



Kavaklı, N. (2016). A gimmick for mimick: the ELT student-teachers' attitudes towards drama course. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching (IOJET)*, 3(2). 122-130.

<http://iojet.org/index.php/IOJET/article/view/124/130>

Received: 21.12.2015  
Received in revised form: 04.04.2016  
Accepted: 07.04.2016

## **A GIMMICK FOR MIMIC: THE ELT STUDENT-TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS DRAMA COURSE**

Nurdan KAVAKLI

Hacettepe University, Faculty of Education, the Department of English Language Teaching.

nurdankavakli@gmail.com

Biodata:

**Nurdan Kavaklı** graduated from Dokuz Eylül University in 2010 from the Department of English Language Teaching. She is currently working as a research assistant and a Ph.D. candidate at the department of English Language Teaching in Hacettepe University. Her interests are language endangerment, language revitalization and language testing.

Copyright by Informascope. Material published and so copyrighted may not be published elsewhere without the written permission of IOJET.

## A GIMMICK FOR MIMIC: THE ELT STUDENT-TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS DRAMA COURSE

Nurdan Kavaklı

nurdankavakli@gmail.com

### Abstract

As a part of interaction-based meaningful activities, the use of drama techniques in education has gained popularity so far. The purpose of this study is to tackle the question whether the drama course together with the in-class applications contribute to the attitudes of prospective English language teachers. In that, the study is composed of the quantitative analysis of the attitudes of the prospective teachers from third graders at English Language Teaching (hereafter ELT) department. The data are gathered through the use of a 25-question-attitude scale (Topoğlu & Erden, 2012) which has been administered to all participants, which are in sum 37 sophomore students. The results have indicated positive attitudes towards drama course held in ELT department within the scope of desire to increase in course duration, continuity of the course for future benefits, the development of personal, interactional and social skills, and the improvement of the creativity skill.

*Keywords:* Drama education, teacher training, ELT, attitudes.

### 1. Introduction

As educational changes have long been shaped by 'Communicative Approach', learners are to be seen as active participants throughout the process of language learning in the classroom environment. Therefore, most ELT teachers take great delight in using interaction-based meaningful activities in the language teaching and learning environment. Those are the ones that are directly different from the mechanical ones in which the newness has no deal to be handled as an instructional catalyst. In that case, as more of a tendency, drama is considered as an activity involving people in a social and interactive context by means of mutual understanding and empathy in a context that is rich in effective communication. It includes something beyond linguistic competence as it is composed of mimes, gestures, intonation, body posture and other prosodic features.

In essence, drama is seen as a blanket term covering 'a wide range of oral activities that have an element of creativity present' (Hubbard et al, 1983: 317). With another view, Holden (1982: 1) states that "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". According to Elam (1980), drama refers to the work designed for stage representation, the body of written plays. Way (1967) asserts that drama education, apart from theatre education, is full of experiences of the participants, irrespective of any function of communication to an audience. Furthermore, Heathcote and Bolton (1995) note that educational drama involves active participants in role-taking contexts in which the main concern is upon the attitudes; not upon the characters. Within this context, any information shared by the participants becomes a part of a common knowledge (Szauder, 2004).

In contemporary societies, it has gained great importance to use creativity to continue to meet the challenges of the future through education at schools. That is why drama pops up as a course to develop creativity, problem solving, and challenge people's understandings, communication and empathy (Holden, 1983). The value of drama course in education draws the attention of the teachers who advocate communicative competence in classroom instruction. Although certain problems are emphasized within the implementation of the course, drama education is supposed to be effective in permanence of learning, as it not only provides positive learning atmosphere but it also develops communication skills. In case of effective implementation, it helps learners to develop positive attitudes such as self-trust and imagination (Holden, 1981). Herein, it is to be noted that drama as an art and drama as a course are differentiated in nature. To elaborate, drama is a mode of narrative which is mostly fictional and represented in performance (Elam, 1990). The enactment of drama is mostly performed in theatres on a stage by actors before an audience. On the other hand, drama as a technique, which is mostly called upon creative drama, nestles dramatic activities and games exploited preemptively in educational settings with children, which has its roots in the early 1990s. From now on, the drama mentioned within the scope of this article, is the technique, albeit not an art.

