

Effect of Drama in Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) on the Enhancement of Junior Middle School Students' English Oral Abilities

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Abstract

Drama in task-based language teaching is an interactive way to enhance junior middle school students' English speaking abilities. The importance of English proficiency has grown significantly due to globalization and the international nature of many professions. For junior middle school students, developing strong oral English skills is crucial as it lays the foundation for effective communication and academic success in higher education and beyond. Traditional teaching methods often emphasize grammar and written exercises, which may not adequately develop students' oral abilities. This paper presents the use of drama in task-based language teaching with the aim to (i) Identify the students' interested, confident and willing to participate in English learning, and (ii) Identify the tone of voice, tasks, conversations and theme test in oral abilities before and after Task-based Teaching. The study primarily employs experimental methods, using questionnaire and oral test. A two-month teaching experiment was conducted with two classes at Huanghekou Town Middle School to verify the practical application and effectiveness of the drama in task-based teaching method in oral English instruction. The research results indicate that the drama in task-based oral teaching is conducive to creating a positive oral English teaching environment. It successfully stimulates students' enthusiasm and self-assurance in acquiring spoken language skills, greatly improving their proficiency in oral English. Furthermore, this instructional approach significantly enhances pupils' ability to understand spoken language. Overall, the inclusion of dramatic elements in task-based oral education has a beneficial effect on the enhancement of students' overall language proficiency. It improves their ability to speak and understand spoken English, showing potential for use in teaching oral English to junior high school students. Research implication included (i) Enhanced pedagogical strategies, (ii) Curriculum development, and (iii) Teacher training and professional development. Suggestion for this research included (i) Integrate real-world tasks, (ii) Regular assessment and feedback, and (iii) Foster a supportive learning environment.

Keywords: Drama, Task-Based Language Teaching, English Oral, Junior High School

Introduction

Through our teaching practice, we can see that drama, as an effective interactive medium to enhance junior high school students' oral English skills, can be used to improve students' oral skills by integrating certain activities in drama into students' language tasks, so that students can experience an authentic and dynamic environment, which promotes students' active participation in teaching and learning activities (Carson, 2012; Humaira et al. 2012; Humaira et al., 2022; Nguyen, 2023). TBLT method focuses on encouraging students to actively participate in learning, thus stimulating their interest in English (Ellis, 2003). By engaging in tasks that require language use, students develop comprehensive language skills (Willis & Willis, 2019). Drama in TBLT serves as a dynamic method to engage learners actively and contextually in learning English. Andrew et al (2017) demonstrated that combining TBLT with drama significantly improves communicative skills by providing authentic, interactive scenarios. Similarly, Uştuk and Gorp (2020) explored the practical application of process drama within TBLT, highlighting its effectiveness in creating immersive, meaningful language learning experiences. This approach not only fosters language proficiency but also boosts learner confidence and creativity.

Although traditional teaching methods have long dominated classroom teaching, in actual teaching teachers still emphasise the transmission of language knowledge, but often neglect the practical application of English as a subject (Xiao, 2018). These traditional methods not only fail to meet the requirements of the new curriculum standards, but also fail to meet the needs of modern education quality. In response, China's curriculum standards, issued in 2001, place special emphasis on the importance of "language use" as the foundation of the English language programme, with the aim of comprehensively cultivating students' comprehensive abilities (Ministry of Education, 2001). In response to the shortcomings of traditional teaching methods, the standards advocate the use of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which urges teachers to abandon "fill-in-the-blank" teaching and instead use a variety of tasks to enhance students' thinking, communication and co-operation skills. Through this teaching method, students can really use language in real situations (Wang & Wang, 2020).

