

SVEUČILIŠTE JOSIPA JURJA STROSSMAYERA U OSIJEKU

FAKULTET ZA ODGOJNE I OBRAZOVNE ZNANOSTI

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**THE BENEFITS OF USING IMPROVISATIONAL STRATEGIES IN
REAL LIFE SITUATIONS**

DIPLOMSKI RAD

Osijek, 2017.

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Integrirani preddiplomski i diplomski sveučilišni Učiteljski studij

**THE BENEFITS OF USING IMPROVISATIONAL STRATEGIES IN REAL
LIFE SITUATIONS**

DIPLOMSKI RAD

Predmet: Drama Workshop in English Language

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Matični broj: 2286

Modul: C

Osijek
travanj, 2017.

SUMMARY

This thesis encompasses the history of improvisation, the fundamental characteristics of theatrical improvisation and the benefits of engaging in improv that improve one's life in a variety of contexts. The main aim of this research was to discover if the students, i.e. the participants of the course Drama Workshop in English Language at the Faculty of Education in Osijek, or some other worldwide improv workshops, benefited in certain areas by using improvisational strategies in their real life situations. Through methods of collecting data by means of a questionnaire, interviews and online sources and analyzing them afterwards, the results confirmed the general hypothesis that students who attended Drama Workshop in English language at the Faculty of Education in Osijek and people taking up an improv class elsewhere in the world did notice the beneficial changes regarding their personality development, their social skills, language skills and communication in their daily life.

Key words: improvisational theatre, communication skills, foreign language skills, personal and social development, conversational fluency

SAŽETAK

Ovaj diplomski rad obuhvaća povijest improvizacije, osnovne karakteristike kazališne improvizacije te prednosti sudjelovanja u improvizacijskom kazalištu koje rezultira pospješivanjem brojnih aspekata ljudskoga života. Glavni cilj ovog istraživanja bio je otkriti jesu li studenti tj., polaznici kolegija Dramska radionica na engleskom jeziku na Fakultetu za odgojne i obrazovne znanosti u Osijeku, ili polaznici drugih improvizacijskih radionica u svijetu, uvidjeli prednosti korištenja improvizacijskih strategija u stvarnom životu. Prikupljajući podatke anketom, intervjuima te online izvorima, analizom istih došlo je do očekivanih rezultata. Rezultati potvrđuju hipotezu koja govori kako su studenti koji su pohađali kolegij Dramska radionica na engleskom jeziku na Fakultetu za odgojne i obrazovne znanosti u Osijeku, te polaznici drugih improvizacijskih radionica u svijetu, primijetili pozitivne promjene na područjima njihovog razvoja osobnosti, društvenih vještina, jezičnih i komunikacijskih vještina u svakodnevnom životu.

Ključne riječi: improvizacijsko kazalište, komunikacijske vještine, vještine stranog jezika, osobni i društveni razvoj, razgovorna tečnost

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is commonly known that improvisation is an act of saying, playing or doing certain things at the moment rather than planning it in advance. In the essay *What is improv?* improvisation is considered “a part of human existence” which “appears in daily conversation, in playful banter, and in serious debate” (1). Patricia Ryan Madson would agree that the whole human existence is brimming with different improvised situations (Ryan Madson 15). In her book *Improv wisdom: Don't Prepare Just Show Up* she lists thirteen maxims of improv “[that] can help [people] meet real life challenges more skillfully, and with a sense of humor” (19). According to Viola Spolin, the founder of improv in the USA and the author of the book *Improvisation for the Theater*, each and every human being is capable of improvising (3). Spolin also accentuates the importance of human intuition by saying that:

Intuition is often thought to be an endowment or a mystical force enjoyed by the gifted alone. Yet all of us have known moments when the right answer “just came” or we did “exactly the right thing without thinking.” Sometimes at such moments, usually precipitated by crises, danger, or shock, the “average” person has been known to transcend the limitations of the familiar, courageously enter the area of the unknown, and release momentary genius within. When response to experience takes place at this intuitive level, when a person functions beyond a constricted intellectual plane, intelligence is freed. (3-4)

