The Benefits of Drama in the Albanian English Language Teaching Classroom: A Case Study

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Abstract: *This study aimed to present the benefits of plays in the English language teaching classroom. Over the last few years, the use of literature as a fundamental component and source of authentic texts in the learning context has grown rapidly all over the world, especially after the introduction of Communicative Language Teaching in 1970s and 1980s. The 1990s brought about a novel approach to language teaching in the Albanian classroom. In 2018, the Ministry of Education in Albania published A Curriculum Manual for Foreign Language Teaching, issuing a guideline for the teaching of foreign languages and aiming to broadly apply the Communicative Language Teaching Method and play activities. Of the literary genres, drama is distinctive in its use in fostering the learning of English as a second language in an ELT classroom. The didactic advantages to the use of a play are as follows: it stimulates the imagination and promotes creative thinking, develops critical thinking skills, promotes language development, heightens effective listening skills, strengthens comprehension and learning retention, increases empathy and awareness of others, fosters peer respect and group cooperation, reinforces positive self-concepts, and provides teachers with a fresh perspective on teaching. Understanding the role of plays in Albanian schools is the key to an effective teaching experience. A quantitative approach was used in this study to examine the results and observe the reliability of the findings. The method used to collect the necessary data was a questionnaire with closed-ended questions.*

Keywords: plays, literature, English language teaching, communicative language teaching method, Albania

INTRODUCTION

The Use of Literary Texts in English Language Teaching
In the Albanian context of language education, English is taught from primary education to the third year of high schooling. With the breakdown of the communist regime, the approach to language teaching and learning changed. English came to be taught and learned in a new context. Innovative viewpoints, methodologies, teaching strategies, and aims emerged. The shift was from an old mentality to new standpoints. Curriculum design and class planning, considered as traditional aspects of education, came to be considered useful for students. Student input was traditionally insignificant. These strategies became outdated in the modern classroom. The 1990s saw the introduction of a novel approach to language teaching in the Albanian classroom.

Over the last few years, the understanding of literature as a fundamental component and source of authentic texts in the learning context has grown rapidly all over the world. The use of literature is regarded as a component of EFL teaching and a method of language acquisition. The first methodology employed in the teaching of foreign languages was the Grammar Translation Method. Richard and Rodgers (2001, p.5) stated that the purpose of the method was to acquire "a language in order to read its literature in order to benefit from the mental discipline and intellectual development that result from foreign language study." Therefore, the study "of language in those days meant the study of literature" (Kramsch and Kramsch, 2000, p.554). A tendency to attempt to modernize this methodology emerged in the beginning of the 20th century. Therefore, a distance from literary texts developed. The use if these texts in English Language Teaching has seen a revival today, especially since the introduction of Communicative Language Teaching in the 1970s and 1980s. Since then, literature has been reconsidered as referring to authentic texts, which serve as teaching materials within communicative teaching. Literature was reintroduced into language teaching as "a welcome comeback within a communication-oriented methodology" (Kramsch, 1985, p.356).

 Different authors have cited various reasons for the use of literary texts in the English Language Teaching Classroom. Maley (1989) referred to universality, non-triviality, personal relevance, variety, interest, economy, and suggestive power and ambiguity. In 1990, Collie and Slater mentioned the value of authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment, and personal involvement. Gillian Lazar (2013) stressed the importance of motivation, a**ccess** to cultural background, the encouragement of language acquisition, the expansion of students' language awareness, the development of their interpretative abilities, the education the whole person, etc. The cultural aspect was underlined by Parkinson and Thomas (2000, p.9-11), together with the use of linguistic models, mental training, the extension of linguistic competence, authenticity, memorability, access to a rhythmic resource, motivating material, open interpretability, and convenience. Linguistic value, cultural value, and affective value incentivize the

use of literature in the English language learning context according to Duff and Maley (2007).

In 2018, the Ministry of Education in Albania published A Curriculum Manual for Foreign Language Teaching, offering a guideline for the teaching of foreign languages. In the section referring to English language teaching, it is advised to avoid the use of previous teaching methodologies such as the Grammar Translation Method, the Audio-Lingual Method, the Total Physical Response Method, etc., and instead to broadly apply the Communicative Language Teaching Method, emphasizing that the aim of the method is not to teach "how to speak", but "what to speak" and "when to speak" (p. 16).