Throughout the research on drama teaching, previous studies have not only pointed out the many advantages of integrating drama into task-based language teaching (TBLT), but also suggested numerous feasible pedagogical approaches. Carson (2012) investigated the role of drama in task-based learning, highlighting the effects of drama on autonomy, identity and agency. Humaira et al (2022) examined the impact of drama-based theatre language teaching on enhancing students' oral proficiency, and their findings indicated a notable advancement in students' oral proficiency. Similarly, Nguyen (2023) investigated the effects of applying drama activities in speaking classes and found that such activities had a positive effect on the oral performance of students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Liu and Zhang (2019) also found that task-based language teaching had a significant impact on students' oral communicative competence and overall language proficiency. Similarly, Chen and Liu (2021) observed in a study that task-based activities enhanced students' engagement and motivation, which in turn yielded superior learning outcomes.

The integration of theatre into Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) represents a significant advancement in language education. It not only addresses the shortcomings of conventional teaching approaches but also aligns with contemporary educational standards. The implementation of TBLT enables educators to establish a more interactive and practical learning environment, which can effectively enhance students' overall language proficiency.

Research Background

In the field of language education, the task-based language teaching (TBLT) method has been demonstrated to be an effective approach for enhancing the oral English proficiency of junior high school students. The studies conducted by Carson (2012); Humaira et al (2022); Nguyen (2023) all emphasise the considerable impact of integrating dramatic activities into linguistic tasks. The utilisation of this approach enables educators to establish a dynamic and engaging learning environment, which in turn serves to enhance students' motivation to learn and facilitate a notable improvement in their speaking abilities. In light of the aforementioned studies, this study will further investigate the efficacy of drama in enhancing the oral English proficiency of middle school students within the context of TBLT. The integration of drama activities into TBLT has been demonstrated to markedly enhance students' communicative competence. Andrew et al (2017) discovered that the integration of theatrical activities within TBLT enabled students to participate in authentic interactive scenarios, thereby enhancing their communicative abilities. Similarly, Ozgehan and Koen (2020) highlight that the advantages of theatre activities based on TBLT principles include the capacity to provide students with an immersive and meaningful learning experience that enhances their self-confidence and creativity. The aforementioned studies illustrate the profound impact of drama within the TBLT framework.

Andrew et al (2017) demonstrated that integrating task-based language instruction (TBLT) with drama in teaching practice enables learners to become immersed in authentic interactive scenarios at a faster rate, thereby markedly enhancing their communicative abilities. Similarly, Ozgehan and Koen (2020) highlight the numerous benefits of integrating process drama within the framework of TBLT, including the creation of immersive and meaningful learning experiences that foster self-confidence and creativity in learners. The aforementioned studies demonstrate that the incorporation of drama into TBLT has a profound effect.

The global emphasis on English ability is intensifying, as is the demand for effective language education. This has a significant impact on oral English teaching in junior middle school. The conventional pedagogical approaches tend to prioritize English grammar and written exercises, which often prove inadequate for fostering students' oral communication abilities. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) represents an alternative approach to language instruction that prioritises the completion of meaningful tasks, the simulation of authentic language use scenarios, and the enhancement of oral language proficiency through the active involvement of students. TBLT places significant emphasis on the concept of "learning by doing", a pedagogical approach that has gained prominence since the 1990s.

Having perceived the recent modern trends in the field of English language education, Huanghekou Middle School also recognises the importance of English language proficiency in today's era of globalisation. In the current form of education, English is not only an important tool for international communication, but also a key part of students' academic and professional development. And for Year 8 students, English language education at this stage is particularly important as it lays the foundation for higher education and future career development. Despite the importance attached to English teaching in schools, many students at the junior secondary level still have difficulties in speaking English, mainly because traditional teaching methods focus more on English grammar and the memorisation of English words, while neglecting the cultivation of students' actual English speaking skills.

In Huanghekou Middle School, teachers' previous traditional English teaching methods usually focused on reading and writing, with insufficient attention paid to speaking and listening. This approach often resulted in students performing well in written exams but lacking confidence and speaking skills in actual oral communication. Limited interactive English situations in the classroom restrict students' ability to apply language skills in real-life situations. It is therefore essential to investigate additional efficacious pedagogical techniques to address the deficit in oral English proficiency, with a view to enhancing students' oral English capabilities.