Most people understand the act of courageously entering the area of the unknown as an act of improvisation. That is because when people are entering the unknown they become unaware of what the future holds. Accordingly, in the essay *What is improv?* we find out that in improvisation “There are no ‘life scripts’, no plans, and no preparation” (1). People generally do not know what could happen next or how they might behave in future situations. Yet, one thing is certain; they will be improvising. People also improvise in theater; in her book *Kazališna improvizacija, jezik i komunikacija*, Željka Nemet Flegar states that theatrical improvisation is a method in which no dramatic text is used, but which covers various theater forms that are used in many ways when it comes to practising, preparing or performing dramatic material (13). During my studies at the Faculty of Education, University of Osijek, I was given the opportunity to enroll in the course Drama Workshop in English Language which dealt with improvisation and

improvisational theater also known as improv. As the activities we were engaging in had a huge effect on me, I wanted to discover whether improvisational techniques had the same effect on the other participants as well. For that reason the research has been conducted in order to gain insight into the effect of improvisational exercises on the participants of the course Drama Workshop in English Language at the Faculty of Education in Osijek. Moreover, it is known that a lot of people around the world have also taken some form of improvisational workshop and wholeheartedly shared their experience on the Internet, their views on improv being the part of the analysis of the research. Therefore, the research led to the acknowledgement of what were the beneficial changes in self-perception that both participants of Drama Workshop in English Language and the participants of some other worldwide improv workshops have in common. The effects that may be recognized by the participants of improvisational workshop might include better listening skills, generally better communication skills and fruitful group collaboration. They may also include higher self-assurance about English language skills and generally higher self-confidence.

2. HISTORY OF IMPROVISATION

2.1. Commedia dell 'arte

It is not difficult to assume that improv has its unique history. Its history may even “be traced back to before the invention of the written word” (“What is Improv?” 1). Since improv does not include written scripts it is easy to picture ancient human beings telling stories by acting them out, i.e. “performing improv” even before they were able to write (“What is improv?” 1). However, the most direct ancestor of modern improvisation is the *commedia dell 'arte* which was a theater form that developed in 16th century in Italy (Flegar 15). “The title, *Commedia dell 'arte* (Comedy of Art or Comedy of the profession), means unwritten or improvised drama, and applies rather to the manner of performance than to the subject matter of the play” (“The *commedia dell 'arte*”, n.d, para. 1). Roehl explains that “[*commedia dell 'arte*] performance troupes would travel from town to town and present theatricals on makeshift stages [while] all dialogue would be improvised within a framework or a scenario (qtd. in “What is improv?” 1).

Of course in actual practice the play was not, in any sense, the result of the moment's inspiration. The subject was chosen; the characters conceived and named, their relations to one another determined, and the situations clearly outlined, all beforehand. The material was divided into acts and scenes, with a prologue. The situations were made clear, together with the turn of action and the outcome of each scene. When this general outline (called also scenario or canvas) was satisfactorily filled out there was left an opportunity for actors to heighten, vary, and embellish their parts as their genius might suggest. (“The *commedia dell 'arte*”, n.d, para. 1)

Flegar also states that the older name for *commedia dell 'arte* was *commedia all'improvviso* which “implies that improvisation was one of its fundamental characteristics” (15). Another important characteristic of the *commedia all'improvviso* is the fact that actors had improvised dialogues within the given act that they were familiar with, while at the same time were responsible for shaping their roles (Flegar 16). Flegar explains that *commedia dell 'arte* disappeared after about two centuries but that its cult of laughter and its numerous structural elements and characteristics were carried over into modern improvisational theater (Flegar 16). In

the essay “What is improv?” it is mentioned that after commedia dell’ arte troupes stopped performing, improvisational theater became somewhat forgotten but after some time was separately re-invented by two great improvisers Viola Spolin and Keith Johnstone (“What is improv?” 1).