In the light of these, teachers clearly need practical step by step guidance on how to integrate drama-based activities into language courses in a more comprehensive and cohesive way. Methodology books or papers are flooded with such terms like drama education, educational and/or creative drama, and drama teaching. However, the inclusion of drama-based activities is not that much evident. The students, for that reason, are to compensate for this loss on their own or with one or more fellow students by acting in a controlled way in lieu of organizational and linguistic signposts most generally established by the teacher. Besides, they are to be left free to work and act out voluntarily. In both cases, there is the entity of interaction grounded upon students' own personal store of language in language learning environment. Wessels (1987) asserts that drama needs enthusiasm to create an environment of mutual trust so that both learners and teachers have the opportunity to change the roles according to the objectives of the lesson. In this sense, Holden (1982: 14) suggests the following five-point plan for integrating drama activities into the lesson:

'First of all, the teacher is to present the idea, theme, or problem to the students, organizing any preliminary work and making sure that the students know exactly what to do. Then, the students are to discuss in groups what they are going to do and exactly how they are going to do this. Thirdly, the students experiment in groups with various interpretations until they are satisfied with one. A possible forth stage would consist of students showing their interpretation or any kind of solution to another group or to the rest of the class. Finally-or even in place of the fourth stage-the students may discuss their solution in groups or with the rest of the class. This discussion can serve as a form of assessment for the students of their work, as well.'

In a side, the inclusion of drama activities into ELT is a gimmick for learners. Because learners are expected to absorb the information much easier through aforementioned activities. Secure about the learners' emotional development, teachers become more at ease as there is not any obligation to master the language; albeit the support of prosodic features of that language which are preceded by variety of classroom materials and/or equipment. Within this framework, the enrichment of learning through drama has long been reviewed as a research topic. Herein, the use of drama techniques in English language teaching has occupied the big part amidst these researches (Esslin, 1987; Davies, 1990; Sam, 1990; McCarthy & Carter, 1994; Chukueggu, 2012; Cremin, Reedy, Bearne & Dombey, 2015). At the very same, drama techniques in language teaching which are taken at the heart of the

school curriculum have also been reviewed (Maley & Duff, 1978; Holden, 1981; Wessels, 1987; Zafeiriadou, 2009; Zhang & Gao, 2014). Besides, educational drama has been a research topic for primary schools (Winston, 2004) and teaching English to young learners (Bland, 2015) as well. Within the context of English language teaching Mengü (2002) has suggested a syllabus for the drama courses which are included in the ELT departments. Baldwin and Fleming (2003) has ascertained the effectiveness of drama for teaching literacy. The use of drama techniques for teaching English as a foreign language has yielded productive and positive results for skills development, as well. Herein, the relationships between writing and drama (Baldwin & John, 2012), oral skills development (Miccoli, 2003; Stokes, 2014), teaching speaking and listening through drama techniques (Prendiville & Toye, 2007) and enrichment of learning through the use of drama in foreign language teaching courses (Slamet, 2015) have been pointed out. To add more, the use of drama techniques in teaching English as a foreign language classes has brought to a successful conclusion on the reduction of speaking anxiety (Atas, 2015).

It is a crystal clear fact that drama takes an important role in education carrying out three elements of meaningful activities, namely ‘the presence of conflict, the imitation of reality, and the practice of improvisation’ (Dougill, 1987: 60). The personal, emotional and social tendencies of the students seem to control these elements in an instructional environment when they feel free to produce, and that is why these controller elements are to be taken into consideration in the field of education. Accordingly, this study aims to uncloak the attitudes of prospective English language teachers towards drama course as one of the selective courses of the ELT curriculum. Therefore, the perspectives of the student-teachers are targeted to be reckoned as an indicator for the effective use of drama activities for future use. At the very same, the utility of the course for the benefit of learners is identified; in that, these learners are future English language teachers who are supposed to be the activator of classroom practices.

## **2. Methodology**

In this study, a non-experimental research utilizing survey design was employed. A questionnaire composed of 25 items, which was developed by Topoğlu & Erden (2012) to investigate the learners’ attitudes towards music course, was adapted for drama course, and exploited to collect data within the scope of this study. Within the methodology part, aim of the study, instruments used to collect data, procedures for data collection and analysis, findings and discussion were discussed.

### **2.1. Aims of the Study**

The aim of this study is to investigate the attitudes of prospective English language teachers towards drama course within the framework of its contribution to the field of ELT. Accordingly, answers to the following research questions are sought:

1. What are the attitudes of ELT sophomore students towards drama courses?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference between groups in terms attitudes towards drama courses regarding gender?
3. What are the tendencies of students towards drama course regarding sub- components listed as: interest, skill development, emotional interference, educational gains?

