Utilizing process drama in education: a study of pedagogical perceptions

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Abstract
Language pedagogy currently remains an evolving field for teachers, scholars, and researchers as the world is advancing towards AI and other technologies, but accordingly it still poses difficulties and problems of authenticity and suitability. A number of strategies and methodologies have been used by different educational psychologists and applied linguists, but pedagogues still face problems with classroom pedagogy. The strategies and methodologies that have evolved in English pedagogy aim to develop procedures and concepts for designing materials which can be utilized in classrooms. The purpose of developing theories for the classroom is to develop the communicative competence of students, which is unfortunately not currently achieved due to the heterogeneous nature of classrooms. Process drama, unlike other instructional methods, attempts to amalgamate various language skills in pedagogy. It is devoted to targeting productive and receptive language skills. The research aims to elicit responses from teachers regarding the use of PD in the language classroom. The participants (46) were chosen randomly for this study, and a mixed method was employed by the researchers, using a questionnaire consisting of closed and open-ended questions. The findings of the study revealed that PD is an engaging, interactive and communicative pedagogical strategy that brings the desired learning results.
Key words: Process drama, critical thinking, interactive pedagogy, communicative competence, language skills

Introduction

English is a global language, so various cultures throughout the world have imbued it with different shades. Therefore, ELT is a fascinating as well as a challenging field. Language teaching in the classroom poses numerous challenges for teachers across the globe, especially when the target language exposure is less available or simply unavailable. The dominance of the mother tongue often plays a vital role in acquiring the target or foreign language. In this situation, it becomes a challenge for a teacher to provide an authentic real-life language structure inside the classroom when teaching a language (Azizi, 2022). Educational drama is very helpful in developing creativity and improving the capacity of imagination among learners through various activities and exercises (Alam, 2022). It focuses on the learners' autonomy in the classroom, which helps them to minimize hesitation in the learning process. Process drama can serve as a bridge between exposure and language use for learners to acquire complex structures by practicing or enacting it through various activities (Alam, Karim & Ahmad, 2020).

Process drama is a dynamic and engaging approach to learning and creative expression that blends theatre, education, and personal development. It is a form of drama that focuses on the process of creating and exploring a fictional or real-life situation rather than the final product or performance. In process drama, participants are encouraged to step into the shoes of various characters, explore complex issues, and engage in collaborative problem-solving within an imaginary world (Alam et al., 2023). The present study will delve into the key principles and benefits of process drama (fig. 1, below), as well as its applications in various educational and therapeutic settings. One of the fundamental principles of process drama is the concept of "living

through" an experience rather than just talking about it. By assuming different roles and engaging in dramatic activities, participants are able to explore and understand various perspectives, emotions, and responses within a safe and supportive environment. This experiential learning approach allows individuals to develop empathy, critical thinking, and communication skills, as well as gain a deeper understanding of complex social and personal issues (Mahant et al., 2023).

Figure 1: Nature of Process Drama

In the context of education, process drama can be a powerful tool for both teaching and learning languages. It can be used to develop the learner's communication skills, creativity, spontaneity, and critical skills. Process drama provides students with an embodied and immersive experience that brings the real-life context to using language structures. Through role-playing, improvisation, and group interactions, students can develop a deeper understanding of the context while improving their creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, process drama fosters a sense of real language structures which can be used and practiced to develop language skills and - more importantly - ownership in learning, as it is a learner-centered approach in which the participants can create and shape the language structures by imagining, and practice learning by using it in pairs or peer groups within the classroom (Charalambous & Yerosimou, 2020).

Process drama can provide students with an opportunity to express themselves, gain a command of the language, and develop confidence in dealing with real-life challenges. It can be utilized to promote self-awareness, emotional expression, and interpersonal skills, offering a creative and engaging approach in pedagogy for language skills development in the classroom (Charalambous & Yerosimou, 2020, Goskel & Abraham, 2022, Mahant & Ghosh, 2024). Moreover, process drama encourages a sense of engagement and spontaneity, inviting participants to engage in imaginative and open-ended experiences. This engaged approach helps to reduce inhibitions, foster creativity, and promote a sense of joy and exploration. By creating fictional situations and characters, participants can explore new possibilities, experiment with different situational activities, and expand their imaginations. In practical terms, process drama is often facilitated by teachers or facilitators who design activities for language teaching to meet specific learning outcomes (Piazzoli & Cullen, 2020, Alam & Alhawamdeh, 2022). The facilitator creates a structure and

activities based on various aspects of drama, establishes a safe and supportive environment, and provides prompts and interventions to guide the participants' active role in the learning process. Through skilled facilitation, process drama can be tailored to different age groups, cultural contexts, and learning objectives, ensuring that the experiences are both meaningful and relevant to the learners.

It is important to note that process drama is not solely focused on the individual experiences of the participants but also emphasizes the collaborative and collective aspects of drama. Through shared improvisation, storytelling, and problem-solving, participants work together to co-create dramatic experiences, fostering a sense of belonging and connection within the group. This collaborative dimension of process drama aligns with its potential for promoting social cohesion, teamwork, and empathy, making it a valuable tool for nurturing a sense of community and understanding among the participants. In conclusion, process drama offers a rich and immersive approach to learning, personal development, and social exploration. By engaging in embodied, imaginative, and collaborative experiences, participants of all ages can deepen their understanding of complex issues, improve their creative and interpersonal skills, and gain insights into themselves and others. It can be effectively used in education specific to language teaching, as it provides a vibrant and transformative platform for personal and collective exploration. As the learners step into the imaginary worlds of process drama, they not only expand their capacity for creativity and confidence but also embark on a journey of self-discovery and growth that transcends the boundaries of traditional learning and communication.