2.2. Viola Spolin’s contribution to improvisational theatre

Viola Spolin is considered to be one of the first people to study and teach improvisational theater techniques that can be applied in improvisational practice. In her book *Improvisation for the Theater*, which is recognized as “the bible for improvisational training” (qtd. in Libera 43) Spolin thanks Neva L. Boyd, the sociologist at the faculty of Northwestern University for providing her with “an extraordinary training in use of games, story-telling, folk dance, and dramatics as tools for stimulating creative expression in both children and adults, through self-discovery and personal experiencing” (xlvii). Immediately following the period of training, Viola Spolin was given the opportunity to direct experiments in teaching drama for the first time by becoming a “teacher and a supervisor of creative dramatics on the WPA Recreational Project in Chicago” (xvii). In her book *Theater games for the classroom*, the editors Arthur Morey and Mary Ann Brandt also explain that in 1955 in Chicago she ran workshops for the country’s first improvisational acting company (Spolin para. 1, before Preface) called Compass which, as Bruce Bebb (1988) claims, was started by a small group of young people including David Shepherd and her own son Paul Sills. In addition, Flegar explains that the combination of Shepherd’s and Sills’s ideas brought them to the point in improv theatre which led to the very beginnings of the revue Compass Players and later on the establishment of The Second City, theater, club and the school of improvisation which became one of the world’s most important centers to lots of famous American comedians, writers and celebrities (Flegar 17). On the official Second City website it can be read that “The Second City opened its doors on a snowy Chicago night in December of 1959, and has since grown to become the world’s premier comedy club, theatre and school of improvisation ...using techniques that grew out of the innovative techniques Spolin developed and taught” (“OVER 50 YEARS OF FUNNY” para. 1). Furthermore, Spolin says that each individual is capable of improvising (Spolin 3). She also developed her own approach of teaching

how to act by using three most important terms to which she refers to as “focus”, “integration” and “intuition”. To support the explanation of the term “intuition” she always believed that one must not spend time thinking about playing but simply play (Spolin liv). She adds that “the intuitive can only respond in immediacy” which leads to spontaneous acts and spontaneity in general which makes people re-formed into themselves (Spolin 4). Viola Spolin died in 1994 and part of her legacy is that at least one troupe of improvisers is hosted in almost every major city as well as in hundreds of smaller towns and universities in the United States (Sweet 2010).

2.3. Keith Johnstone’s involvement with the theatre

Another pioneer of theatrical improvisation, Keith Johnstone, started to build his reputation in 1956 when artistic directors of the Royal Court Theatre, George Devine and Tony Richardson, commissioned a play for him (*Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre* Introduction). After the commission, Johnstone was invited to teach there and created a syllabus that consisted of the things his teachers stopped him from doing (Johnstone XI). The reason he did that was because his teachers “had felt obliged to destroy [their] spontaneity” (Johnstone XI) and “had done their best to stifle his creativity and self-expression” (Salinsky and Frances-White 4). Therefore he used the “reversed methods” and soon “became notorious as the acting coach who shouted ‘Be more obvious!’ and ‘Be more boring!’ and ‘Don’t concentrate!’”. Owing to that kind of approach his students (the group called Theatre Machine) began improvising and soon went public in order to validate their work (Johnstone XII). Furthermore, in the 1970s Keith [...] developed Theatresports (Salinsky and Frances-White 4) which is considered a theatre and sports combined together (“What is improv?” 2). Furthermore, Salinsky and Frances-White report that Johnstone founded the Loose Moose Theatre (4), and some other inventions such as Micetro ImproTM and Gorilla TheatreTM (7). What is very interesting about Theatresports and Micetro is that “there exists a mechanism by which ‘failures’ – scenes which didn’t go the way the players hoped they would – can be incorporated in the show and made entertaining” (Salinsky and Frances-White 8-9). Overall, in his book *Impro: Improvisation and The Theatre* Johnstone thoroughly described his approach and philosophy of impro by writing about Status, Spontaneity, Narrative Skills and Masks which are still considered revolutionary for the theatre (Flegar 20).