### **2.2. Participants and Setting**

The participants of the current study included 37 students recruited in compliance with stratified random sampling from 3<sup>rd</sup> graders of the ELT department at a state university in Turkey. The participants all attended to Drama course during the 2013-2014 Fall Semester. Herein, it was to be stated that Drama as course was an elective course offered for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders

within the curriculum of the ELT departments. To give a detailed information about the participants, it was to be highlighted that with a count of 26, the female students were the 70.3% of the total number. On the other hand, the rest (N=11) included the male students with the ratio of 29.7%, whose consent forms were all taken before enrolling for this study.

### **2.3. Instruments**

With the aim to scrutinize the attitudes of ELT students towards drama course, the necessary data was gathered by means of a five point-Likert scale designed, planned, and previously administered to their own subjects, and applied for music course by Topoğlu & Erden (2012). The instrument was adapted by the researcher regarding the drama course. The language of the scale was English which was catered for all of the participants. If designated by labels, the scale was consisted of *Strongly Disagree* being the lowest possible rating and *Strongly Agree* as that of highest one. With a view to internal consistency, the scale showed high internal consistency within this context as the Cronbach's alpha was .865. If case of any, reverse items were also checked and coded accordingly to prevent problematic data entry.

### **2.4. Data Collection and Analysis**

The data gathered was analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20. To measure participants' attitudes towards drama course, mean scores were taken into consideration. Moreover, the frequency analysis of the demographic information gathered yielded no abnormality when the items were detected. To reveal if there was a significant statistical difference in terms of gender, independent samples T-Test was applied. All the numerical results were presented in tables. Furthermore, 25 items were grouped in 4 components as interest, skill development, emotional interference and educational gains. The descriptives were presented to reveal tendencies and group characteristics, as well.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

In this part, the results are presented and statistics are turned in pedagogical inferences. Each research question is answered and recommendations are made.

### **3.1. What are the attitudes of ELT sophomore students towards drama courses?**

To analyze learners' attitudes towards drama course, items in the scale was divided into 2 sections as positive and negative items. Table 1 given below presents positive items and learner attitudes:

Table 1. *Positive items*

ITEMS	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cultural Activity Habit	37	3,00	5,00	3,9189	,59528
Like drama course	37	4,00	5,00	4,7838	,41734
Course hours	37	3,00	5,00	4,4595	,55750
Excitement	37	2,00	5,00	3,5405	,93079
Time pass	37	4,00	5,00	4,5405	,50523
Course Compensation	37	2,00	5,00	3,7838	,82108
Course pleasure	37	4,00	5,00	4,6216	,49167
Relaxation	37	4,00	5,00	4,5946	,49774
Fun	37	4,00	5,00	4,6757	,47458
Future Benefits	37	4,00	5,00	4,4595	,50523
Curriculum	37	4,00	5,00	4,5135	,50671
Creativity	37	3,00	5,00	4,4595	,60528
Best Course	37	3,00	5,00	4,4324	,64724
Required for ELT	37	1,00	5,00	4,5405	,76720
Socio-Cultural and personal development	37	4,00	5,00	4,6486	,48398
Interaction	37	4,00	5,00	4,6216	,49167
Valid N (listwise)	37				

Table 1 above clearly indicated that students had quite positive attitudes towards drama course. First of all, it was assumed by the students that drama course was full of pleasure, relaxation and fun. Similarly, believing that drama course provided future benefits and socio-cultural and personal development, drama course was supposed to promote the student-teachers' creativity and personal interaction. Furthermore, in terms of pedagogy, students found drama course necessary for ELT departments; for that reason, it was to be included in the curriculum. At the very same, drama course was expected to take more hour of study as students were taking pleasure from the course.

The negative items were also analyzed. According to Table 2 given below, students felt nearly no stress and boredom while studying drama. On that account, they found the course attractive. Furthermore, students enjoyed attending the courses no matter it was elective or compulsory. That was why students had the desire to see the course within the concept of the current curriculum. To add more, students had no problems regarding the course duration and grade. However, students were not that much engaged in drama activities as a part of their spare times. In conclusion, positive and negative items showed that students had positive tendencies towards drama course. It mainly derived from drama's enjoyable nature in which students voluntarily take part in course activities. They also believed that they could benefit from drama course; therefore, they could use drama as a beneficial technique in their future career.