The incorporation of drama into TBLT represents a promising advancement in English language pedagogy. In contrast to conventional methodologies, the utilisation of drama in TBLT places an emphasis on authentic communication through the completion of meaningful tasks, thereby fostering an environment in which students are encouraged to utilise the English language in practical and engaging contexts within communicative conversations. This approach incorporates a variety of activities, including role-playing, improvisation, drama skits, group discussions, problem-solving tasks, and project-based learning. These activities not only enhance the interactive nature of learning but also provide students with the opportunity to simulate authentic English usage scenarios in a simulated real-world context. Huanghekou Middle School has implemented a teaching method based on TBLT, with the objective of modifying the prevailing approach to oral English instruction in junior middle school. The incorporation of drama activities into the Grade 8 English curriculum is intended to provide students with enhanced opportunities to learn and practise spoken English in authentic contexts. It is anticipated that this approach will enhance student engagement, foster motivation to learn, and markedly enhance their spoken English proficiency.

Research Problem Statement

There is a significant discrepancy between the current state of English education and the evolving demands of modern society. Despite having been engaged in the study of English for a period exceeding ten years, many junior high school students continue to experience difficulties in communicating effectively in English in their daily lives (Li, 2020). Consequently, the objective of TBLT research is to enhance the efficacy of existing junior middle school English pedagogical approaches, to facilitate the effective integration of TBLT in the classroom, and to elevate students' oral English proficiency. It is therefore evident that there is a pressing need to introduce the task-based teaching method into junior high school oral English teaching.

Drama teaching in TBLT has a long history in which the knowledge and methods have evolved over time. The direct method was a pioneer in the teaching of spoken English, emphasising the accuracy of language use (Humaira et al.). Subsequent developments, such as the audiolingual approach, signalled a new era in foreign language education. In the continuous evolution of teaching methods, cognitive and communicative approaches have gained prominence (Richards, 2015). The drama task-based approach, which emphasizes the cultivation of students' communicative abilities, has become a critical standard in oral English teaching. However, numerous problems persist in the practice of oral English teaching in junior middle schools, indicating a significant gap from the desired standards.

For a long time, oral English has not received the necessary attention in foreign language teaching. Due to a narrow understanding of language, traditional PPP (Presentation, Practice, Production) teaching methods have dominated, focusing mainly on isolated symbols,

vocabulary, and grammar (Zhang, 2021). This approach has limited the effectiveness of oral English instruction.

Given that the fundamental objective of English teaching is to enable students to use the language as a tool for actual communication, finding an appropriate method for oral teaching is crucial. TBLT addresses the long-standing issue of the prioritisation of knowledge over ability in the context of oral English teaching in China. Recent studies have indicated that TBLT can markedly enhance students' oral communication abilities by fostering a more appealing and pragmatic learning atmosphere (Liu Heyu, 2022).

The discrepancy between the English education system and students' effective communication abilities has prompted educators to consider incorporating drama teaching into TBLT as a means of enhancing the spoken English proficiency of junior high school students. The conventional pedagogical approach unduly emphasises grammatical accuracy while failing to adequately foster students' oral proficiency in English. This imbalance in focus has contributed to the shortcomings observed in oral English instruction.

Drama in Task-Based Language Teaching in Junior Middle School

In the field of language teaching, drama represents a pedagogical approach that is grounded in extensive research and practice, and is regarded as a key component of modern communicative language teaching. At its core, learners are required to utilise the target language in order to complete tasks that have been designed by the teacher. This approach allows for the dual achievement of language learning and practical application (Humaira et al., 2022; Nguyen, 2023; Ellis, 2018). As demonstrated by Andrew et al (2017), the integration of TBLT with drama has the potential to markedly enhance students' oral communication abilities by immersing them in authentic, interactive communicative scenarios. Similarly, Ozgehan and Koen (2020) emphasise the advantages of process drama in TBLT, particularly in terms of fostering immersive and meaningful learning experiences. For students in secondary education, this approach has the potential to enhance their language abilities, self-assurance and inventiveness, rendering the acquisition of linguistic competencies both engaging and efficacious. The drama section of TBLT allows students to actively participate in class activities and to simulate realistic tasks related to daily life, study and work. This enables them to achieve the classroom teaching goals.