The syllabus of the course "Foreign Language" taught in the pre-university system in Albania, was prepared in 2015 in accordance with the National Curriculum of Modern Languages for Public Pre-University Education, as well as with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. It was built to respond to the needs of an open society according to the requirements and needs of learning, and to aid in acquiring a foreign language in the context of our country (p. 4). The objectives of the "Foreign Language" course, taught in basic education from grades 6 to 9, are as follows:

> *Develop the speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills based on various literary and non-literary texts, as well as fostering critical and creative thinking; use of language and its tools on the situation and students' goals; finding, understanding, analyzing and evaluating the information given (p. 2).*

The teaching of a foreign language (English, French, Italian, German, etc.) in the Albanian pre-university system is part of the field "languages and Communication".

> *This field aims at linguistic and literary development which is the fundamental alignment for the intellectual, social, and emotional growth of the students. It enables students to use language to communicate, fulfil their personal and social interest, as well as meet the demands of the society and workplace (p.2).*

The syllabus set out in 2015 for the Foreign Language course, approved by the Ministry of Education in Albania, for high school students in grades 10-12, suggests that pre-university students should "read literary and non-literary texts belonging to different periods, classic and contemporary, from Albanian and world literature, working on their meaning, analysing and judging them (these texts suit the students' age)" (p.16).

LITERARY REVIEW: THE BENEFITS OF DRAMA IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING CLASSROOM

Literary texts include a variety of genres such as novels, short stories, and plays, poems. Of these genres, drama is distinctive in it use in fostering the learning of English as a second language in an English language teaching classroom. In trying to define drama, numerous scholars have provided ideas regarding its integration into language education. Styan (1975, p.7) stated that "drama is not made of words alone, but of sights and sounds, stillness and motion, noise and silence, relationship and responses." Lloyd Evans (1977, p.133) is another author to have underlined the importance of words, stating that "the world of tragedy, comedy, farce or melodrama may be, everything that we experience has its source, in the long run, in words." The common term employed in these definitions is the word, acting with words, implying the importance of this concept in education. Davis (1990) mentions that drama is a powerful tool that can be used to engage students actively with the English Learning process, via role-playing, the simulation of daily life situations, dramatized readings, miming and dialogues. On the other hand, paralinguistic elements should be added to the way this literary genre is used, such as gestures, facial expression, pauses, fillers, and interruptions (Triguero, 2011).

A theoretical framework for the integration of drama into language teaching was suggested by the socio-cultural theoretician Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934). In Vygotsky's interpretation, the cognitive skills of children are inspired and motivated by social collaboration and can be inserted into socio-cultural education. He supported the idea that the education of children is deeply connected to social and cultural events, whereby knowledge is circulated among people and in cooperation. Haught and McCafferty (2008, p.139) mentioned that Vygotsky "discussed the critical role of play in child development, basically contending that through play a child is able to creatively formulate her coming of age intellectually by behaving and thinking in ways that are beyond her current state of development." He thought that the use of drama is associated with play, and it can be used to immediately develop ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development), a concept invented by Vygotsky, in providing an environment for young children to progress, thus laying the groundwork for the future.

From the historical viewpoint, Bolton and Heathcote were supporters of the introduction of plays into the English language teaching classroom. Heathcote, in the 1950s, persuaded teachers to employ plays in the English language teaching classroom. Her support for integrating plays led to many studies in the didactic field. The inclusion of plays by teachers came firstly as a result of their effectiveness as a specific literary genre. Afterwards, with the development of the Communicative Language Teaching Method, this literary genre came to be seen in relation to education. As Uzuner (2019) has mentioned, drama became deeply intwined with the language education frameworks. In Britain and the United states, this literary genre became part of the teaching experience. In this context, Bolton was an active advocate of integrating drama

into language teaching. Dundar (2013, p.1425-6) stated that Bolton advised teachers to modify their curriculum, with plays enacting a didactic function.

Many authors have proposed didactic advantages to the use of plays, as follows: they stimulate the imagination and promote creative thinking; they develop critical thinking skills; they promote language development; they heighten effective listening skills; they strengthen comprehension and learning retention by involving the senses as an integral part of the learning process; they increase empathy and awareness of others; they foster peer respect and group cooperation; they reinforce positive self-concept; they provide teachers with a fresh perspective on teaching (Lenore, 1993). In her work *Drama in Language Teaching*, Holden (1982, p.232) proposed a methodology to integrate plays into teaching. The activities she proposed are as follows: The teacher presents the idea, theme, or problem to the students, undertaking any necessary preliminary work to ensure that the students know precisely what to do; the students discuss in groups exactly how they will do the task; the students experiment in groups with various interpretations until they are satisfied with one; they may then share their interpretation or solution with another group; the students may also discuss their solutions in groups or with the rest of the class. This discussion can serve as a way for the students to assess their work. This plan of activities suggested by Holden was then further developed by the ideas of Moore (2002), who presented the benefits of plays in the "personal development of our students. The skills and qualities developed by students in drama, such as teamwork, creativity, leadership, and risk-taking are assets in all subjects and all areas of life." Furthermore, the use of plays, as he insisted, encourages "the imagination and allows students to explore issues and experiences in a safe and supportive environment" (Moore, 2002). Moreover, Boudreault (2010) was of the idea that plays permit the development of eloquent communicational abilities in the target language, in addition to the assimilation of the characteristics of pronunciation, the acquisition of a novel - circumstantial vocabulary, the improvement of the students' self-reliance in acquiring their target language, the fostering of the students' imagination, the enhancement of independent thinking, the elevation of critical and creative thinking, and the development of cooperation, social awareness, and understanding.