Literature Review

Process drama is very helpful in developing creativity and improving the capacity of imagination among learners through various activities and exercises. It focuses on the learners' autonomy in the classroom, which helps them to minimize hesitation in the learning process. Language learning through process drama has the clear aim of developing the language skills of learners utilizing different pedagogical strategies in the classroom because learning a language is a conscious process and requires rigorous efforts to master a language. Traditional methods and styles of teaching do not provide learners with enough space to practice the English language in real-life situations. To learn a language, the teacher has to keep a balance between receptive and productive skills. The technique of improvising drama techniques in the language classroom has a unique balance between all four skills through its dynamic nature of spontaneity and creativity. It gives sufficient practice for all language skills in real-life situations. Maley and Duff (2006) explains:

> By fully contextualising the language, it brings the classroom interaction to life through an intense focus on meaning. The emphasis on whole-person learning and multi-sensory inputs helps learners to capitalise on their strengths and to extend their range. In doing so, it offers unequalled opportunities for catering to learner differences. It fosters self-awareness (and awareness of others), self-esteem and confidence; and through this, motivation is developed. Motivation is likewise fostered and sustained through the variety and sense of expectancy generated by the activities. (p. 1)

The approach of using PD is an act of doing, applying, remembering, understanding, and realizing. Using drama and theatre in the classroom does not refer to producing dramatic texts or a play, rather, it refers to using the text as a stimulus to teach language components. The approach does not promote parrot-like repetition; and rather, it aims to emphasize the production of language structures. As Sarah Eaton says "there is no longer focus on grammar and memorization but rather using language and cultural knowledge as a means to communicate and connect to others

around the globe" (p. 5, 2010). Moreover, recent studies, such as Mahant et al. (2023), have showcased the efficacy of Process drama in the language classroom, where they experimented with the approach of teaching parts of speech to students. The Alam, Karim, and Ahmad study (2020) also highlighted some critical aspects of PD, and they devised some practical activities for classroom pedagogy that can be further improvised according to the nature of the individual classroom. It is a cognitive classroom strategy. It has the potential to maximize rather than limit instruction and also enhances the learner's creative, imaginative and cognitive abilities. The approach discovers content and concepts discussed in the classroom, the real-life situation in which they generate ideas among themselves and in interaction with others. Maley and Duff (2006) further opine:

> encourages an open, exploratory style of learning where creativity and the imagination are given scope to develop. This, in turn, promotes risk-taking, which is an essential element in effective language learning. It has a positive effect on classroom dynamics and atmosphere, thus facilitating the formation of a bonded group, which learns together. It is an enjoyable experience. (p. 2)

Theatre and drama in education have received acceptance among content developers and curriculum designers after scholars such as Gavin Bolton, Dorothy Heathcote, Brian Way, Brad Haseman, Winifred Ward, Betty Jane Wagner, Alan Maley and Alan Duff, and Kao & O'Neill have developed it as a reflexive praxis and demonstrated how it can be incorporated in classrooms. Heathcote has worked rigorously with children. She has not used children to produce plays, but instead, she exploited drama techniques to expand their awareness, to enable them to understand the realities with the help of their imagination and to understand the meaning of a particular action. She often uses the demonstrative method in the classroom to teach language to children, while her role as a teacher is only to observe, instruct and analyze the class. One of the most significant aspects of her style of teaching is that she encourages children to listen to what others are saying or demonstrating.

Process drama demands the kind of communicative environment which requires considerable flexibility and skills from the teachers who decide to use this approach to teach the language. It asks a teacher to be a facilitator, guide, counselor, coach, evaluator, commentator, observer, consultant, torchbearer, and discussion leader. Kao and O'Neill (1998) accentuate, "the students have a certain degree of autonomy in deciding how to respond within the scenario. The teacher is very much responsible for the design of the activity and their progress" (p. 11).

Assessment and Evaluation

It is a fact that the evaluation process in using PD as a tool in language teaching and learning is very challenging. The pragmatic use of PD in the language classroom demands a lot of preparation for pedagogues across the curriculum. The question is, how to conduct an evaluation in the classroom, and when should it take place? What are the tools that have to be used while assessing the language skills of the learners? While evaluating the learning results of the learners, one of the significant issues is validity which reflects use, meaning, and appropriateness in assessment. For example, if the teaching is carried out through a communicative approach, then the evaluation should be done with the communicative tests aimed at the accuracy and fluency of the linguistic structures, otherwise, it will not reflect the correct learning outcome. The focus should be on an evaluation of the communicative competence rather than the linguistic abilities of the learners.