The fundamental premise of TBLT is to integrate theoretical learning with practical applications through the simulation of authentic language use in the classroom, thereby facilitating students' engagement in meaningful learning. This approach establishes a connection between theoretical knowledge and practical application, not only facilitating students' language learning but also enhancing their social interaction abilities. At the junior level, the drama component of TBLT encourages students to actively use English to enhance their communicative abilities and prepare them for authentic communication (Andrew et al., 2017; Ozgehan & Koen, 2020; Humaira et al., 2022; Nguyen, 2023; Zhou & Wei, 2019; Carless, 2018). The incorporation of tasks pertaining to students' daily experiences renders the learning process more pertinent and engaging, thus enhancing their overall language proficiency.

The research of Humaira et al (2022); Nguyen (2023) indicates that drama is an effective method for enhancing students' oral proficiency. Lee's study (2020) revealed that students who engaged with TBLT demonstrated enhanced communicative competence. Wang and Liu (2021) also highlighted the beneficial impact of TBLT in fostering critical thinking. The research conducted by Sweeney et al. (2017) and Utuk and Van Gorp (2020) indicates that the

integration of TBLT with drama can enhance communicative abilities through the utilisation of authentic, interactive scenarios. This approach has the additional benefit of making the learning process more immersive and meaningful, while also improving students' language skills, self-confidence and creativity.

Junior Middle school Student's Oral English Abilities

The teaching of junior middle school English as a foreign language is of great importance in the cultivation of students' communicative competence and oral fluency. As Stinson and Winston (2020); To (2019) have observed, the use of theatrical activities in the teaching of spoken English allows students to practise this skill in both real and imaginative contexts. This has the effect of enhancing their self-confidence and creativity, while also providing a dynamic approach to language learning. Nevertheless, several challenges remain. These include the presence of excessive class sizes, limited resources and insufficient teacher training in oral English teaching in junior high schools.

In order to address these issues at the current lower secondary level, it is necessary to implement comprehensive educational reform and to continue investing in teacher development programmes. It would be beneficial to explore innovative, interactive and resourceful approaches, particularly the integration of drama activities into the curriculum, which is crucial for effective oral English teaching.

The key factors affecting middle school students' participation in oral English activities are interest, confidence and willingness. Students who evince a genuine interest in learning English are more likely to engage actively in oral practice, thereby enhancing their language skills (Dornyei, 2019). The incorporation of culturally pertinent materials and interactive activities has been demonstrated to serve as effective stimuli for fostering interest (Zhao & Liu, 2020). The level of self-confidence exhibited by students has been identified as a significant factor influencing their willingness to participate. Teachers can facilitate the creation of a supportive learning environment that encourages risk-taking and reduces the fear of making mistakes, thereby enhancing students' self-confidence (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009). Teachers' positive reinforcement and constructive feedback are of great consequence in the development of students' self-confidence. Furthermore, peer collaboration in group discussions provides an opportunity for practising speaking in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere, which fosters a sense of community and support (Ghaith, 2018). Furthermore, the willingness to communicate in English is of great consequence, and this willingness is frequently influenced by the perceived importance of English for future opportunities (MacIntyre et al., 2002).

Programs highlighting the practical benefits of English proficiency can motivate students to participate more actively. Incorporating technology, such as language learning apps and online speaking platforms, can make oral practice more engaging and accessible (Chen & Hsu, 2021). Assessing oral abilities in junior middle school students involves evaluating various components such as tone of voice, tasks, conversations, and theme-based tests. Tone of voice is crucial as it reflects students' ability to convey emotions and nuances in English. Effective assessment includes listening for intonation, stress, and rhythm, which are essential for clear and expressive communication (Rossi & Bove, 2021). Tasks designed to evaluate oral skills should be diverse and interactive. Role-playing, storytelling, and debates are effective tasks that engage students and require them to use English creatively and contextually (Ellis, 2020). These tasks help assess students' ability to apply language skills in real-life scenarios. Conversations, both structured and spontaneous, are another critical

assessment tool. Engaging students in dialogues with peers or teachers can reveal their proficiency in understanding and responding appropriately in various contexts (Goh & Burns, 2012). This method assesses their listening and speaking skills, as well as their ability to maintain a coherent flow of conversation. Theme-based tests can be used to evaluate students' ability to discuss specific topics in depth. These tests often involve presenting on a given theme, followed by a question-and-answer session. This format helps assess students' vocabulary, grammar, and ability to organize their thoughts logically (Chen & Hsu, 2021).

