# Multiple Intelligences and Drama Techniques: A study in Rural ESL classroom

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**Abstract**

Drama is useful for language learning. It shifts the classroom from teacher centric to learner centric. Language learning can benefit from the use of drama as it moves the focus of the classroom from the teacher to the learner. The objective of this study is to examine how drama techniques can be effective in developing linguistic skills in ESL classrooms, particularly for rural students. This study is aimed to determine whether the use of drama techniques can improve both linguistic intelligence and interpersonal intelligence among undergraduate ESL students. The study was conducted in a rural undergraduate Government college from the perspective of teachers and students. The study revealed that Linguistic intelligences and interpersonal intelligences improved through the use of drama techniques, such as readers theatre, skit, and role-play. 'The Merchant of Venice' was the textbook for the BCom III sem students. And drama techniques were used to teach the play in the ESL classroom. There were total 40 participants in the study. A mixed-methods approach was used in this study, involving both quantitative and qualitative methods such as document analysis, semi-structured interviews, feedback, and questionnaires. Findings from this study suggest that the use of drama techniques led to improvements in both linguistic intelligence and interpersonal intelligence among undergraduate ESL students. The study also revealed that the use of drama techniques was well received by both the teachers and the students

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## INTRODUCTION

The concept of multiple intelligences (MI) was first introduced by Howard Gardner in his book, "Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences" in 1983 (Gardner, 1983). Gardner proposed that intelligence is not a single entity that can be measured by a single test, but rather a set of distinct abilities that enable individuals to solve problems, create products, and offer services that are valued in one or more cultural settings. The theory of multiple intelligences has been widely accepted by educators, psychologists, and researchers over the past few decades.

Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences posits that individuals possess a unique combination of nine different types of intelligence, including linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic, and existential. However, traditional teaching methods often focus on only a few of these intelligences, leaving many students feeling disconnected from the material and unsupported in their learning. In a multicultural classroom, it is crucial to recognize and nurture the diverse types of intelligence that each student brings to the table. This requires creating an environment that encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and multiple forms of expression. By doing so, students can cultivate the skills and perspectives needed to navigate challenges and take ownership of their own learning. Moreover, this approach to teaching and learning not only supports students' individual strengths and needs but also fosters a deeper understanding and connection to the curricular material. By tapping into their various intelligences and applying them to their studies, students are able to approach learning from different angles, enhancing their engagement, confidence, and overall success.. (Gardner,1999.)

High test scores alone are not a dependable indicator of a person's intelligence, according to recent studies. Gardner claimed that this one IQ hypothesis needed to be revised because it had limitations. He emphasises that intelligence is a combination of different abilities rather than a single phenomenon. He first suggested there are at least seven distinct forms of intelligence, and then he added two more (Gardner 1993). The nine intelligences are

The theory of multiple intelligences, as proposed by Howard Gardner, outlines nine different types of intelligence.

1. Linguistic intelligence refers to the ability to understand and express language effectively, including syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. People with linguistic intelligence may excel in communication, public speaking, or writing.
2. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence relates to the understanding of one's body and its movements, as well as the ability to handle objects skillfully. This type of intelligence is often seen in dancers, actors, or athletes.
3. Spatial intelligence involves the ability to perceive the visual world accurately and form mental models of the spatial world. Those with this type of intelligence may excel in fields such as architecture, engineering, or navigation.
4. Musical intelligence is the ability to understand and express musical components such as rhythm and melody. This type of intelligence is often found in great composers or musicians.

5. Logical-mathematical intelligence involves the understanding and application of logical structures, including patterns, relationships, statements, and propositions. This type of intelligence is useful in fields such as mathematics, science, or programming.

6. Intrapersonal intelligence refers to the capacity to understand oneself, including inner moods, intentions, motivations, potentialities, and desires. People with intrapersonal intelligence may excel in fields such as psychology or counseling.

7. Interpersonal intelligence is the ability to understand others and effectively interact with them, including interventions, persuasion, manipulation, mediation, or counseling. This type of intelligence may be found in politicians, teachers, or salespeople.