DRAMA ACTIVITIES

The challenges of using plays in an English language teaching classroom are multitudinous. This is related to the characteristics of this genre. The teacher here is compelled to take into consideration their plans and the organization of the class. Furthermore, he/she is expected "to create a learning situation which will ensure a constant supply of stimuli to the students, which will keep them active and alert" (Wessels, 1987, p.15). In response to the question of why one would use plays in an ELT classroom, Gillian Lazar (2013, p.137) cited the improvement of oral skills, as students have the opportunity to practice speaking with a focus on pronunciation, speed, intonation, and sounds (p.136); they also mentioned the benefits of exposure to

language in conversation, as plays are full of dialogues, and students can practice inferring meaning from someone else's speech, in addition to the provision of a meaningful context to the acquisition and memorization of a language (p.138) and student involvement in classroom activities via role-playing, and the reading of extracts, which stimulates group cohesion (p.136). Therefore, plays allow students "to constantly explore and experience the target language in various meaningful, realistic contexts." (Purcell-Gates, Degener, Jacobson and Soler, 2002, p. 75). These realistic contexts necessitate the utilization of facial expressions, gestures, pauses, and interruptions (Triguero, 2011) that are consistent paralinguistic components.

The most common types of play-based activities used in an English language teaching classroom are simulation, role-playing, miming, and improvisation. In Albania, A Curriculum Manual for Foreign Language Teaching, issued by the Ministry of Education, mentions dialogue, role playing, and group discussion. Simulation is characterized as "an intensive, interactive experience in which the content and roles assumed by participants are designed to reflect what people encounter in specific environments" (Buckner, 1999, p. 1). Simulation provides numerous benefits, such as offering the chance for the students to perform an assignment or resolve a question in unison, permitting students to apply the most recently learned terminologies and structures, allowing students the freedom to pursue their own options and decisions, grounding students' choices in their own involvement, and offering teachers the ability to supervise improvement without direct involvement (David, 1996).

Ladousse (2002, p.5) sought to define the term, stating that "'role' signals the individual participating in the activity is acting a role in a special condition. 'Play' means that the role is taken on in a protected setting where students are as creative and playful as possible." Richard-Amanto (1988) explained that role-play is a classroom activity, similar to drama, in which students adopt the role of people encountering different and unusual circumstances, forcing them to act out how they might behave in that setting. The advantages to this activity are manifold. In his study, Maley (1990) suggested that role-play can induce a wide spectrum of involvement in the teaching space; it places students in circumstances in which they are obliged to work to acquire the systems of language necessary to develop and strengthen social connections. Further, some individuals study English to prepare them for specific future responsibilities, which role-play will help with. It is also an entertaining experience as students can allow their creativity to flow freely. Lastly, it represents a communicative method for fostering articulation and developing communication in the classroom, thus enhancing inspiration.

In the 2018 A Curriculum Manual for Foreign Language Teaching, the Ministry of Education in Albania advised teachers to use roleplaying as it encourages students to take on distinctive roles, forcing them to think as the characters they have chosen. This technique is used to encourage students to consider a problem from different perspectives. Following a set dialogue can work very well, where students take on the roles of the characters in the dialogue, and then they can create their own dialogue. This

document also sets out a procedure for specific role-play activity. First, the teacher sets out the situation of the roleplay. Second, the students are given a role, and time to think about the role. Third, a debate or discussion is held between students, depending on their roles. Finally, students watching the role-play discuss the process of how the debate developed (p.20).