2.4. Del Close and the Harold

Kim “Howard” Johnson in the book *Truth in Comedy* emphasizes that “the life of Del Close is virtually a history of American improvisation” (Introduction II, 3). In *The Second City Almanac of Improvisation* it is explained that Del Close joined The Second City cast in 1961, leaving it in 1964, and spending some time in San Francisco working with the Committee, afterwards returning to direct and teach in Toronto and Chicago in 1989 (Libera 116). Furthermore, Halpern in the introduction of the *Truth in Comedy* explains the beginnings of the ImprovOlympic Theatre by saying that after collaborating for a year with David Shepherd she realized that they simply had separate visions for the ImprovOlympic and therefore split up (Halpern et al, 2). However, she continued creating an entertaining theatrical sport, but was lacking inspiration. At that point she met Del Close, whom she started to perceive as an inspirational figure (Halpern et al, 2). Both of them then created a perfect form combined by Close’s game called “the Harold” and Halpern’s game called “the Time Dash” and “developed the newest advancement in improvisation” (2). As Kim “Howard” Johnson in the second introduction of the book *Truth in Comedy* explains, the Harold united all the games, scenes and techniques in one format (Halpern, et al. 4). However, Salinsky and Frances-White explain the crucial difference between Johnstone’s Theatresports and Close’s Harold by stating that “Harold is often described as ‘long form’, and competitive formats such as Theatresports as ‘short form’” but that not one of them attempts “to tell a continuous narrative for the length of the piece” (10). All in all, throughout his whole life Del was seen as an improvisational innovator (Libera 116).

Due to Spolin’s, Johnstone’s and Close’s approaches people nowadays have the opportunity to get to know all the various aspects of theatrical improvisation even though in essence they are very similar. Spolin’s approach of teaching acting is based on focus, integration and intuition, accentuating that anyone is “stageworthy”. She also stresses the importance of play. Johnstone’s approach is based on welcoming any mistake and failure his students experience while improvising because that leads them to the ability of telling various stories through spontaneity while having fun. Likewise, Del Close was constantly coming up with new approaches but remained faithful to the game called Harold which unites all the improv techniques in one format.

3. THEATRICAL IMPROVISATION

Improvisation in theater opens up many ways of creating a spontaneous environment where improvisers may feel free to be whoever and wherever they want to be. Likewise, Flegar in her research paper “The Great Literary Improvisers” says that “the theory of theatrical improvisation assumes that all inspiration and creation comes from initial spontaneous impulses and not deliberate reflection and contemplation” (188). She also notes that there are lots of different types of theatrical improvisation which all consist of combination of unique improvisational structures and various forms of activities that enable improvisers to express themselves freely on stage (Flegar 13). She stresses that not everything that an actor spontaneously improvises on stage is considered theatrical improvisation, but that there are specific rules of improvisation which are sometimes omitted, broken or neglected, yet forever present (Flegar 13). Salinsky and Frances-White explain that the process of learning to improvise involves learning to turn off a lot of instinctive behavior, which has proven to be “very useful in achieving most people’s top priority: maintaining a feeling of comfort and safety” (125). Furthermore, Carol Hazenfield in her book *Acting on Impulse: The art of making improv theatre* says that “no written play can match the edge and spontaneity of an improv show – the audience members know they’re watching the actors’ imaginations at work” (9). She argues that improvisers can “create the [same] levels of comedy, tension, sorrow, and joy because [they] are improvising, the stakes are higher – there’s no script to act as a safety net” (10). Not knowing what comes next develops scenes that are either utterly comic or completely filled with tension since improvisers are acting without predicting or overthinking (Hazenfield 10). She stresses that “... powerful spontaneous theater is created through commitment, experimentation, and risk” (11) adding that “compelling improvised theater requires strong acting skills and a deep understanding of character, relationship, and narrative” (11). All in all, improvisers in theatrical improvisation context always seem to bring out the best in themselves while performing improvisational scenes. They are given the chance to display where the spontaneous interactions could lead them and what acting on impulse really means.