Enhancing junior middle school students' oral English abilities requires a shift towards effective teaching methods like drama in TBLT. By prioritizing practical communication skills over grammar, TBLT offers a dynamic approach to engage students and improve their speaking proficiency. Through this method, students can develop the necessary skills for success in higher education and beyond.

Integrating Drama in Oral English Learning

Incorporating theatre activities into students' English language learning activities not only significantly increases students' engagement and motivation, creates an immersive and interactive environment, and reduces students' anxiety about oral communication (Stinson & Winston, 2018). This approach not only promotes authentic communication between students, which leads to students being able to use the language spontaneously, but also improves their fluency and discourse skills in using the language (O'Toole & Dunn, 2020).

Drama activities while learning English can also encourage students to learn English pronunciation and intonation. Kao and O'Neill (2018) found that before preparing for a drama activity, students continually practise repetition and express themselves during the activity, and these aspects help to improve students' pronunciation and intonation, leading to clearer communication. During role-play sessions, students are able to engage with new knowledge through different cultural perspectives, developing cultural awareness and empathy (Zafeiriadou, 2021). Drama activities require group or peer-to-peer cooperation, so it also has the advantage of collaborative learning at the same time, which improves students' social skills and creates a supportive learning environment for students' English language learning (Cheng & Winston, 2019). In addition, theatre stimulates students' creativity and critical thinking about problems and develops their ability to explore and solve problems in real-life situations (To et al.). Despite the many benefits of implementing theatre activities for students' English language learning, challenges such as the need for teacher training and logistical constraints need to be addressed if it is to be effectively implemented in secondary school teaching (Stinson & Freebody, 2018).

Incorporating theatre activities into the teaching of spoken English offers a promising avenue for the future development of students' speaking skills. When conducting language tasks, teachers can inject theatre elements such as role-playing, improvisation and drama sketches into the speaking tasks. Teachers can create immersive learning environments where students feel immersed and thus motivated to participate. This approach not only enhances students' oral communication skills, but also has a positive impact on their creativity, self-confidence and cultural understanding. Previous studies have shown that the implementation of theatre activities or the addition of theatre elements to spoken English can have a significant positive impact on enhancing the richness of spoken English activities and helping students to communicate effectively in real-life situations.

Research Objectives

This research aims to:

- 1. Identify the students' interested, confident and willing to participate in English learning through drama in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT).*
- 2. Identify the tone of voice, tasks, conversations and theme test in oral abilities before and after implementing the drama in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT).*

Research Design

This section outlines research design for implementing drama in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), offering insights into its potential impact English oral abilities. This research employs experimental methods using questionnaires and oral test questions. This study was conducted at Huanghekou Middle School, involving two eighth-grade classes: Class 8 with 38 students and Class 7 with 28 students. Both classes were chosen because they had no significant differences in English grades, ensuring consistency for the study. The research took place from March to May, spanning two months to implement and observe the teaching plan.

Implementation Steps of Drama in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) Method

These stages involve Pre-task stage, Task cycle stage and Language focus stage respectively, which are in line with the framework of oral language teaching proposed by Willis in previous studies (Ellis, 2020; Willis & Willis, 2019). These stages ensure that task-based speaking instruction is comprehensive in real-world situations and enhances students' communicative competence and practical language use.