Evaluation can be conducted after implementing drama activities such as role-playing, improvisation, simulation, scripted and non-scripted exercises, and language games

focussed on improving reading, writing, speaking, listening, vocabulary, and grammar. After that, the teacher will use different tools to evaluate the effect of drama on the learner's social and cognitive ability. These tools are oral presentations which aim to assess the fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation of the learners. Controlled and uncontrolled interviews are another tool to evaluate the cognitive ability of the learners through various roles assigned to them. Picture description, interactions, and group discussions are the techniques through which the teacher can analyze the learner's level.

Evaluation and assessment play crucial roles within the educational landscape, providing both teachers and students with valuable insights into learning progress and indicating areas for improvement. When applied within the context of process drama in the English classroom, evaluation and assessment take on a dynamic and participatory character, reflecting the interactive nature of this pedagogical approach. Process drama, a method which involves students participating in improvised dramatizations, offers unique opportunities for evaluating and assessing students' language skills, creativity, critical thinking, and collaborative abilities. However, alongside its benefits, using process drama for evaluation and assessment in the English classroom presents certain challenges and difficulties that educators must navigate effectively.

In the context of process drama, evaluation and assessment are multifaceted processes that encompass more than just measuring students' memorization of facts or their ability to reproduce learned information (fig. 2, below). Rather, process drama calls for a holistic evaluation and assessment framework which captures students' engagement with language, their imaginative contributions, and their ability to reflect and respond to complex themes and narratives. Through process drama, educators can observe and evaluate students' linguistic fluency, vocabulary usage, and communicative confidence as they actively participate in role-playing scenarios, improvisational exercises, and storytelling. This dynamic approach to evaluation acknowledges the interconnectedness of language development, creative expression, and social interaction, moving beyond traditional assessment methods and fostering a deeper understanding of students' holistic language competencies (Baldwin & Galazka, 2021).
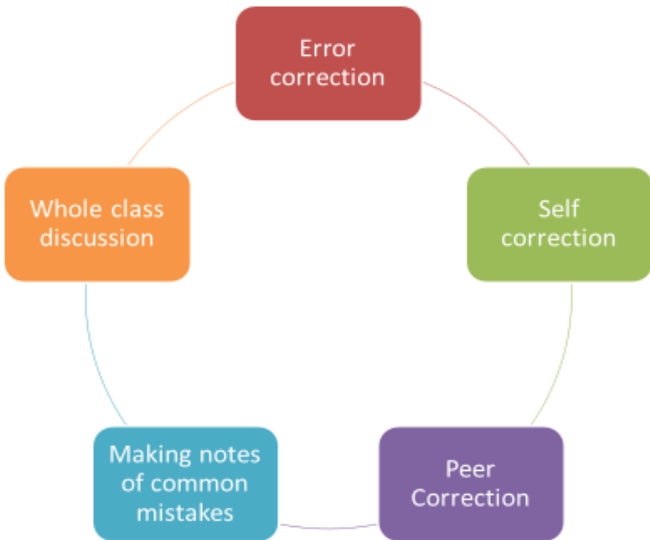
Figure 2: Assessment Module

Furthermore, the use of process drama in the English classroom offers an avenue for assessing students' critical thinking and interpretive skills. As students immerse themselves in dramatic scenarios and explore diverse characters and narratives, educators can evaluate their ability to analyze and interpret complex texts, synthesize information, and articulate their perspectives effectively. Process drama provides a rich context for students to engage with literary works on a deeper level, enabling educators to assess their comprehension, interpretation, and application of language in dynamic, real-world contexts. Moreover, the performative aspect of process drama allows for the assessment of students' creativity as they conceptualize and embody characters, express emotions, and construct narratives through improvisation and various activities (Piazzoli, 2010; 2011).

Collaborative skills are also central to the evaluation and assessment process within process drama. In the English classroom, process drama fosters collaborative learning experiences as students work together to co-create narratives, develop characters, and engage in interactive storytelling. Assessment within this context can, therefore encompass the observation of students' ability to collaborate, negotiate, and communicate effectively with their peers while contributing to a shared dramatic experience. Additionally, the assessment of students' ability to empathize with diverse perspectives and engage in constructive dialogue can be integrated into the evaluation framework, reflecting the social and emotional dimensions of learning facilitated by process drama.

Despite its numerous benefits, the use of process drama for evaluation and assessment in the English classroom presents certain challenges and difficulties which teachers need to address actively. One significant challenge lies in the development of valid and reliable assessment tools which capture the multifaceted learning outcomes of process drama. Traditional assessment tools may not fully capture the scope of students' engagement, creativity, and collaboration within the dynamic context of process drama. Therefore, educators are tasked with designing and implementing assessment methods which align with the experiential and participatory nature of process drama, ensuring that assessment criteria are relevant, comprehensive, and reflective of diverse learning styles and abilities.

Another challenge arises from the need to balance formative and summative assessment within the context of process drama. While formative assessment strategies, such as ongoing observations and reflective feedback, are essential for capturing the dynamic and evolving nature of students' learning experiences in process drama, the integration of summative assessments, such as performance evaluations or written reflections, can present logistical and pedagogical challenges. Facilitators must navigate the tension between the spontaneous, exploratory nature of process drama and the need to document and evaluate students' learning outcomes within a structured framework that effectively communicates students' progress and achievements.