Table 2. *Negative items*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Stress	37	4,00	5,00	4,8378	,37368
Boredom	37	1,00	5,00	4,7297	,73214
Compulsory	37	4,00	5,00	4,6486	,48398
Unnecessary input	37	4,00	5,00	4,8378	,37368
Out of curriculum	37	4,00	5,00	4,9459	,22924
Spare time activity	37	2,00	5,00	3,2703	,80445
Finish the course	37	4,00	5,00	4,7838	,41734
Unattractive	37	4,00	5,00	4,8378	,37368
Grade	37	4,00	5,00	4,4865	,50671
Valid N (listwise)	37				

### 3.2. Is there a statistically significant difference between groups in terms of attitudes towards drama course regarding gender?

Statistics showed no significance between males and females in terms of attitudes towards drama courses. But item by item analysis was resulted with significance with 2 items, namely course hours and duration as given below. In this sense, male students showed more tendency towards an increase in drama course hours and duration than female students:

Table 3. *Item by Item IS T Test*

ITEM	MEAN		SIG. (2 TAILED)
	Females	Males	
More Course Hours	4,3077	4,8182	<b>.004</b>
More course duration	4,6923	5,0000	<b>.003</b>

### 3.3. What are the tendencies of students towards drama course regarding sub-components listed as: Interest, skill development, emotional interference, educational gains?

As presented below, all the sub-components were analyzed one by one. Accordingly, within the framework of aforementioned sub-components, interest had the highest mean score, which was subordinated by emotional interference, educational gain and skill development respectively:

Table 4. *Sub-components*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
interest	37	4,00	5,00	4,6409	,31339
skilldevelopment	37	3,20	5,00	4,1838	,36630
emotionalinterference	37	3,86	5,00	4,5290	,32796
educationalgain	37	3,83	5,00	4,4775	,32433
Valid N (listwise)	37				

It was crystal clear in Table 4 that students had positive tendencies in all sub-components, grouped by the Cluster Analysis purported by SPSS. They were to enhance their skills through drama course from which they believed they gained a lot both educationally and emotionally. And this situation was a sign to blossom interest among students towards drama course.

#### 4. Conclusion

It is all known before and during the process of research that using drama in a language course provides an active, stimulating, fun and creative environment in which developing the students' language learning potential is a need. Hereby, the results of the research have shown that ELT students of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade seem to be quite satisfied with the drama course. With a view to the reasons lie behind it, it can be speculated that the course content is up-to-date and enjoyable including real-life activities based on authentic materials. Besides, the course content depends both on hands-on skills and computer-based material design, enabling authentic and beneficial material adaptation and design.

Furthermore, the course promotes students' creativity and social interaction among each other. It also empowers intellectual skills and provides harmony with these skills and foreign language teaching. The activities within the scope of drama course develop confidence, motivation, self-trust and oral communication skills. The course itself enhances awareness of interpersonal and socio-cultural communication skills based both upon accuracy and fluency of expression. It is also to be noted that the course promotes the use of rhythm and pronunciation techniques with the intent of developing social interactive skills besides linguistic intelligence.

However, there are some limitations within this study. First of all, it is to be stated that for a research in which attitudes are enrolled, an interview is a need for the reconfirmation of the findings. Herein, due to the time and some procedural constraints, it has not been employed. Besides, it is also recommended for further studies that drama as an art and drama as an educational tool for English language teaching are to be touched upon separately. In that, the course content for this study is mostly occupied with the applications of educational drama activities for the enhancement of foreign language teaching. However, it is also a rosebud of creativity which is employed as an art. One more to add, conducting drama as a technique in foreign language education mushrooms as a field of study for the researchers through which models for the enrichment of learning and skill-based language teaching can be examined. Although reported self-evidently, it may be a critical issue for the classes of teaching foreign languages to young learners.

Based upon the results and inferences, some recommendations are given by the author of this paper. Accordingly, the course hours are expected to be increased during the semester. As the drama course of the ELT departments in Turkey is a selective one, the course language is Turkish, even in ELT departments. It is better if the medium of instruction for the drama course is preferred to be English, at least in ELT departments. Besides, the classroom activities are to be supported more by technological equipment in order to meet the demands of globalization. By this, the course is implemented as an element of curriculum; not on an elective basis. To enhance learning, the scope of application is to be supported by studio works. Last but not least, to bridge the gap between natural use of language and personal development skills, the course is to be taken as a starting point for future implications. However, it is a delicate matter as drama is not a 'last resort' (Sam, 1990); albeit a parcel of the classroom methodology which is laced with communicative approach underneath.