Mime is presented as a "a non-verbal representation of an idea or story through gesture, bodily movement, and expression" (Dougill, 1987, p. 13) Mime is often used in warm-up activities at the beginning of a lesson; however, it can also be used as the main activity practise, for instance, the skill of interpretation (Dougill 1987, p.13-16). Mime involves a specific part of communication- the paralinguistic features. Miming contributes to the recalling and reinforcing of language elements by correlating them with visuals and images (Rose, 1985). Savignon (1983) stated that this helps learners get used to the idea of acting. Some other uses of mime in the language learning context include the following. It can generate language use when explanation is required; it is a way of reinforcing memory and recall of language items, by means of visual association; it can be used in the learning and practicing of vocabulary.

Improvisation is defined by Wessel (1987, p.85) as it **"taps the students' already existing command of the language and tests their communicative strategies."** Therefore, many researchers, social constructivists, consider improvisation as an efficient instrument of teaching because it employs randomly numerous opposing voices ((Bearison, Magzamen, & Filardo, 1986; Cobb, 1995; Doise & Mugny, 1984; Perret-Clermont, 1980). Improvisation imitates everyday occurrences (Winston & Stinson, 2011), while facing the important skills listening and communication (Crossan, 1998)). However, it provides a chance for Flexible and original student-centred activities (Kurtz, 2015).

PLAYS IN THE ALBANIAN CONTEXT: A CASE STUDY

Understanding the role of plays in Albanian schools is the key to effective teaching. In the context of Albanian schools, recognizing the importance of implementing drama activities has become essential to fostering a rich and impactful educational experience for both teachers and students. Methodology is an important aspect that should be considered. Qualitative and quantitative methods are used in this research. Moreover, the sampling employed a questionnaire. The groups that we focused on were 6th graders at "Martin Camaj," 1st graders at "28 Nentori," 2nd graders at "Shkolla e Mesme e Bashkuar Hajmel," and 3rd graders at "Ate Pjeter Meshkalla." The first school is a secondary school, while the last three are high schools.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

A quantitative approach was used in this study to examine the results and to assess the reliability of the findings. Bryman (2012) defines quantitative research as a research strategy that concentrates on the quantification, compilation and analysis of data. The method used here to collect the necessary data involved a questionnaire, as well as Likert scale with closed-ended questions. These questions were sent to the students of "Martin Camaj," "28 Nentori," "Shkolla e Mesme e Bashkuar Hajmel," and "Ate Pjeter Meshkalla." The aim was to identify students' perceptions of plays and their impact.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants of this study included thirteen (13) secondary school students from the 6th grade of "Martin Camaj", twenty-two (22) first year students at "28 Nentori" high school, seventeen (17) third-year students at "Ate Pjeter Meshkalla", and eighteen (18) second-year students at "Shkolla e Mesme e Bashkuar Hajmel". The first three schools are in Shkoder while the last one is in Hajmel, a village near the city of Shkoder. The sample design was purposive, chosen deliberately to acquire specific information from the group of students. This technique was selected to aid in the strategic selection of individuals who could provide rich and meaningful data with relevance to the particular purpose of the research. The sample was selected to derive insights into the attitudes, experiences, or and behaviors of the chosen population- the students of the pre-university system in Shkoder, Albania.

DATA COLLECTION TOOL

To collect the primary data, was requested permission from the respective teachers at "Shkolla e Mesme e Bashkuar Hajmel" and "Martin Camaj", who were informed about the study's purpose and objectives. The English teacher at "Martin Camaj" distributed the questionnaires to sixth-grade students. Assistance was offered to the participants as they completed the questionnaire. To the other three schools, "Ate Pjeter Meshkalla", "28 Nentori", and "Shkolla e Mesme e Bashkuar Hajmel", the questionnaire was sent virtually. Moreover, the questionnaire was anonymous. The research study took place in May. The data collected were then analyzed and interpreted. We utilized closed-ended multiple-choice questions, associated with a Likert scale, to collect quantitative data in order to restrict responses and to derive concrete results. The population of the survey were quick to respond and understand. Therefore, online and paper questionnaires were supplied. The questionnaire consisted of ten closed-ended questions relating to the students' experience of the use of drama in their English classroom (see Appendix 1). The questions were structured in a manner that allowed the students to reflect on their experience. The questions were intended to focus on the skills and experiences students had fostered through drama activities.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ethics of the research procedures were confirmed. Informed consent was obtained from all participants (Eeckhout et al., 2023). Participants were guaranteed the preservation of confidentiality, and appropriate ethical procedures were followed throughout the entire process.