Moreover, the inherently open-ended and improvisational nature of process drama can pose challenges in terms of standardization and consistency in evaluation and assessment. Given that process drama encourages students to be spontaneous, imaginative, and responsive to emergent narratives and situations, educators may face difficulties in establishing uniform benchmarks for evaluating students' performances and contributions. Striking a balance between allowing for creative freedom and maintaining evaluative rigor can be a complex task that requires ongoing reflection, dialogue, and adaptation within the assessment process. Additionally, the diverse range of skills and competencies engaged through process drama necessitates a comprehensive and nuanced approach to assessment, which can be demanding for

educators to implement effectively (fig. 3, below). ABCD refers to audience, behavior, content and degree, and 5W1H is what, why, who, when, where and how. Evaluating students' language proficiency, creative expression, critical thinking, and collaborative skills within the context of process drama requires a multifaceted assessment framework that integrates diverse modes of assessment, including observation, self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher-led evaluation.
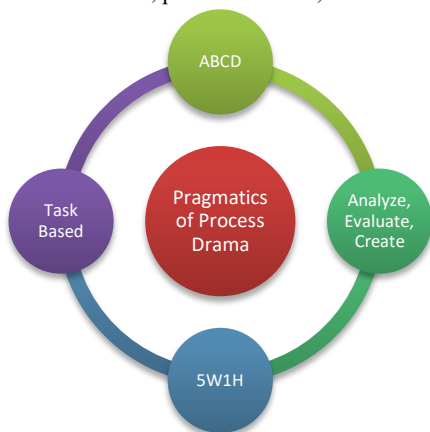
Figure 3: Mechanics of Classroom Pedagogy

Furthermore, the inclusive nature of process drama, which encourages students to engage with diverse perspectives and express themselves authentically, poses challenges in terms of evaluating and assessing students' contributions in a manner that honors their individuality and cultural backgrounds. In conclusion, the utilization of process drama for evaluation and assessment in the English classroom offers a dynamic and immersive approach to capturing students' language development, creative expression, critical thinking, and collaborative abilities. However, implementing effective evaluation and assessment within the context of process drama comes with its own set of challenges and difficulties. Teachers must cope with the need to develop comprehensive and relevant assessment tools, balance formative and summative assessment strategies, maintain consistency and standardization while allowing for creative freedom, and address the complexities of evaluating diverse skills and perspectives within an inclusive framework. By acknowledging and addressing these challenges, teachers can make most of the transformative potential of process drama as a vehicle for holistic evaluation and assessment in the English classroom, nurturing students' language proficiency, creativity, critical thinking, and collaborative skills within a dynamic and engaging learning environment.

Objectives
The objectives of the present study are:
- To analyze the use of process drama in EFL classrooms effectively by encouraging students to learn English language skills
- To improvise, highlight and develop the cognitive ability and confidence of learners through the incorporation of drama techniques.
- To articulate the practical implication of the approach in EFL classrooms and aim to improve group cohesion and supra-segmental skills of language.

Research Questions

- How to use process drama effectively for better learning results in classroom pedagogy?
- How to develop cognitive ability and confidence among students by using activity based pedagogy?
- What are the practical implications of improving kinesics and group cohesion through process drama?

Methodology

The study adopts a mixed method using a survey based questionnaire and interview among 46 respondents teaching English in EFL classrooms. The questionnaire was based on a Likert scale to understand the efficacy of process drama in an educational setting. The participants were chosen using the purposive method and randomly selected. However, in the initial stage, more than 50 participants were chosen for the study, but only 46 completed the survey, followed by an interview. The study uses SPSS to analyze the data, and later MS Excel was used to make inferences from the research.

Analysis and Discussion

The analysis of the data was conducted with SPSS, and it was later tabulated in Excel to make a pie chart of the responses. A total of 9 integrated questions were asked before each interview session. These questions were dynamic in nature and included the different layers of language skills which can be taught with the help of process drama and its elements. The first question asks how process drama is learner-centered with a friendly approach which raises learning results. The response is shown in Fig. 4 below.
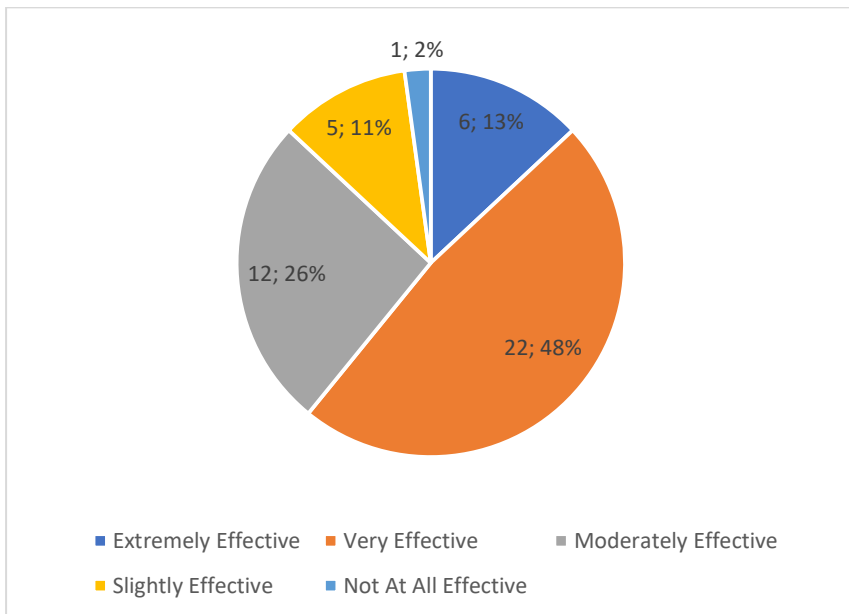

**Figure 4: Process Drama and learning results**

Most of the respondents teaching at university level pointed out that it is an effective method if it is utilized in a proper manner with planned lessons. More than 60% of respondents said that it can maximize the productive skills of learners, and only less than 6% responded that it is not an effective methodology for teaching the English language. However, in the interview, they emphasized that they don't have ample activities available in their classroom which can cater to learners.