## References

- Atas, M. (2015). The Reduction of speaking anxiety in EFL learners through drama techniques. *Procedia- Social Sciences and Behavioral Sciences*, 176, 961-969.
- Baldwin, P. & Fleming, K. (2003). *Teaching literacy through drama: creative approaches*. Abington: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Baldwin, P. & John, R. (2012). *Inspiring writing through drama: creative approaches to teaching*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Bland, J. (2015). *Teaching English to young learners: critical issues in language teaching with 3-12 year olds*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Chukueggu, C. O. C. (2012). The use of drama and dramatic activities in English language teaching. *The Journal of Theatre and Media Arts*, 7, 151-159.
- Cremin, T., Reedy, D., Bearne, E. & Dombey, H. (2015). *Teaching English creatively*. Routledge: Taylor and Francis.
- Davies, P. (1990). The use of drama in English language teaching. *TESL Canada Journal*, 8(1), 87-99.
- Dougill, J. (1987). *Drama activities for language learners*. Essential Language Teaching Series.
- Elam, K. (1980). *The semiotics of theatre and drama*. London: Methuen.
- Esslin, M. (1987). *The field of drama: how the signs of drama create meaning on stage and screen*. London: Methuen.
- Heathcote, D. & Bolton, G. M. (1995). *Drama for learning: Dorothy Heathcote's mantle of the expert approach to education*. Portsmouth: Pearson.
- Holden, S. (1981). *Drama in language teaching*. England: Longman.
- Holden, S. (1982). *Drama in language teaching*. England: Longman.
- Holden, S. (1983). *Role-Play and simulation*. Second selection from modern English teachers. London: Longman.
- Hubbard, P. et al. (1983). *A Training course for TEFL*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Maley, A. & Duff, A. (1978). *Drama techniques in language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McCarthy, M. & Carter, R. (1994). *Language as discourse: perspectives for language teaching*. Routledge: Taylor and Francis.
- Mengü, H. I. (2002). *A suggested syllabus for the drama teaching course in ELT departments*. Unpublished MA Thesis. Ankara: Hacettepe University.
- Miccoli, L. (2003). English through drama for oral skills development. *ELT Journal*, 57(2).
- Prendiville, N. & Toye, N. (2007). *Speaking and listening through drama 7-11*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Sam, W. Y. (1990). Drama in teaching English as a second language – a communicative approach. *The English Teacher*, 19.
- Slamet, S. (2015). The enrichment of learning English model based on drama at Mardisiwi Islamic kindergarten in Gendroprasto Surakarta, Indonesia. *International Conference on Science, Technology and Humanity*. [Retrieved from <https://publikasiilmiah.ums.ac.id/bitstream/handle/11617/6331/d-04.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>, on 20th December, 2015]
- Stokes, T. (2014). 'O, reason not the need!' Examining opportunities for a reciprocal relationship between drama and English through the use of a movie stimulus for oral language development. *Language, Literacy and Literature: Re-imagining Teaching and Learning*, 129-135.

- Szauder, E. (2004). Partnership, protection and participation: Principles for Working in Drama with People with Special Needs. In H. Heikkinen (Eds.) *Special Interest Fields of Drama, Theatre and Education*. Finland: University of Jyväskylä.
- Topoğlu, O., Erden, E. (2012). Bireysel çalgı eğitimi dersine yönelik tutum ölçeğinin geliştirilmesi, *Akademik Bakış Dergisi*, 31, 1-11.
- Way, B. (1967) *Development through Drama*. London: Longman.
- Wessels, C. (1987). *Drama (resource books for teachers)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Widdowson, H.G. (1978). *Teaching language as communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wilkins, D. (1976). *Notional syllabuses*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Winston, J. (2004). *Drama and English at the heart of the primary curriculum*. London: David Fulton.
- Zafeiriadou, N. (2009). *Drama in language teaching: a challenge for creative development*. [Retrieved from [https://www.academia.edu/5102011/Drama\\_in\\_language\\_teaching\\_a\\_challenge\\_for\\_creative\\_development](https://www.academia.edu/5102011/Drama_in_language_teaching_a_challenge_for_creative_development), on 24th December, 2013]
- Zhang, Y. & Gao, C. (2014). Towards creativity in ELT: from word plays to drama. *ELT Journal*, 68(4), 453-456.