Stage 1: Pre-task stage

In the pre-task stage, the teacher begins by setting the task to the students by instructing them on some of the rules and considerations for performing theatre within the framework of TBLT in preparation for the performance that follows. This includes introducing the theme, providing the necessary vocabulary and language structures, and these sessions reactivate students' prior knowledge to ensure that they are able to perform the task.

Stage 2: Task cycle stage

The task cycle stage is the stage in which students perform theatre tasks guided by the framework of TBLT. In this phase, students will interact and cooperate between theatre tasks using the target language provided by the teacher until the final task is completed, and students will improve their practical language use and communicative competence in a meaningful context.

Stage Stage 3: Language Focus Stage

During the Language Focus stage, which is a reflective stage, the teacher guides the students to review and analyse the language they have used in drama tasks within the TBLT framework. This involves correcting errors, discussing language forms and reinforcing correct usage to consolidate what has been learnt and improve language accuracy.

Results and Discussion

The findings of this experiment analysed in this session will be explored more comprehensively in the following section on the effectiveness and usefulness of drama activities in task-based language teaching (TBLT).

Result 1: Enhanced Interest, Confidence, and Willingness to Participate in English Learning through Drama Activities

According to the results of the questionnaire survey of the experimental class (Class 8), after the implementation of drama activities as the core of language teaching in Class 8 under the framework of TBLT, it is seen that the students' attitudes towards English language learning in Class 8 have undergone a significant improvement from the previous period to the present. The number of students who are interested in learning English has increased by 25 or 62.5 per cent, the number of students who are confident in learning English has increased by 9 or 22.5 per cent, and the number of students who are willing to participate in English activities has increased by 8 or 20 per cent.

Table 1

Experimental class (Class 8)

Item	before	after
Interested in learning English	5(12.5%)	30 (75%)
Confident in learning English	3(7.5%)	12 (30%)
Willing to participate in English activities	15(37.5%)	23(57.5%)

The data suggest that the introduction of theatre activities in TBLT can not only significantly increase students' interest in learning English, but also increase their confidence in participating in English learning activities and their willingness to participate.

Discussion: The results of this experiment show that after the application of drama teaching in TBLT, it can be seen that the students in the experimental class 8 are significantly more motivated to learn English than before. Interest in learning English increased by 62.5%, confidence by 22.5%, and willingness to participate in English activities by 20%.

These findings align with recent studies demonstrating that TBLT with drama can positively impact students' attitudes toward language learning. Andrew et al (2017) highlighted the use of TBLT and drama to improve communicative skills, while Ozgehan and Koen (2020) emphasized the practical application of process drama within TBLT principles. Drama activities have been shown to enhance interest, confidence, and willingness to participate in English learning.

These studies support the effectiveness of integrating drama role play into TBLT to enhance students' English learning experiences.

Result 2: The Impact of Drama in TBLT on Tone of Voice, Tasks, Conversations, and Theme Tests in Verbal Communication

First, through the oral test before the experiment, the basic situation of the students was understood, the weak links of the students were identified, and the problems were analyzed. Second, in the process of the experiment, based on the principle of task-based teaching method design, tasks were designed respectively. Additionally, Drama Role Play activities were incorporated to make the learning process more engaging and effective. Finally, after a semester of teaching experiment, by adopting the same form of spoken English test as before, the analysis of the performance test results was conducted to test whether the task-based teaching mode and Drama Role Play improved students' oral English ability.

To test and compare the two classes of oral English, the author has carried on the experiment, oral English achievement test before and after the experiment respectively from words and tone of voice, tasks, conversations and theme three aspects carries on the spoken English test to speak. The following eight classes are experimental, and class seven is control class. The results are as follows:

Table 2

The grades of reading the words and the paragraph

Class	Class8	Class7
Grades	the highest score 13	the highest score 14
	the lowest points 7	the lowest points 6
	average score 9	average score 9.5

The problem with this section is that the word stress is not sure; some vowels and consonants are incorrect. Reading a short essay is not very consistent. The tone of voice is inaccurate; there is a pause in error. As you can see from the test scores, the two classes did not make much difference in pronunciation.