The following questions elicited information on how process drama can be incorporated in the classroom to develop productive and receptive skills using activities. More than 46% (refer to Fig. 5) of the respondents stated that they use techniques and strategies related to PD in their classroom, and 17% stated that they use it occasionally, according to the needs of the students. Only 17% of the participants stated that they use process drama in their classroom rarely or not at all. Moreover, during the interviews, some of the respondent revealed that they couldn't find activities related to the topics they want to teach, or the activities were not in line with their student's needs.
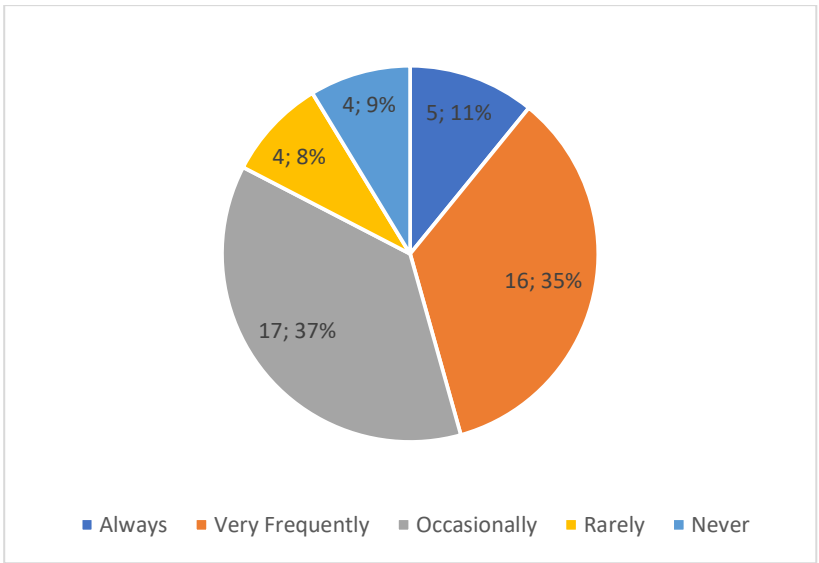
**Figure 5: Targets productive and receptive skills**

The next question was intended to elicit information about how easy it is to incorporate activities related to PD in classroom pedagogy. More than half (54% as shown in fig. 6) of the respondents stated that they felt it was easy to incorporate PD and activities related to visualization, role play, enactment and simulation activities, as they are available and easy to improvise according to the different nature of the classroom.
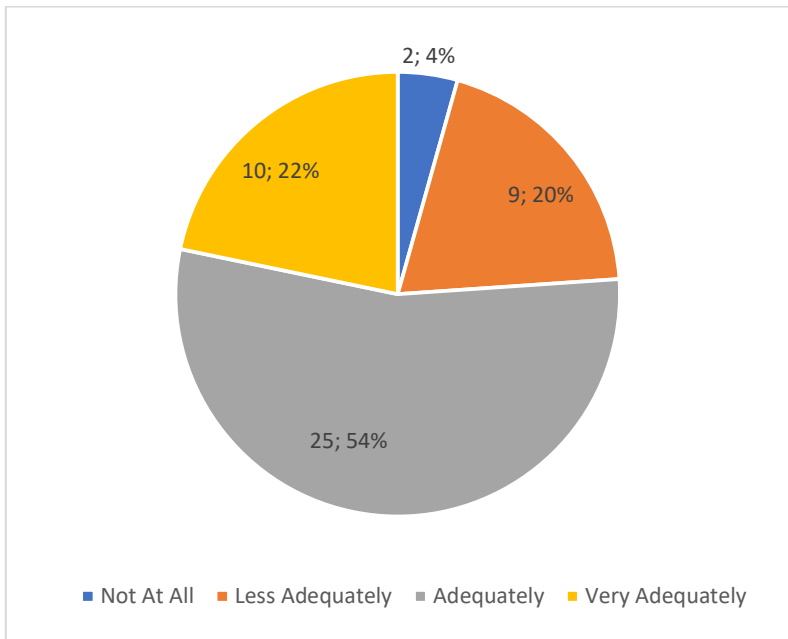
Figure 6: Visualization, role-play, enactment, and simulation activities are easy to adopt in classroom pedagogy

These activities are also easy, as many scholars such as Maley & Duff (2006), Piazzoli (2010), Holdan (1981), and Lazar (2013) demonstrated numerous types of activities through their works, and those can be improvised in any classroom with variations according to the nature of the students and classroom.