8. Naturalist intelligence involves the ability to be aware of and care for the environment and its ecosystem, including flora, fauna, and other living creatures. People with naturalist intelligence may excel in fields such as farming or environmentalism.

9. Finally, existential intelligence relates to the ability to understand and contemplate philosophical topics relating to humanity's existence, including life, death, and meaning. This type of intelligence may be found in philosophers or spiritual leaders. (Gardner , 1993)(Armstrong, 2003)

**Drama in Education**

According to Taneri and Akduman (2014), Theatre in Education (TIE) or drama in education is a movement that emerged in Britain after World War II, which involved using drama techniques in education. It is not a one-time performance on stage or in school, but rather a structured pattern of activities that enhances learning. TIE involves many elements of drama in education, such as active participation of students in learning and making learners responsible towards their own learning.

Guliyeva (2011) noted that the use of drama techniques enlivens the class, and even the most passive student is engaged in the learning process. Theatre approaches demand that people participate fully on all levels - intellectually, emotionally, physically, verbally, and socially. This active involvement leads to an increase in student motivation and engagement in the learning process. Furthermore, many studies have pointed out that drama techniques provide space for imagination and involve both learning and acquisition (Boal, 1992; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995).

The drama techniques also permit the expression of emotions and the development of self-confidence in ways that regular instruction cannot (Guliyeva, 2011). In summary, the use of drama techniques in education is an effective way to engage students actively in the learning process, enhance their motivation, and allow for the expression of emotions and development of self-confidence.

**Methodology**

Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used in the study of BCom III sem undergraduate students at Govt First College Alnavar, Dist. Dharwad, conducted in 2021–2022. With an emphasis on the students' aptitude for learning through theatre, the researchers gathered data via participant observations, questionnaires, interviews, curriculum analysis, video and photo. The study used a combination of strategies to examine how use of theatre techniques like

readers theatre, skit, role play can help ESL undergraduate students' linguistic intelligence. The research question was whether theatre techniques could enhance ESL undergraduate students' linguistic and interpersonal intelligences.

**Participants**

The study consisted of 40 participants who were undergraduate students in their third semester of B.Com. the English Textbook prescribed by the University of Karnatak for the semester was shakespeare's The study consisted of 40 participants who were undergraduate students in their third semester of B.Com. The English textbook prescribed by the University of Karnataka for the semester was Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice". The students were from a rural background and had no prior exposure to theatre activities or English literature. Furthermore, 90% of the students had completed their previous studies in Kannada, Urdu or other vernacular mediums.

**Details of the study**

The purpose of this study was to explore how theatre techniques could be used to enhance linguistic intelligence among ESL undergraduate students from rural areas, as perceived by both the teacher and students. The study was conducted between November 2nd, 2021 and February 2nd, 2022. At the outset, the students were provided with the syllabus and course plan, and an open discussion was held to explain the study's objectives and design. The students showed a great deal of interest and were eager to take an active role in their learning. To conduct the experiment, the researchers utilized Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice", which was the prescribed syllabus for the III Semester BCom class at Karnataka University Dharwad. The 40 students were divided into groups of 6 or 7, and the story was narrated to introduce them to the syllabus. Additionally, the class watched videos of the drama being enacted, which provided the students with their first experience of seeing the text being brought to life on the theatre stage. During this stage of the project, each group was tasked with assigning characters to its members and writing a script of their own. The groups were instructed to design a script that was between ten to fifteen minutes in length, and all members were actively involved in writing as the teacher slowly distanced themselves from the groups, there was a peak in peer learning, allowing for a natural and non-threatening environment for learning. The collaborative approach made the learning process very interesting, as students had to develop their interpersonal intelligence and critical thinking skills. It's worth noting that one group chose to write the dialogues initially in their mother tongue and then translate them into English, while other groups preferred to write directly in simple English.

