Personal and	https://dspace.uib.es/xmlui/handle/11201/1845	Gómez, A. (2015). Exploring Affective Variables in the EFL Classroom: An Educational Proposal for the Development of	MASTER'S THESIS

	Emotional Intelligences through Dramatical Interpretations.		Personal and Emotional Intelligences through Dramatical Interpretations.	
	Emotional intelligence in foreign language acquisition.	https://is.muni.cz/repo/1338686/?so=na	Rudolfová, E. (2015). Emotional intelligence in foreign language acquisition. <i>CASALC Review</i> , (1).	MAGAZINE ARTICLE (IS MUNI)
	Speaking accuracy and fluency among EFL learners: The role of creative thinking, emotional intelligence, and academic enthusiasm.	https://doi.org/bibliotecavirtual.unad.edu.co/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e37620 https://doi-org.bibliotecavirtual.unad.edu.co/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e37620	Wang, W. Rezaei, Y. M., & Izadpanah, S. (2024). Speaking accuracy and fluency among EFL learners: The role of creative thinking, emotional intelligence, and academic enthusiasm.	RESEARCH ARTICLE
Affective Filter in Language Learning	Theories of acquisition and learning in second language and Krashen's affective filter hypothesis.	https://avances.adide.org/index.php/ase/article/view/506	Al Shehri, H. (2012). Theories of acquisition and learning in second language and Krashen's affective filter hypothesis.	JOURNAL ARTICLE (Avances, Núm, 16)
	Stephen Krashen: sus aportes a la educación bilingüe.	https://revistas.ucc.edu.co/index.php/ra/article/view/491	Contreras, O. (2012). Stephen Krashen: sus aportes a la educación	MAGAZINE ARTICLE (Rastros & Rostros, Vol 14, Núm, 27)

			bilingüe. <i>Rastros Rostros</i> , 14(27).	
Learner-centered approach in ELT	The Impact of Student-Centered Instruction on EFL Learners' Affect and Achievement.	https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1200231.pdf	Kassem, H. (2019). The Impact of Student-Centered Instruction on EFL Learners' Affect and Achievement.	JOURNAL ARTICLE (English Language Teaching Vol. 12, No. 1)
	<i>Learner-Centered Psychological Principles: Guidelines for School Redesign and Reform.</i>	https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED371994.pdf	<i>Learner-Centered Psychological Principles: Guidelines for School Redesign and Reform.</i> APA. (1993)	DESCRIPTIVE REPORT
	Learner-centered approach in teaching foreign language: Psychological and pedagogical conditions.	https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042815051770	Matukhin, D. & Bolgova, D. (2015). Learner-centered approach in teaching foreign language: Psychological and pedagogical conditions.	JOURNAL ARTICLE (Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, Vol. 206)
	<i>A Learner-Centered Framework for E-Learning.</i>	https://journals-sagepub-com.bibliotecavirtual.unad.edu.co/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1467-9620.2005.00534.x	McCombs, B. & Vakili, D. (2005). <i>A Learner-Centered Framework for E-Learning</i> (Vol. 107, Issue 8, pp. 1582–1600).	JOURNAL ARTICLE (Teachers College Record Volume 107, Number 8)
	Application of Learner-Centered Approach in College English Instruction in	https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v14n10p23	Shengnan, D. (2021). Application of Learner-Centered Approach in	JOURNAL ARTICLE (English Language

	China: A Case Study.		College English Instruction in China: A Case Study.	Teaching; Vol. 14, No. 10)
Drama-based approach for ELT	The Effect of drama-based method on pre-intermediate EFL learners' speaking skill and elementary EFL learners' speaking fluency, comprehensibility, grammaticality, and willingness to communicate.	https://journals.scmu.sinaweb.net/article/114621.html	Barekat, B., & Nezami, H. (2020). The Effect of drama-based method on pre-intermediate EFL learners' speaking skill and elementary EFL learners' speaking fluency, comprehensibility, grammaticality, and willingness to communicate.	JOURNAL ARTICLE (Iranian Journal of English for Academic Purposes, Vol. 9, No. 2020)
	Drama-based approach in English language teaching.	https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4086137	Bessadet, L. (2022). Drama-based approach in English language teaching.	JOURNAL ARTICLE (Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume 13. Number 1)
	Theatre used in teaching foreign languages, Dramatization as a model, and action.	https://redine.d.educacion.gob.es/xmlui/handle/11162/178547	Fulla, A. C. (2013). Theatre is used in teaching foreign languages as a dramatization model and action.	MAGAZINE ARTICLE (Didáctica, Lengua y Literatura, Vol. 25)
	Theatre as a didactic resource in an English classroom.	https://repositorio.ual.es/bitstream/handle/10835/3472/2928_teatro%20como%20recurso%20didactico%20	Esteban, S. (2015). Theatre as a didactic resource in an English classroom.	FINAL DEGREE PROJECT

		2.pdf?sequence=1		
	Drama and theatre in teaching foreign languages for professional purposes.	https://doi.org/10.4000/apliut.4215	Giebert, S. (2014). Drama and theatre in teaching foreign languages for professional purposes. <i>Open Edition Journals</i>	JOURNAL ARTICLE (Open Edition Journals, Vol. xxxiii N° 1)
	Theater for Language Teaching and Learning: The E Theater, a Holistic Methodology.	https://doi-org.biblioteca.virtual.unad.edu.co/10.15446/profile.v20n2.63969	Gualdrón, E., & Castillo, E. (2018). Theater for Language Teaching and Learning: The E Theater, a Holistic Methodology. <i>Revista PROFILE: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development</i> , 20(2), 211.	MAGAZINE ARTICLE (Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development, Vol. 20, N° 2)
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