

EFFECTS OF DRAMA AND THEATRE ON STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Joseph Abuh

Department of English,,Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa,

Clement Gowon Omachonu, PhD

Department of Arts Education,Kogi State University, Anyigba

Yahaya Ibrahim

Department of English,, Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa

ABSTRACT: *This study investigated the effects of drama and theatre as a teaching strategy on the achievement of students in English language in Ankpa Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria. One research question guided the study. 100 students were used as subjects for the study from three different schools. The students in each school were divided into two groups (GA and GB). GA was used as the experimental group while GB was the control group. Both groups were taught a topic together using literature method. They were then subjected to a pre-test. In the next two lessons, GA was taught a topic through the drama and theatre method, while GB remained in the classroom and was taught the same topic using a traditional method. A uniform post-test was administered to both group. The result of the pre-test was compared with that of the post-test. The comparison formed the basis for the analysis, decision and conclusion in this work. The findings revealed that the group that was taught with the drama and theatre method performed better than those taught using the traditional method. Based on this finding, the paper recommends, among others, that all would-be-teachers should be trained in the skills of using drama and theatre as a teaching method.*

KEY WORDS: Drama and theatre, students' achievement, English language teaching.

INTRODUCTION

Researchers have long recognized that teaching technique is at the heart of many of the pervasive problems Nigeria face in teaching young children English Language. The result is that many secondary school students are unable to learn the skills needed to enable them perform well in English language. This has adverse effect on the quality of the English Language spoken in Nigeria. This low level of performance could, probably, be due to poor teaching method. The method presently in use by most teachers of English language is mainly the lecture method. Probably, lack of innovative methods that are problem-solving oriented and interactive such as drama and theatre could be the cause of poor performance of students in English. This is because

the traditional method predominantly in use seems to make students passive participants in the teaching and learning processes. The interaction with others afforded by drama and theatre could enable learners to have more influence on the learning processes and the activities become responsive to their needs.

The Concept of Drama and Theatre

Drama has a Greek origin, “drain” which means, “to do.” Aristotle, sees drama as “mimes is,” meaning “imitation of an action.’ Atabo and Abuh (2010) in Abrams (1981) see drama as a prelude to theatre. According to Abrams (1981), dramas is the literary form designed for the theatre in which actors take the roles of characters, perform the intended actions and utter the written dialogues. One can say, therefore, that drama is a composition that tells an imaginative story of human action in dialogues intended to be presented on the stages for the entertainment of an audience.

Just like drama, theatre has a Greek origin. The Greek word for theatre (theatron) comes from the verb “theasthai”, meaning “behold” or “to see” (Gill, 2016). Theatre refers to the structure, building or place where spectators sat to watch spectacles such as plays, films, rituals, etc. it is also used to designate the spectacle that is viewed. The summary of these senses of theatre is that it can refer to the locale of the action that spectators sit to view or to the action itself as spectacle. However, in drama and theatre as a teaching method, it is the sense of theatre as spectacle that is underscored.

From Abrams (1981) s’ definition of drama cited above, drama is a prelude to theatre. The primary aim of writing a play is not to be read but to be watched on a theatrical stage. To buttress this fact, Soyinka (1960) in *A dance of the Forests* says:

My prime duty as a playwright is to provide excellent Theatre; in other words, I think I have only commitment to the public, and that is to my audience; and that is to make sure they do not leave the theatre bored.

According to *World Book Encyclopedia*, (1982), it is believed in some quarters that play is not properly regarded as one until it has been performed in a theatre for an audience. Thus, drama and theatre are two sides of the same coin.

The notion of classroom drama and theatre

The theatre and drama method of teaching has a long history. Its use in the teaching of foreign languages can be traced to the 19th century (Schewe 2007). In the classroom setting, drama and theatre is viewed as teaching method. In this view, the phrase is taken as an entity and thus it attracts singular verbs and pronouns. However, it is worth nothing that drama and theatre as a teaching method is different from conventional drama and theatre. The pedagogical sense is characterized by brevity of presentation, slim volume (mostly two or three page length) with the

aim to teach a definite curricular topic. These features contrast on each point with those of conventional drama and theatre. Morgan and Soxton (1994) aver that in classroom drama, it is the educational focus; that is, what is to be taught; and the dramatic focus is, how will the students achieve an understanding of the educational focus? These are the basic consideration of drama and theatre as a teaching strategy.

But in spite of the benefits that drama and theatre could provide for the improvement of language learning, there seems to be no meaningful application of these methods in English language instructions in most Nigerian classrooms. Thus, students' performances in English language have been poor (WAEC Chief Examiner's Report 2014 -2017). There is need to seek ways of making the teaching of English more effective in order to enhance students' performance. This paper guesses that drama and theatre method might produce a better impact on the achievement of students than traditional method of teaching. This study, therefore, seeks to find out the effects of drama and theatre on secondary school students' achievement in English language. To guide the study, one research question and one null-hypothesis were formulated. These are:

Research question

Will students achieve better in a language lesson when drama and theatre method is used than when exposed to a traditional method?