The next question attempted to gather information about how one can combine fluency, pronunciation and intonation in their pedagogy using PD as an instructional approach. The responses are shown in fig. 7 below. 43% of respondents stated that it is effective in teaching fluency, intonation and pronunciation. Only 9% of respondents rejected the idea of teaching these supra-segmental features using PD in the classroom. A large number of participants firmly believed that it can be taught using this methodology, and it is quite effective as if focuses on drilling, repetition, and enacting.
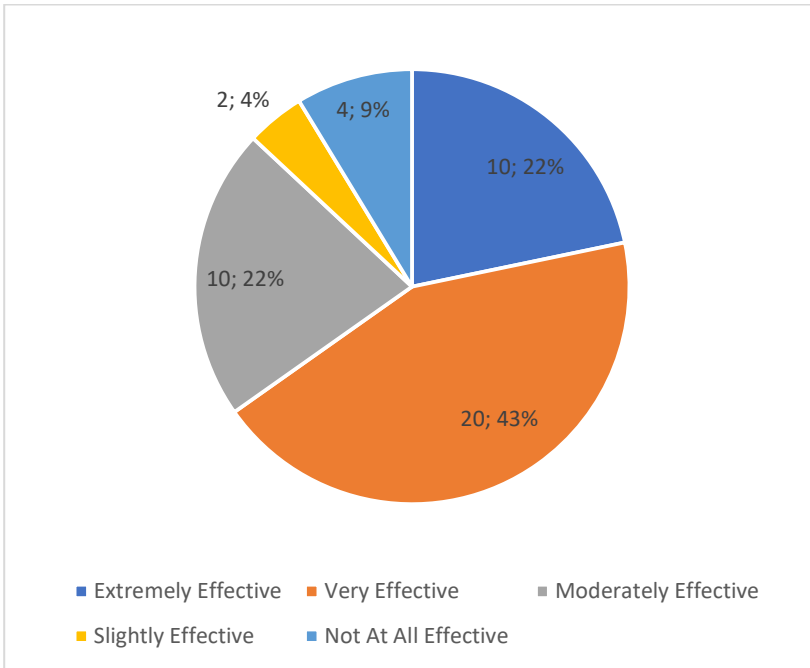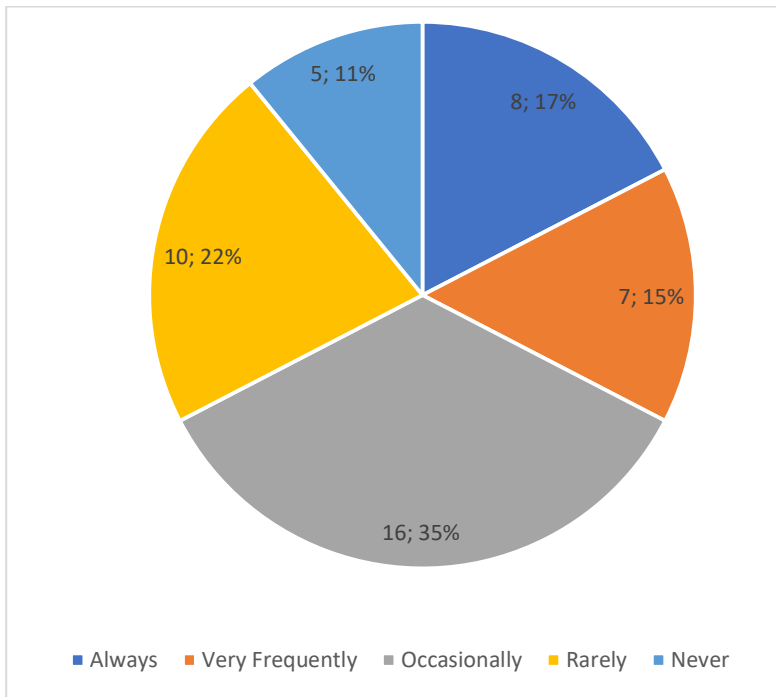
Figure 7: Integration of fluency, pronunciation and intonation

The following question explored promoting group cohesion and collaborative learning using process drama, and the respondents were quite certain that the strategies that can be used in classroom pedagogy definitely promote collaboration among learners. Almost all the techniques used in the classroom are based on pair work and group work, which develops collaboration among students. Fig. 8 below shows that 39% of participants were certain when they were asked the question about collaboration in the classroom using PD. Only 13% of participants stated that they were not sure about the statement or they don't have experience of using it in their classroom.
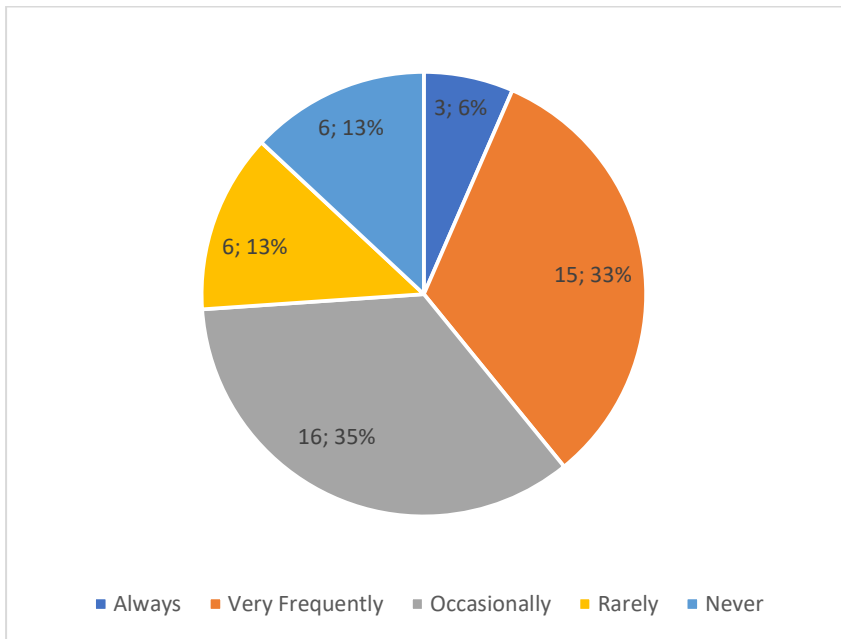
Figure 8: Promotes group cohesion and collaborative learning