3.1. Rules of improv

Every improv game, activity or exercise ought to have a set of rules by which one abides in order to get the most of the game being played. Rules of improvisation are provided by different sources and can be interpreted in many ways, e.g. Mick Napier lists ten of them in his book *Improvise: Scene from the Inside Out*, Anne Libera explains the three most important in her book *The Second City Almanac of Improvisation* (Libera 9) and the Improv Encyclopedia webpage lists the most famous set of rules provided by David Alger. Kathleen Franks (2013) explains that Alger as the director of the Pan Theater in Uptown Oakland where he performs, teaches and directs “has taught improv workshops in numerous settings” and that “his popular guide ‘The Rules of Improv’ is an explanation of basic improv ideas”. According to David Alger, the first 10 rules of improv are: “Say Yes-and”, “After the ‘and’ add new information”, “Don't Block”, “Avoid Questions”, “Focus on the Here and Now”, “Establish the Location!”, “Be Specific- Provide Details!”, “Change, Change, Change!”, “For serious and emotional scenes, focus on characters and relationships”, “For humor, commit and take choices to the nth degree or focus on actions/objects” (“David Alger’s First 10 Rules of Improv”, n.d.). In the book *Improv Wisdom: Don’t Prepare Just Show Up* Patricia Ryan Madson says that “the spirit of improvising is embodied in the notion of ‘yes and’ [because] agreement begins the process; what comes next is to add something or develop the offer in a positive direction” (30). Salinsky and Frances-White generally believe that “saying ‘Yes, and’ to [your] partner’s ideas, accepting and building, is the bedrock of all improvisation” (61). When improvisers say Yes to their partner’s ideas they are actually taking a risk because they can’t plan their response to a partner’s offer in advance. Moreover, they claim that it’s the enthusiasm that their fellow improvisers show that motivates improvisers to come up with and provide various offers (Salinsky and Frances-White 61). However, when an idea is not greeted with enthusiasm, or to be more accurate, when it is rejected, then we talk about blocking which takes us to Alger’s third rule “Don’t block”. “A block is killing an idea, denying audience something they thought they had been promised” (Salinsky and Frances-White 63). In addition, improvisers often use denial when they feel that they are the ones to judge the quality of the scene, their partners or the choices their partners provide (Libera 10). According to Patricia Ryan Madson, blocking means taking control over what emerged in the scene rather than “accepting it” (29). In his book *Impro: Improvisation and*

the Theatre Johnstone states that “bad improvisers block action, often with a high degree of skill [while] good improvisers develop action” (95). However, Johnstone in his book *Impro for Storytellers* states that there may be some negative answers which do not necessarily mean that they are blocking the situation developing in a scene (102). Salinsky and Frances-White also note that “the distinction is not dependent on the words ‘yes’ and ‘no’” and that “sometimes neither response is a block” (63). Just as Carol Hazenfield simply put it:

What confuses a lot of improvisers is the concept of blocking. You don’t want to block your partner. Good for you; blocking is bad. But remember that a block is a denial of the reality of an offer, such as ‘I’m immortal’ or ‘that’s not a volcano’. It’s not blocking to be unhappy about something. Go ahead – have strong feelings about things. You must simply make use of every offer (47).