Table 3

The grades of the task dialogue

Class	Class8	Class7
Grades	the highest score 12	the highest score 14
	the lowest points 6	the lowest points 5
	average score 8	average score 9

During the task dialogue, the test found that the average grade of the two classes was comparable, but the level of difference among the students in this class so greater than before. During this experiment, only a few students chose some difficult sentences and used some dialogues which are so difficult to read. And the rest of those students chose the questions which were so easy for them to read or talked with each others.

Table 4

The grades of topic talking

Class	Class8	Class7
Grades	the highest score 18	the highest score 20
	the lowest points 9	the lowest points 6
	average score 12	average score 13

From the tests, we can see that the problem of vocabulary and grammar is one of the most challenging issues. When learners want to express what they want to say, correct words cannot come to their mind quickly; instead, words with similar meanings are usually stimulated. Additionally, the usage of tense is incorrect, and their expressions often reflect Chinese structures and thinking patterns.

To address these issues, Drama activities were incorporated. These activities encouraged the use of body language, gestures, and facial expressions, making communication more natural. By acting out different roles and scenarios, students practiced vocabulary and grammar in context, helping them think and express ideas in English.

From this perspective, the gap between each student is wider in the two classes. The drama role play activities in the experimental class (Class 8) led to more significant improvements in oral English proficiency compared to the control class (Class 7).

In order to check the results, the author conducted an experiment with the two classes. The test format did not change to maintain reliability with the former test, and the ratings were consistent. The inclusion of drama role play elements in the experimental class provided a more engaging learning environment, contributing to the observed improvements in oral English skills.

Table 5

The grades of reading the words and the paragraph

Class	Class8	Class7
Grades	the highest score 16	the highest score 14
	the lowest points 6	the lowest points 6
	average score 11.5	average score 10

Table 6

The grades of the task dialogue

Class	Class8	Class7
Grades	the highest score 15	the highest score 11
	the lowest points 6	the lowest points 8
	average score 11	average score 10

Table 7

The grades of topic talking

Class	Class8	Class7
Grades	the highest score 18	the highest score 11
	the lowest points 10	the lowest points 8
	average score 15	average score 12

It can be seen from the above test data that after two months of task-based oral English teaching combined with drama role play, Class 8 students' oral English ability improved significantly. In contrast, the traditional teaching methods in Class 7 did not show obvious improvement, and some students' oral English skills remained unchanged. In these two months, teaching according to the principles of TBLT and incorporating drama role play activities, the students were engaged in completing tasks by acting and speaking, ultimately achieving the goal of communication.

Discussion: According to the above experimental data, combining task-based language teaching (TBLT) with role-playing in theatre activities in teaching English as a foreign language in the experimental class, Class 8, significantly improves the students' English speaking ability, especially in terms of pronunciation, fluency, and oral complexity. The experimental group showed significant improvements in intonation, task completion and dialogue topics compared to the control group of seven classes.

These findings are in line with recent research findings that have demonstrated that combining theatre activities with TBLT can positively influence students' attitudes towards language learning. Andrew et al (2017) explored how combining a task-based learning approach and theatre can enhance students' communicative competence in authentic situations, while Ozgehan and Koen (2020) investigated how the principles of TBLT in the pedagogical effectiveness of applying process theatre activities under. Both studies highlight

the positive effects of drama in TBLT on tone of voice, task engagement, conversational abilities, and theme test performance in verbal communication.

These findings corroborate the present experiment's outcomes, where the experimental class exhibited enhanced oral English skills, while the control class showed limited improvement. The use of drama role play in TBLT principles, involving task completion and interactive dialogues, effectively promoted better verbal communication skills among students.

Conclusion, Implication and Suggestion

The findings of this study might help language teachers gain a deeper insight into drama in task-based language teaching (TBLT). Now the whole country sees a high rise of advocating applying drama in TBLT in language learning classrooms because of its merits. The author admits that drama in TBLT, to some extent, is such a new way that it can provide more chances for the learners' to practice oral English, and thus, improve their oral ability.