During this stage of the project, the groups were tasked with assigning characters to their members and producing a script. The guidelines specified that the script should be between ten to fifteen minutes in length, and all members were actively involved in composing the dialogues. As the teacher gradually withdrew from the groups, peer learning reached its zenith, creating a natural and non-threatening environment for learning. The collaborative technique employed during this stage of the project facilitated the development of interpersonal intelligence and critical thinking skills amongst the students. It is noteworthy that one group opted to draft the

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dialogues in their mother tongue before translating them into English, whereas other groups preferred to write directly in simple English.

As the second stage of the experiment, the researchers shared simple animation videos of stories related to "Merchant of Venice" in the class group. The videos were presented in both simple English and vernacular languages. The students watched these videos repeatedly in order to become comfortable with understanding the play. Some of the videos showed other schools and colleges performing the play in simplified versions Given that many of the students lacked exposure to theatre, language fluency, and confidence, watching other children perform the drama had a positive impact on their confidence levels. This activity incorporated the LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) skills.

The groups were given the liberty to choose between the Reader's Theatre and Skit methods. The intended objectives of this activity were to improve the students' pronunciation, vocabulary, sentence formation, reading ability, writing skills, and interpersonal skills. The entire process was thoroughly enjoyed by the students. Following the performances, constructive feedback was solicited from the students, with a focus on positive improvements.

The students hailing from rural areas initially struggled to engage with the activity as they had no prior exposure to theatre discipline. Additionally, they exhibited a strong reluctance to speak in English on stage, further adding to their apprehension. These challenges were compounded by shortcomings in their pronunciation, stage presence, and confidence, body language, reading skills, and writing skills, which did not meet the requirements of the theatrical performance. However, with persistent motivation and encouragement, the students gradually overcame their inhibitions and demonstrated remarkable enthusiasm in their participation.

**Data Gathering**

To gather data on the students' experience of using drama techniques in class, a variety of methods were employed, including videos, photos, Google form questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The questionnaire was designed in simple English to ensure clarity and comprehension. The use of videos allowed for a visual representation of the students' gradual progress, while also capturing their enthusiasm for participating in the activity and developing their Linguistic Intelligence. The combination of these methods enabled a comprehensive and multi-dimensional understanding of the students' experience and provided valuable insights for further research and development of drama techniques in language learning.

**Results**

The findings of the study indicate that the students were actively involved in their learning process and demonstrated a strong sense of responsibility. Initially, due to their lack of exposure to theatre and western literature, they faced challenges in participating actively. However, as the study progressed, the students gradually shed their inhibitions and became more expressive and engaged in the learning process.

Figure 1.
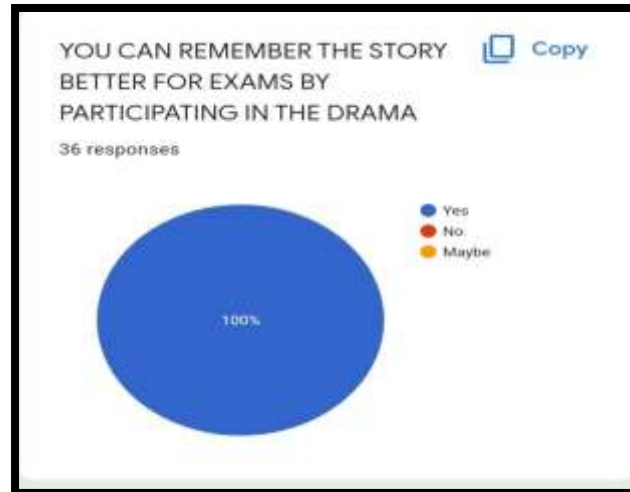
All of the students surveyed agreed that incorporating theatre techniques into their learning process improved their exam performance. Specifically, they found that being able to recall the story and characters helped them to perform better on exams.

Figure 2



The majority of students (95%) agreed that their reading skills improved during the activity. By practicing reading their dialogue with proper intonation and stress, they gained firsthand experience in rendering dialogue in real-life situations. All students agreed that this improved their ability to remember the characters and details of the story for exams. Additionally, 98% of students agreed that their understanding of the drama increased through this drama activity. Students strongly agreed that they enjoyed working in groups, which

improved their interpersonal intelligence and communication skills with their peers. Furthermore, participating in the process of writing the script helped improve their vocabulary.