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the mean achievement score of students taught English with drama and theatre and those taught with the traditional method.

METHOD

This study employed the quasi-experimental design. A quasi-experimental research design is a type of evaluation which aims at determining whether a programme or intervention has the intended effect on a study's particulars (Ali, 1996). It is an empirical study used to estimate the causal impact on an intervention in its target population. The quasi-experimental design is adopted for the study because it is a non-randomized experimental and control group pre-test-post-test study.

The simple random sampling technique was used to sample 100 secondary school students each from three schools in Ankpa Local Government Area, making a total of 300 students which constitute the sample for the study. These were community Secondary School, Ajitata, Elite Foundation Secondary School, Ankpa, and Government Secondary School, Ikanekpo. In each school, the class teacher was requested to produce the best 100 students in basic secondary two. The set of 100 students was divided into group A and B (GA and GB) of 50 students each. In sharing the students up into GA and GB, the previous term's results in English language were used. These were collected in descending order with the highest scoring student topping the list

while the last student on the last scored the least mark. All odd numbers formed GB. Only one of the researchers did the teaching throughout the research work. This was in order to reduce teacher variable.

A researcher-made Language Achievement Test (LAT) was used to generate data for the study. The test contained 2 items on guided composition in which the students were requested to follow clear instructions to compose essays where some parts are given while the test areas are omitted. To ensure content validity of the test instrument, the researchers set both the pre-and the post-test questions from Basic Secondary Two of the National Curriculum from the relevant unit. A table of specification was prepared by a language methodology specialist in the Department of English, Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa. From that table, a number of questions were drawn.

Two topics were selected: informal letter writing and narrative writing. The lesson plans prepared by the researchers were checked by a lecturer in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa. The lesson plans on drama and theatre were used to teach the experimental group in each school while the lesson plans written on the traditional method were used to teach the control group. The treatment session lasted for six weeks. After treatment, the same test was re-administered as post-test on the two groups – treatment and control. The data were analyzed based on the research question and hypothesis. The research question was answered using mean, standard deviation and t-test. It was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question

Will there be a significant difference between the mean achievement in an English language test of students who are exposed to drama and theatre method and that of students not exposed to it?

Tables 1A, 1B, 1C and 2A, 2B, 2C below are analysis of both the pre-test and the post-test scores of students in order to provide an answer to the research question.

Hypothesis

H₀: There will be no significant difference between the mean achievement in an English language test of students who are exposed to the drama and theatre method and those students not exposed to it.

The data collection through the pre-test administered to the student before teaching them how to write narrative essays are presented below. (Table 1A, 1B, 1C, correspond to the three schools from where the data were collected).

Table 1.A: pre-test scores of 100 students from GA and GB in school A

GA					GB				
43	60	59	47	52	48	62	61	72	58
47	67	58	46	36	66	58	47	61	65
66	60	72	63	25	80	54	55	71	83
57	52	57	54	68	60	72	63	20	65
44	42	59	46	54	52	70	72	16	52
36	56	40	71	71	57	70	75	80	70
60	56	57	86	45	71	53	74	66	43
66	46	57	66	50	64	68	76	45	65
75	53	62	47	68	81	63	32	67	41
28	70	76	56	38	51	50	48	60	36

X = 55.9
SD = 12.85

X = 55.9
SD = 14.7

The analysis shows that the mean score for GA = 55.9, whereas the mean score of GB = 59.9, the standard deviation for GB = 14.7

t-test is then used to establish the directional bearing of the above result.

Table 2: T-Test Of The Performance By Group A And B Pre-Test

Group	X	X	SD	t-cal	t-crit	Df	Decision
A (experimental)	50	55.9	12.85	-1.4	2.36	98	No significant difference
B (control)	50	55.9	14.7				

$$\begin{aligned}
 t &= \frac{X_1 - X_2}{\sqrt{\frac{S_1^2}{N_1} + \frac{S_2^2}{N_2}}} \\
 &= \frac{55.9 - 55.9}{\sqrt{\frac{12.85^2}{50} + \frac{14.7^2}{50}}} \\
 &= \sqrt{-4} \\
 &= -4 \\
 &= -2.76
 \end{aligned}$$

t-test above indicates calculated t of - 1.4; it is less than critical t of 2.36 (df 98, 0.01). Null hypothesis is then accepted. There will be no significant difference between the mean achievement of the two groups, GA and GB, in an English language test of students who are exposed to the traditional method of teaching.

Table 3: Post Test Scores Obtained From 100 Students From Two Groups: A And B.

A					B				
70	80	90	71	80	49	55	47	73	76
75	78	59	72	86	43	46	43	29	54
80	90	64	67	68	48	45	70	50	61
55	74	61	63	82	46	50	39	54	50
80	69	69	71	50	83	77	54	57	51
88	78	76	67	85	55	34	60	58	80
83	85	81	60	77	50	40	36	54	45
48	60	82	93	40	79	60	59	49	60
76	76	70	95	70	61	58	35	41	63
84	70	69	79	67	61	51	40	44	45

$$X_A = 80.3$$

$$X_B = 55.8$$

$$SD_A = 15.1$$

$$SD_B = 12.5$$

The table above indicates that GA has a mean of 80.3 and standard deviation of 15.1. GB, on the other hand, has a mean of 55.8 and standard deviation of 12.5.