The next question referred to the development of critical thinking and motivation among students as PD promotes communicative competence. As per fig. 9, 32% of participants responded positively, while 35% stated that it does, but only occasionally. The reason behind this is the unavailability of appropriate materials for other formats of the classroom. The teachers were not sure whether it would work for their classroom or not. Only 11% of participants rejected this statement. Critical thinking and motivation are intrinsic learning skills which can be developed gradually and can be achieved with time if the strategies are used effectively.

Figure 9 pie chart data:
- Always: 8; 17%
- Very Frequently: 7; 15%
- Occasionally: 16; 35%
- Rarely: 10; 22%
- Never: 5; 11%

Legend: ■ Always ■ Very Frequently ■ Occasionally ■ Rarely ■ Never

Figure 9: Communicative approach which promotes critical thinking and motivation

The following question asked about the availability of authentic materials related to PD used in classroom teaching. The respondents were not very sure about this question, and most of them chose the option 'less adequately'. Later, they revealed that they had pressure to finish the syllabus on time, and they didn't have time to experiment in their classroom. The respondents revealed that traditional methodology does not provide enough choice to teach language skills, and do not promote communicative competence among learners. However, the unavailability of materials relating to PD is still a question among most of them. As fig. 10 shows, 17% of participants stated that materials for implementing PD in classroom pedagogy were unavailable.
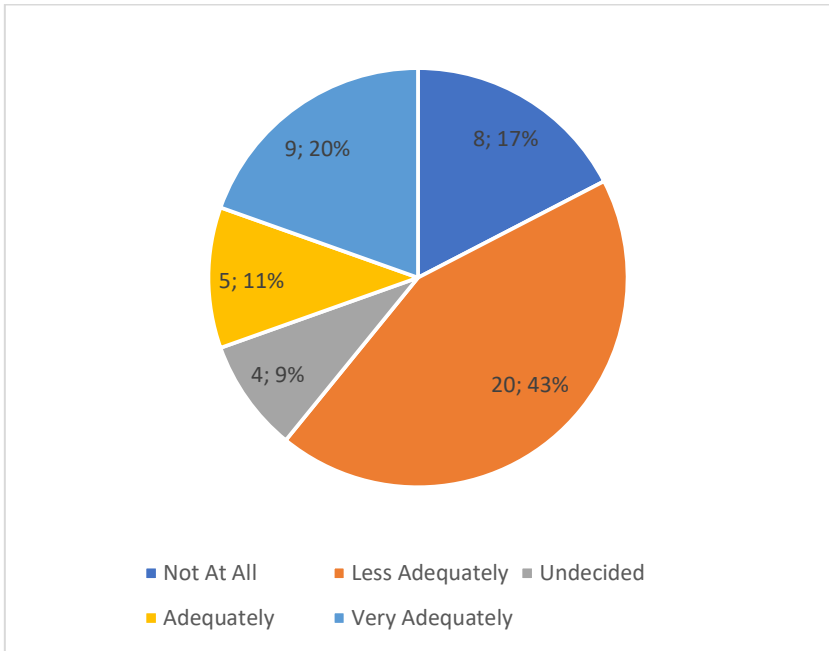
Figure 10: Unavailability of ample resources for implementation in classroom pedagogy

The next question asked participants whether PD develops the communicative competence of learners when used properly inside the language classroom. The data in fig. 11 shows that 67% of participants believed that it develops and promotes the communicative ability of the students because it provides real life situations and language use through exercise and repetition, which is unfortunately not available for learners. However, 15% of respondents stated that it does not develop communicative competence, but when they were asked why in the personal interview, for an unknown reason, they skipped the question.
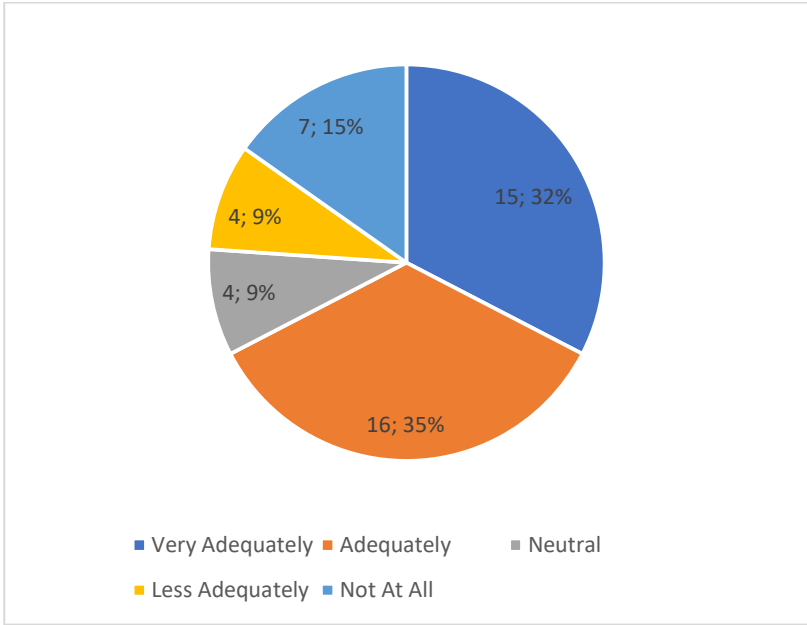
Figure 11: Develops communicative competence