Figure 3
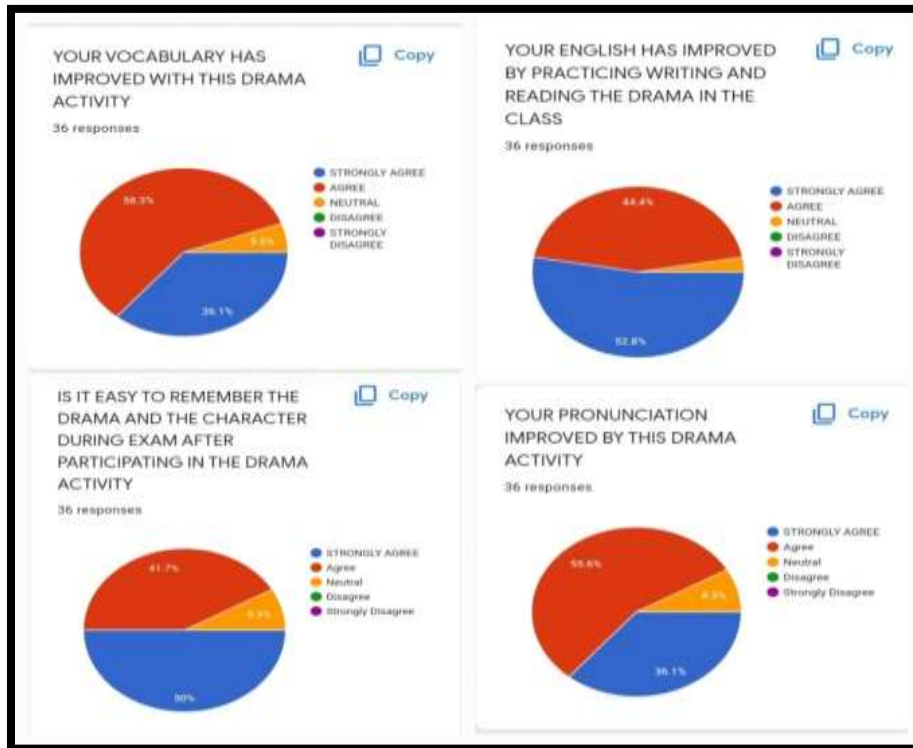


A significant percentage of students (54% strongly agreed and 42% agreed) believed that learning through drama techniques improved their English. Similarly, a majority of students (59% agreed and 36% strongly agreed) believed that their vocabulary improved through participation in this activity.

In the semi structured interviews, the students expressed that they were actively engaged in the lessons through drama and felt a strong connection with the characters they created. Working in groups created a non-threatening environment that encouraged active participation. The groups included diverse types of learners, and the students helped one another, particularly slower learners who received support from their peers. For vernacular medium students, drama provided an opportunity to express themselves in English among their peers. All students had equal opportunities to contribute to the design of the script and performance in class. Peer learning allowed students to observe and learn from each other's pronunciations, sentence formation, reading fluency, expression of feelings, and script writing. They felt equal in drama, and constructive feedback helped them overcome language learning difficulties through drama techniques. During the student interviews, they expressed that working through drama was a fun

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and enjoyable experience. They also noted that this helped them overcome their fear of using English, especially since many of them came from rural backgrounds.

They found that they could remember the names of the characters and the story well during exams. The drama technique helped them connect with the story, and they were able to better understand the plot. As a result, the students felt more confident in their ability to write well on exams.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings, teaching language through drama was effective in improving students' vocabulary and memory of the story. The students also performed well in their internal exams, as evidenced by their evaluation marks. The study revealed that the linguistic intelligence and interpersonal intelligence can thus be enhanced by using drama/theatre techniques Moreover, the drama technique helped to reverse the roles of passive learners into active and participative learners. This suggests that using drama techniques in teaching can be an effective way to engage students and enhance their learning experience.

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