The difference between the mean (df 98, 0.01). calls for the use of t-test.

Table 4: t-test of the performance by group A & B in the post-test

Group	X	X	S.D	t-cal	t-crit	Df	Decision
A	50	803	15.1	9.0	2.36	98	significant difference
B	50	55.8	12.8				

$$\begin{aligned}
 t &= \frac{X_1 - X_2}{\sqrt{\frac{SD_1^2}{N_1} + \frac{SD_2^2}{N_2}}} \\
 &= \frac{80.3 - 55.8}{\sqrt{\frac{15.1^2}{50} + \frac{12.5^2}{50}}} \\
 &= \frac{24.5}{7.6}
 \end{aligned}$$

DISCUSSION

To answer the research question using the tests administered to the two groups of students (GA and GB), it is manifest that students exposed to the drama and theatre method performed significantly better than those exposed to the traditional method. In the course of using the drama and theatre method, the students discovered by themselves the concepts and procedures they

were being taught. By this self-discovery and active participation, the students remembered the subject matter better. This agrees with Atabo and Abuh (2010) when they assert that, an advantage (which as well becomes an aim) of the drama and theatre method is that interest is enhanced and concepts are remembered longer as a result of participation. As a result, they performed better in the test.

From the findings of this study, the necessity becomes clear for schools to intensify efforts in employing the drama and theatre method of presenting English language lessons. However, a good preparation is needed in terms of writing the play script (into which the lesson is built) carefully. Also rehearsals, as well as a good summarizing exercise after the dramatization, will go a long way in enhancing both the manifest (learning) and the latent (interest) aims of this method.

It is noted, however, that the drama and theatre method is exacting when used. It places enormous tasks on the teacher and the student alike in the scrip as the student who double as actors and audience would already have mastered the concepts and procedures being taught ever before the final play production. In this way, over-learning takes place and remembrance is greatly enhanced.

In testing the hypothesis, it was discovered that there was a significant deference between the mean achievement in an English language test of students exposed to the drama and theatre method and that of those who were exposed to the traditional method. A t-test at 0.05 level of significance was used to test the hypothesis. In the pre-test, the calculated value which was derived was – 1.4. This means that the hypothesis was upheld. But in the post-test, the calculated value was 9.0 which was greater than the level of significance. This then means that there was significant difference in the rate of achievement between students taught with traditional method and students that participated in drama and theatre instructions.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion, one can conclude that students exposed to drama and theatre method achieved significantly higher than those not exposed to it. It implies therefore that this method of teaching English language is more effective and so worthwhile. The drama and theatre method is very suitable and therefore important to the teaching of English language because, apart from the topic or subject matter that is built into the play to be learnt, the method is a drill on other language skills like inducing imagination, giving practice in speaking and writing, as well as composure to public speaking. Seen in this light drama and theatre method can be taken as the proverbial one stone that kills many birds as other language skills that are not targeted in the play presentation are also acquired.

Recommendations

Given the relevance of drama and theatre method to the teaching of English, the following recommendations are made:

1. All teacher-trainees, especially those being prepared for the teaching of English language as a career, should be groomed in the skills of using drama and theatre as a teaching method.
2. School administrators should ensure that a slot be created for dramatization on the school time table for each class. The teacher of English can therefore make use of that period for rehearsals and presentations.
3. School administrators should give extra incentives, perhaps monetary, to the teachers of English for the strain on his time and the demand on extra creativity that this method exerts. If this is done, the teacher would not see it as imposition on him, for if he perceives it as an oppressive imposition, the tendency is for him to shirk responsibility from duty.

References

- Abrams, M.H. (1981). *A glossary of literary terms*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winstons.
- Ali, A. (1996). *Fundamentals of research in education*. Akwa: Meks Publishers.
- Atabo, S.Y & Abuh, J. (2010). *Learning through theatre and drama*. (revised edition). Ankpa: Rowis publishers.
- Gill, N.S. (2016). *Ancient history*. about.com>about.com>about.eduction.retrived 06/06/2018.
- Morgan, N. & Saxton, J. (1994). *Teaching drama: A mind of many wonders*. Portsmouth: Hienemann Educational Books.
- Nkosi, L. (1972). Wole Soyinka. In E. Duerden and P. Cosmo (ed.). *African writers talking*. Oxford: Hienemann Educational Books.
- Schewe, M. (2007). Drama and theatre. *In der frem & Zweitsprachnelerhre.blickZuruck March Vorn. Scenario* 1(1): 154-169. <http://www.ucc.ie/en/scenario/reseaechbibliography/> Retrieved on 02 June 2016.
- World Book Encyclopedia (1982). Retrieved from www.britanica.com/art/mimesis on 07/07/2018.