However, the author firmly holds that a total copy of drama in TBLT will produce problems in the particular context. The traditional method has the advantage of giving the teacher more control in class. It mainly places emphasis on the linguistic structures by asking students to do some exercises and recite texts; nevertheless, the teaching method fails to develop the students' oral ability and arouse the students' interest and motivation. In contrast, drama in TBLT centers on the learners. It provides more chances for the students to practice oral English, which is beneficial to the promotion of the students' motivation for English learning and to the development of the students' thinking and cooperative spirits, due to the insufficient formulaic expressions memorized by the students. Thus, when required to produce their output, the students fail to find formulaic and idiomatic expressions, which hinders the quickest developing pace of their oral English.

Need to find out ways to better drama in TBLT. After two months' case study, the author proposes that the teaching method, which integrates the merits of both drama in TBLT and the traditional teaching, might be the best language teaching method because the traditional teaching can deal with the lack of sufficient formulaic and idiomatic English stored in mind.

The teacher applies drama in TBLT in the English speaking classroom, it is important to raise their sensitivity to the differences between native speakers' way of expression and their ways of expression, and then ask students to rehearse and memorize these expressions in the pre-task phase. Then in the task-cycle phase, students will have more formulaic expressions to choose from, which make their speeches more idiomatic. Thus, their oral English ability may be significantly improved.

Research implication for drama in task-based language teaching (TBLT) included (i) Enhanced pedagogical strategies, (ii) Curriculum development, and (iii) Teacher training and professional development.

Enhanced pedagogical strategies. The study will provide evidence-based insights into the effectiveness of drama in TBLT for improving oral English proficiency among junior middle school students. These insights will help educators and curriculum designers to develop more effective teaching strategies for learners in the future, focusing learning on the development of communication skills rather than mere rote learning. This shift will help to improve the comprehensiveness of language education, which in turn will provide learners with the necessary tools and skills to communicate with the real world.

In terms of curriculum development, the results of this study can be used as a reference for Huanghekou Middle School and other schools or institutions at the same level. Teachers

can integrate the successful TBLT strategies validated in the study to design more engaging and practical English language learning programmes. This approach can help create a more active learning atmosphere in the classroom, and enhance students' participation in English activities and enthusiasm for learning English.

With regard to teacher training and professional development, the findings of this study highlight the need for targeted training programmes for teachers. These programmes are designed to provide teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to implement the TBLT approach, and professional development workshops and learning resources on the TBLT approach can help teachers overcome challenges and improve their teaching practice. Investments in teacher training will ultimately lead to more effective language teaching and contribute to improved student outcomes.

Suggestion for this research included (i) Integrate real-world tasks, (ii) Regular assessment and feedback, and (iii) Foster a supportive learning environment for drama in TBLT.

Incorporating realistic theatre tasks into TBLT introduces a variety of real-life situations into the English classroom and requires students to use English in practical and meaningful ways. For example, role-plays, everyday simulations, group projects and problem-solving activities can be incorporated into the design of the TBLT programme. These drama tasks should be designed to reflect real-life communication scenarios that are more common to students, to help students build confidence in communicating in real-life situations and to improve their speaking skills.

Regularly evaluate and provide feedback on the design of drama activities in TBLT. Formal and informal methods (e.g., speaking tests, presentations, and peer assessment) can be used to regularly assess students' speaking proficiency. Providing constructive feedback on the design of theatre activities, with a particular focus on directions for improvement and timely praise for student progress, helps students to continue to grow. This kind of uninterrupted and continuous assessment is more helpful in tracking students' development in a timely manner and provides the necessary guidance for adjusting teaching strategies to better facilitate students' learning.

Create an environment that supports learning through theatre activities within the instructional framework of TBLT. It is crucial to create a classroom atmosphere that encourages students to try new things and reduces anxiety about speaking in English. To this end, at the very beginning of designing activities, teachers should set clear expectations for students and provide timely and positive incentives to promote mutual respect and a spirit of co-operation among students. At the same time, teachers' encouragement of group work and peer support among students can also help students practice speaking more easily and increase their motivation to practice.

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