Furthermore, the fourth rule focuses on avoiding questions because “questions tend to shift responsibility for the scene heavily onto one player” which should be avoided since each and every improviser on the scene “must take responsibility for their part in building the scene” (Libera 11). Similarly, Johnstone explains that some beginners may accept ideas, but refuse to add to them by constantly asking questions rather than deciding for themselves (Johnstone 115). Salinsky and Frances-White agree saying that improvisers who constantly ask questions tend to rob the scene “by asking the other improviser to provide all the information”, however, not all questions are bad; some may actually “be the motor of the scene” (288). The fifth rule which says “Focus on the Here and Now” basically guides improvisers to be constantly aware of themselves and their partners in present on stage. Accordingly, Geller says that “living in the moment [is] a key to good improvisation” (qtd. in Libera 45). According to Ryan Madson in order to improvise, it is an absolute must to “use the present moment efficiently” (36). Similarly, Spolin in her book *Improvisation for the Theater* agrees that “only from meeting and acting upon the changing, moving present can improvisation be born” (19). However, the sixth rule “Establish the Location!” is all about creating environment. As improvisers step on a stage where there are usually only a few chairs or a table, the audience waits for improvisers to create rich environment making the invisible visible (Hazenfield 141). Spolin lists three environments that should be always kept in mind when creating a scene which are “immediate, general [and] larger” (87). Additional way of creating environment includes Spolin’s famous Where, Who and What. She

says that “Where [relates to] relationship with physical objects [while] in Who we are interested in establishing human relationships – in encouraging the players to realize whom they are working with and to get some understanding of their mutual roles” (88-89). However, “What” refers to actions for handling certain objects, for going into certain places etc. (Spolin 90). Similarly, Gellman explains the creation of the environment saying that:

Improvisers generally perform on a bare stage and must create their environment and the objects in that environment using mime. The student/actor first learns that the empty stage is filled with space/air and that space can be molded and shaped to create anything the improviser can imagine. The student goes from creating objects out of space, to creating imaginary environments out of space, to eventually creating activity in the Where. (qtd. in Libera 43)

Furthermore, about the seventh rule “Be Specific- Provide Details!” Alger states that “details are the lifeblood of moving a scene forward [because] each detail provides clues to what is important ... details help provide beat objectives and flesh out characters” (“David Alger’s First 10 Rules of Improv” n.d.). Del Close gives an example on what it means to be specific by saying that the statement “look over there!” is wrong while the statement “look on the couch under the blue pillow!” is the correct way of being specific (qtd. in Libera 114). The eighth rule refers to the “golden rule of improvisation, ABC: Always Be Changing” (Salinsky and Frances-White 156). In their book *The Impro Handbook* authors say that “if one character is altered by another, we perceive this as action ... [however] if characters remain unaltered, we get the feeling that nothing is happening” (144). In addition, they believe that the crucial part of each story is the opportunity to have bold characters that express different reactions and different emotional states and therefore move the story forward making it interesting (Salinsky and Frances-White 144). The ninth and tenth rule simply advise improvisers how to create serious or humorous scenes and they also show us that improvisation is not just a synonym for a comedy, but that in improvisation “it’s perfectly possible to tell stories of sacrifice, growth, love, and hate, in addition to stories of pure fancy” (Hazenfield 10). However, when it comes to all improv rules in general Salinsky and France-White say that:

It is certainly true that there are principles that help people learn how to improvise, and technique can always help even an experienced improviser out of a tricky situation. However, a slavish obedience to rules that were originated as training wheels for beginners but have taken on a sacred connotation is one of the factors that may be keeping improvisation stagnant. (288)

Moreover, Salinsky and Frances-White advise improvisers to ask themselves one question on a regular basis and that question is “why is that rule there and what would happen if we broke it?” (288). They conclude that improvisers can break any improv rule they wish but only if they are fully aware they are doing it for the right reasons (Salinsky and Frances-White 298). All in all, rules of improv help improvisers stay within the imaginary boundaries of theatrical improvisation; however, breaking a few of them from time to time cannot do any harm as long as improvisers respect each other and their work which has been created by themselves. Similarly, the participants of the course Drama Workshop in English Language and the participants of any other improv workshop have to abide by the rules of improv in order to show what theatrical improvisation truly is and also to create genuine improv scenes in the most spontaneous way.