RESULTS

A five-step plan was followed for the analysis of data through a thematic study; this involved compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding, as proposed by Yin (2015). This section presents the findings, along with the results gathered from primary sources. The collected data have been carefully analyzed and interpreted in an analytical and descriptive way. Each question is here represented in a pie chart, later explained and described. The results of this analysis can be used to draw conclusions regarding the use of plays in the Albanian context.

STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

In the first part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked whether their English teacher employed a variety of drama activities. Most of the students- 62%, or 43 out of 70 answered positively, while 13%, 10 out of 70 reacted negatively, and 25%, 17 out of 70 fell somewhere in between. Furthermore, a vast number of high school students at "Shkolla e Mesme e Bashkuar Hajmel", "28 Nentori" and "Ate Pjeter Meshkalla" replied that their English teacher uses different play-based activities, whereas the students at "Martin Camaj" were not sure.
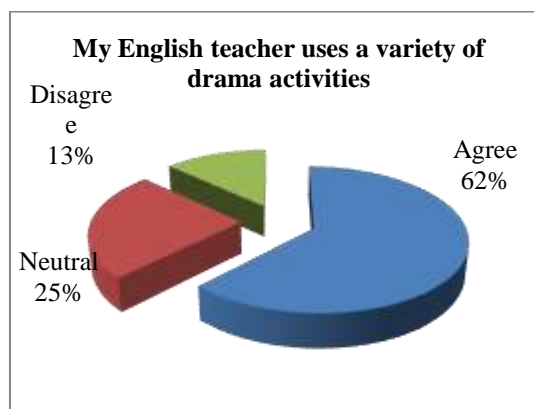

Figure 1: Teachers use a variety of drama activities.

In response to the statement "I participate in drama activities", 41%, 29 out of 70 students agreed. Furthermore, 30%, 21 out of 70 had a neutral position, while 29%, 20 out of 70 stated that they did not participate in drama activities organized by their English teacher. Just a few students at "Shkolla e Mesme e Bashkuar Hajmel"

participated in play activities, while many of the 6th-grade students at "Marin Camaj", the 10th-grade students at "28 Nentori", and the 12th-graders at "Ate Pjeter Meshkalla" reported taking part in these activities.
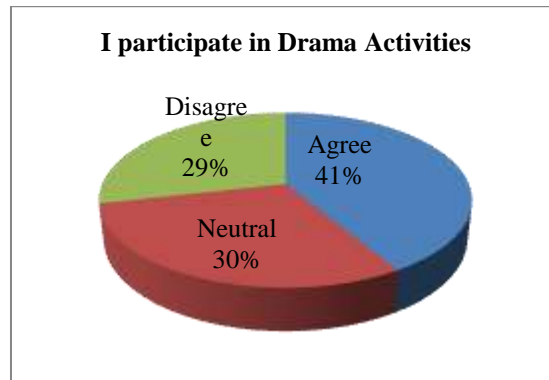

Figure 2:   Students' participation.

The chart illustrates the improvement in students' speaking skills. More than half of the students, 54%, or 38 out of 70 thought that drama activities helped them to improve their speaking skills, whereas 10%, 7 out of 70 disagreed. In addition, 36%, 25 out of 70 took a neutral position. Most 2nd-year students at "Shkolla e Mesme e Bashkuar Hajmel" had a detached point of view in regard to this statement.

Figure 3:   Speaking skills improvement.

To construct Figure 4, students were asked whether drama activities helped them in developing their vocabulary. A higher number of respondents, 62%, 43 out of 70 said that they did, while 7%, 5 out of 70 declared they did not, and 31%, 22 out of 70 had mixed feelings. High school students responded positively, while the 6th-graders at "Martin Camaj" were impartial in their responses.

Drama activities help me to boost my vocabulary
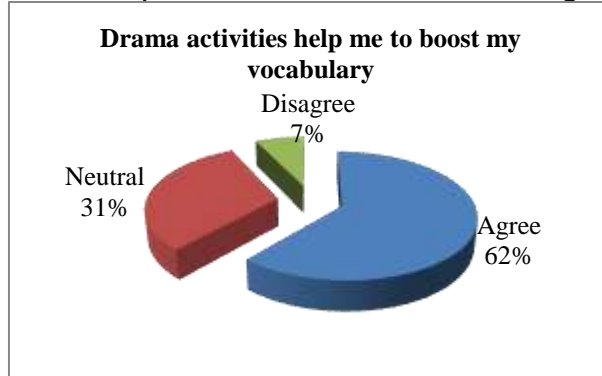
Disagree
7%

Neutral
31%

Agree
62%

Figure 4: Vocabulary improvement.