The next question asked about using PD in the classroom to minimize hesitation among the learners whilst they are using productive skills in real-life situations. As seen in fig. 12, 43% of respondents stated that PD adequately minimizes hesitation, due to the use of exercise and repetition. 13% of participants chose the option 'not at all', and among these most of them had not used PD in their classroom pedagogy. However, activities of role play and simulation do play a key role in developing confidence among students and minimizes hesitation during speaking or writing.
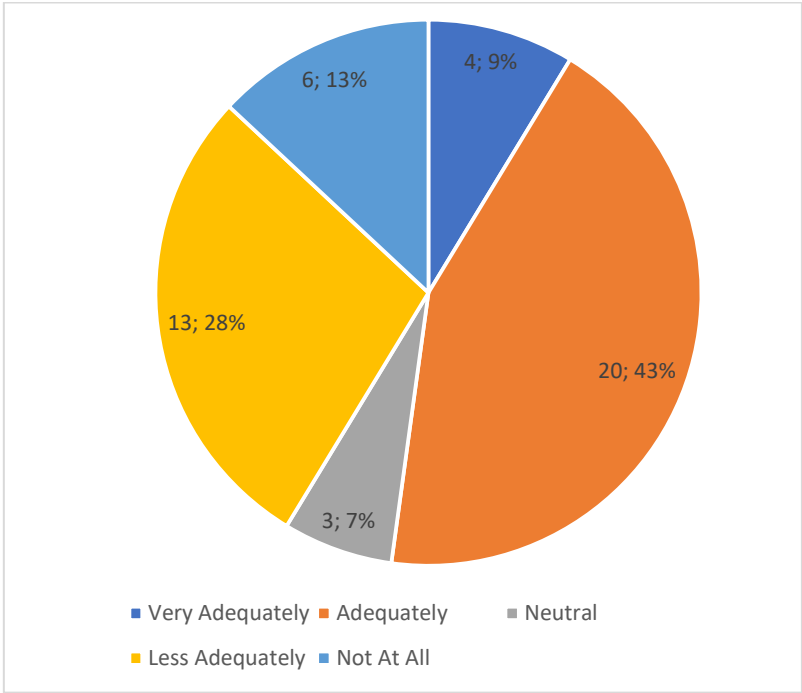
Figure 12: Minimizes hesitation and provides confidence among students

Findings

The findings indicate that process drama develops linguistic structures in the form of scripted and non-scripted activities, thus, students feel comfortable with language use and are able to reproduce language structures and understand how to use it in real-life contexts or situations. The findings also reveal that it provides a stimulus for interactive pedagogy in the classroom which promotes group cohesion, collaborative learning, and the non-verbal skills which are needed for expressing oneself in spontaneous real-life situations. Moreover, it develops the participation of the individual in the classroom community, which enables students to become autonomous learner. The existing praxis is unable to deliver what is needed in today's competitive world, which is to develop competencies and enable them to perform well in real-life spontaneous situations. It can also be said that existing teaching practice does not promote cooperative learning and designifies the importance of group cohesion, which is a core process in the use of drama activities in the classroom. The existing syllabus and materials are not adequate enough to develop the cognition and cognitive ability of the students, but this can be achieved through PD. The approach of using PD in the classroom promotes pair-work, group-work, and cooperative learning because these teaching techniques have not been used by the teacher, as they prefer to go through the traditional patterns which did not promote these communicative methods of teaching English. Traditional methods do not give autonomy to students,

rather, it supports the authoritarian nature as this kind of approach does not welcome errors committed by the students.

Conclusion

On the basis of the discussion above, it can be concluded that the use of PD in education is far more effective when compared to other teaching methods in classroom pedagogy. It gives emphasis to the receptive and productive skills of the language and the idea of activity-based learning can be utilized in the second language classroom for better learning results. Even the intrinsic skills of language, such as motivation and collaboration, can easily be included and taught. The problem teachers are facing, which has also been highlighted by the present study, is that adequate materials which can be easily improvised for classroom teaching are unavailable. It could be a future field of study for scholars to investigate this area and develop some activity-based materials which could be used without any issues or hesitation by pedagogues. The present study is limited, as it was conducted using a small number of participants. For policy implementation, a larger survey and data is further required to support the findings of the present study.

Acknowledgment

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