To construct Figure 5, participants were asked if drama activities increased their self-confidence. Half of the students, 50%, or 35 out of 70 had a positive answer, while 21%, 15 out of 70 answered negatively. Moreover, 29% of the students 25 out of 70 said that they maybe did. Furthermore, a few students at "Martin Camaj" did not agree with this statement. Substantial numbers of students at "Ate Pjeter Meshkalla", "28 Nentori" and "Shkolla e Mesme e Bashkuar Hajmel" disagreed.

Drama activities increase my self-confidence
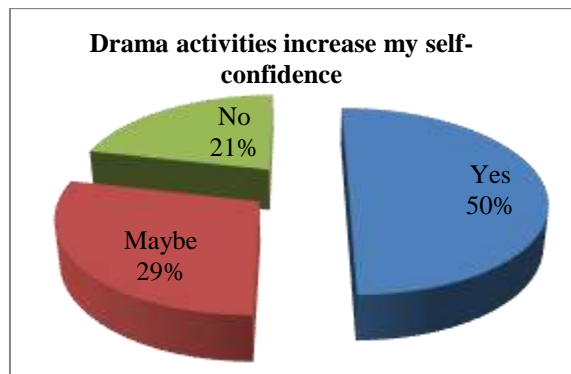
No
21%

Yes
50%

Maybe
29%

Figure 5: Self- confidence increase

From the sixth chart, we can infer the students' viewpoints regarding whether play activities helped them to get to know other classmates. A considerable number of them, 44%, or 31 out of 70 agreed that they did, while 39%, 27 out of 70 took a neutral position, and 17%, 12 out of 70 disagreed. In addition, most of the undergraduates at "Shkolla e Mesme e Bashkuar Hajmel" and "Martin Camaj" had a mixture of feelings, while the rest of the students at the two high schools responded positively.
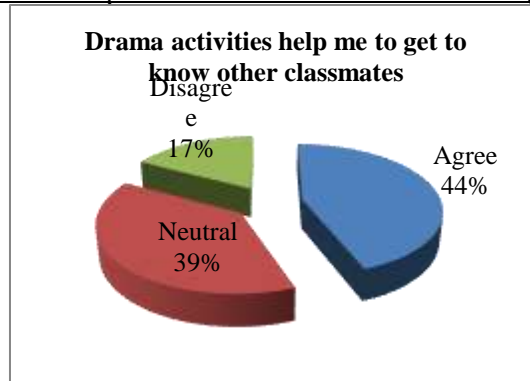
Figure 6: Social interaction.

In response to the statement "I feel comfortable and relaxed when the teacher uses drama activities," 57%, or 40 respondents out of 70 revealed that they felt tranquil and cozy, whereas 14%, 10 out of 70 disagreed, and 29%, 20 out of 70 were neutral. Furthermore, in "Shkolla e Mesme e Bashkuar Hajmel", many of the respondents took a neutral position, while among the 6th-graders at "Martin Camaj", only one student did not agree with the statement.
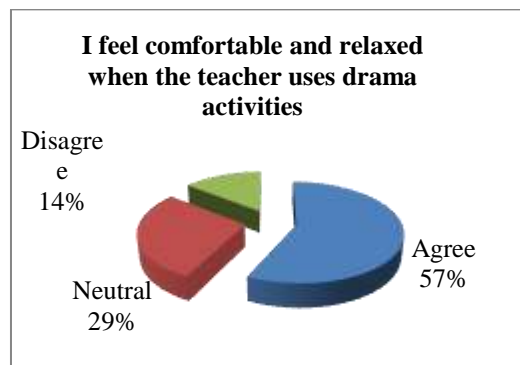

Figure 7: Students' feelings when the teacher uses drama activities.

To construct the eighth chart, students were asked whether they thought drama activities are boring. A higher number of respondents 68%, or 58 out of 70 disagreed, while 4 out of 70 or 6% agreed, and 26%, 18 out of 70 were impartial. Moreover, at "Ate Pjeter Meshkalla" and "Shkolla e Mesme e Bashkuar Hajmel", none of the participants said that they thought that drama activities were boring. Two students at "28 Nentori" and two students at "Martin Camaj" believed that these activities were boring.
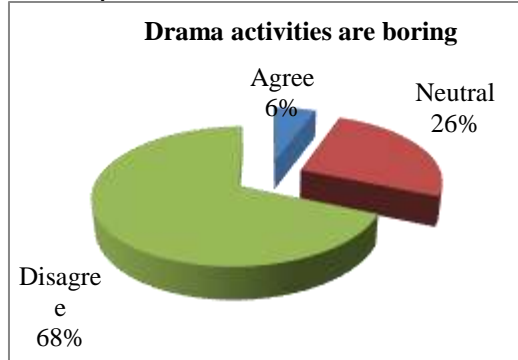
Figure 8: Drama activities are boring.

Students were asked if they would like there to be fewer drama activities in their English lessons. Most of them, 61%, or 43 out of 70 said they would not like to have fewer activities. Further, 16%, 11 out of 70 wanted to have fewer play activities, and 23%, 16 out of 70 were not sure. In addition, a considerable number of participants at "Martin Camaj" stated that they would like to have fewer drama activities, whereas students at "28 Nentori", "Ate Pjeter Meshkalla" and "Shkolla e Mesme e Bashkuar Hajmel" stated a preference for more play activities.
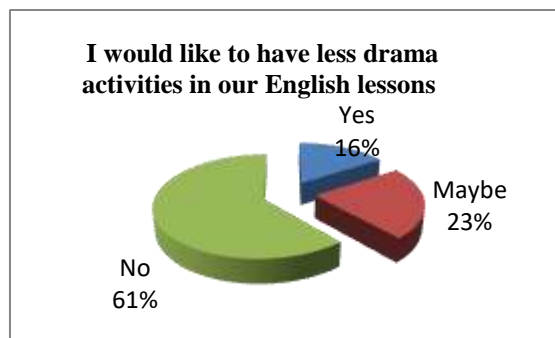

Figure 9: Preference for fewer drama activities.

In the last part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked if they felt comfortable acting in front of others. Here, 34% of them, 24 out of 70 said that they did, while 40%, 28 out of 70 did not, and 26%, 18 out of 70 were neutral. Moreover, many students at "Shkolla e Mesme e Bashkuar Hajmel" also did not feel comfortable when they acted in front of others. The other respondents at different schools did not have this problem.
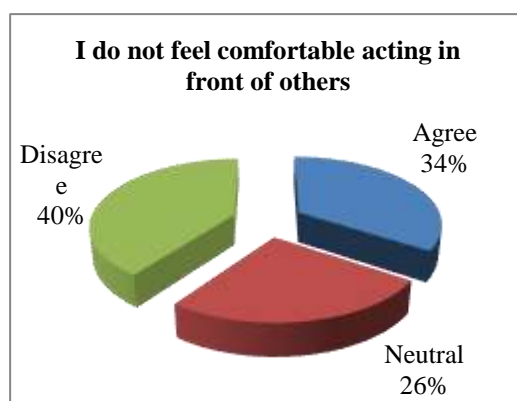
Figure 10: Students do not feel comfortable acting in front of others.

DISCUSSION

"At Pjeter Meshkalla" High School Questionnaire
The first chart illustrates that 59%, or 10 out of 17 of students agreed that their English teacher uses a variety of drama activities whereas 6%, or 1 out of 17, thought the opposite. More than half of the students, 9 out of 17, or 53% participated in play activities. In addition, 59% of students, or 10 out of 17, said that drama activities helped them to improve their speaking skills and to boost their vocabulary. About two- thirds, 65%, or 11 out of 17 of the students disagreed with the two statements that plays are boring that they wanted fewer drama activities in their English lessons. However, most of the students, 47%, or 8 out of 17 said that they did not feel comfortable acting in front of others, while 6 out of 17, or 35%, of the students agreed that drama activities helped them get to know their classmates, and 63%, or 9 out of 17 of learners agreed that partaking in plays increased their self- confidence. A higher number of students, 12 out of 17, or 71 % felt comfortable and relaxed when their teacher used drama activities.

"Shkolla e Mesme e Bashkuar Hajmel" Questionnaire
The first chart shows that 45% of the student, or 8 out of 18, felt neutral about the statement that their English teacher uses a variety of drama activities, while 19% disagreed and 37% agreed. In the second pie chart, we can see that 11 out of 18, or 61 % of the students had a neutral stance on participating in drama activities. Around 40% of the learners, or 7 out of 18, agreed that drama activities helped them to improve their speaking skills, while 50%, or 9 out of 18, were neutral on this. Half of the students, 9 out of 18, or 50% said that taking part in drama activities helped them to boost their vocabulary. Strikingly, a higher number of students, around 78%, or 14 out of 18 stated that drama activities are not boring. 17% of the students, or 6 out of 18, did not feel comfortable and relaxed when the teacher used plays. 8 out of 18 students, or 45% felt that drama activities increased their self-confidence. Moreover, just 50%, or 9 out of 18, of the learners were neutral on the issue of getting to know

other classmates through drama activities, and 9 out of 18, or 50% did not agree that they wanted fewer plays in their English lessons. Lastly, 39% of the students, or 7 out of 18, felt comfortable acting in front of others.

"28 Nentori" Questionnaire

The English teacher at "28 Nentori" reported using a variety of drama activities, and 68%, or 15 out of 22, of the students participated in these activities. Around 60% of the learners, or 13 out of 22, agreed that plays help them to improve their speaking skills, while 27% were neutral, or 6 out of 22, and the remainder disagreed. Furthermore, 17 out of 22 students, 77% felt that drama activities helped them to boost their vocabulary; 41%, or 9 out of 22 said that plays increased their self-confidence; 59%, or 13 out of 22 disagreed with the statement that drama activities helped them get to know their classmates; 14 out of 22, or 64 %, of the students felt comfortable and relaxed when the teacher used drama activities; 19 out of 22, or 86%, of the students strongly disagreed that plays were boring. However, 22%, or 6 out of 22, did not feel comfortable acting in front of others.

"Martin Camaj" Questionnaire

Overall, 8 out of 13, 62%, of the students agreed that their English teacher used a variety of drama activities, and those who felt that this was good numbered, 7 out of 13, or 58 %. Furthermore, 62% of the learners, or 8 out of 13 agreed that drama activities helped them to improve their speaking skills. Moreover, 7 out of 13 students, 58% agreed that drama activities boosted their vocabulary, whereas 1 out of 13, just 7%, had seen no improvement. Furthermore, 9 out of 13, or 67%, agreed that plays increased their self-confidence; 62% of the students, or 8 out of 13, felt comfortable and relaxed when teachers used plays; 8 out of the13 students, or 62 %, disagreed that plays were boring, and 6 students, or 37%, did not agree that they would like fewer drama activities in their English lessons. In addition, 54% of the students, or 7 out of 13 felt comfortable acting in front of others.

After an analysis of the data collected, this study concludes that using play-based activities is an effective method for teaching English as a foreign language. Including plays in the curriculum can help to build a positive learning environment, which is beneficial for both teaching and learning. Therefore, teachers should consider incorporating drama-based activities into their lesson plans in order to enhance the learning process and make it more engaging and pleasant.

CONCLUSION

This study underlines the prominence of drama when used in English language teaching. Simulation, role-playing, miming, and improvisation are **t**he most common types of play activities used in English language teaching classroom. In Albania, A Curriculum Manual for Foreign Language Teaching, issued by the Ministry of

Education, specifically cites dialogue, role playing, and group discussion. The advantages of drama in relation to ELT are supported by many scholars.

Bolton and Heathcote were the first proponents of introducing plays into the ELT classroom. Furthermore, Heathcote encouraged teachers to actively use plays in their classrooms. Many studies in the didactic field have been initiated based on her ideas regarding the use of plays in English Language Teaching. Via the Communicative Language Teaching Method, this literary genre was seen as having a direct relation to education. Bolton was an active advocate of integrating drama into language teaching, advising teachers to include this literary genre in the school curriculum for its didactic function.

Plays aid students to develop in terms of reading, speaking, writing, listening, language proficiency, communication skills, teamwork, critical thinking, self-confidence, and their vocabulary expansion. The personal development of our students can be achieved in terms of teamwork, creativity, leadership, and risk-taking. Moreover, plays comprise a genre of literature that enables the exploration of issues and experiences in a safe and supportive environment. Plays enable the assimilation of unique characteristics of pronunciation and the acquisition of novel circumstantial vocabularies; they improve the students' self-reliance in acquiring the targeted language; they foster the students' imagination; they enhance independent thinking; they help to develop cooperation, social awareness, and understanding.

Focusing on the use of plays in the Albanian English language teaching context, the study population assessed here consisted of 70 students. In our results, most EFL students had a positive attitude regarding the use of drama activities in English language teaching. Integrating drama activities into ELT can be extremely beneficial. This is because it improves students' language skills and leads to better academic results. These activities can help build a positive learning environment, beneficial to both teaching and learning. Students enjoy drama activities. These activities facilitate the enhancement of speaking skills, critical thinking, and vocabulary development in a novel situation, thus increasing their self-confidence. Furthermore, drama helps students get to know their other classmates and develops social interaction in the classroom, generating a friendly environment as they begin to feel comfortable and relaxed. Teamwork helps to develop the student as a whole. The feedback of the undergraduates was positive- they did not consider these activities boring, and would actually like to have more in their lessons. It is therefore recommended that teachers incorporate drama into their lesson plans to enhance their students' learning process and make it more engaging.

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