3.2. Building a character

It is quite demanding to define what a character is, but it is a crucial ingredient that no improvisation theatre can live without. As Spolin states, “character is the essence of theater” (233). Improvisers display lots of different characters while different characters show various emotions. Mabel Elsworth Todd argues that “emotion constantly finds expression in bodily position; if not in the furrowed brow or set mouth, then in limited breathing, in the tight held neck muscles, or in the slumped body listlessness and discouragement” (qtd. in Spolin 235). Likewise, Salinsky and Frances-White say that improvisers “should transform themselves, adopting a different posture, physicality, accent, register and so” (177). Therefore, Viola Spolin in her book *Improvisation for the Theater* lists and explains the exercises that help student/actors deal with the problem of character by e.g. focusing on showing as many facial qualities as possible while playing a scene, by focusing on showing feeling through body attitudes, by focusing on holding facial and bodily expression, and by focusing on exaggeration of a physical quality etc. (237-252). Considering everyday life, these exercises may help students communicate information to

other people more successfully because through games and exercises they may get to know themselves better and see how they could react in particular situations. Some of the situations may include showing sympathy, arguing, telling jokes, presenting something to someone, etc. Consequently, students may actually use this self-realization in their real life situations. Moreover, Salinsky and Frances-White say that improvisers are only limited by their imagination since they can be anyone they wish by playing “anyone, anywhere, anytime” which is truly beautiful about the whole concept of improvisation (184).

3.3. The importance of narrative and storytelling

Storytelling is of the greatest importance when it comes to improvisation (Salinsky and Deborah Frances-White 43). In his book *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre* Johnstone wrote one whole section on the topic of narrative skills. In that section of the book Johnstone describes story as “a series of events that are or might be narrated”, and that a story is “a narrative of real or, more usually, fictitious events” (111). Johnstone in his book *Impro for Storytellers* lists and explains a lot of different story games which help improvisers practice storytelling, such as Word-at-a-Time, What Comes Next, Non-sequential Lists, Link the Items, Verbal Chase and so on (Johnstone 130-153). While creating a story it is important that students are advised to freely use their imagination in order to create plots they have instantly come up with without too much thinking about it (Johnstone 142). In everyday life, storytelling may help students to be more successful in developing higher levels of creativity, logical thinking and even more successful creation of stories for various school and university assignments. Furthermore, Salinsky and Frances-White describe other crucial elements when it comes to storytelling accentuating the importance of platforms which are seen as stable situations that precede the ‘start’ of the stories (69). After the platform is set there should be a hero who is seen as “the first person to have a big emotional response to the situation” (Hazenfield 96). She adds that a hero has to go through a whole process of tackling the obstacles in order to reach a goal and to be changed in the end (Hazenfield 91). Salinsky and Frances-White note that while choosing the right trouble for the hero the best policy is to be obvious (79). Furthermore, when it comes to creating stories, Johnstone believes that the most important thing in order to create narrative is to make the break in the routine (Johnstone 139). Salinsky and Frances-White also note that “interrupting or breaking a routine with something obvious retrospectively provides the point for action” (71).

Moreover, the authors also add the importance of “raising the stakes” of a story as well as the act of “reincorporation” which is considered a provision of “structure and endings” of stories (Salinsky and Frances-White 83). Johnstone also accentuates the importance of reincorporation explaining that it occurs when improvisers link the previous mentioned material and reintroduce it again in order to “shape the story by recapitulation” (Johnstone 116). Salinsky and Frances-White conclude that the general structure of storytelling includes five steps which are listed as it follows: “build a platform, break the routine, get into trouble, raise the stakes, [and] reincorporate” (86). Of course, they stress that the provided structure is not imposed nor that it represents the only way of how one should create a story but that it can be seen as a simple recipe for telling numerous of stories while improvising (Salinsky and Frances-White 86). To conclude, storytelling is an essential part of every improv scene because in general, the story that is being told and presented by improvisers and their characters creates the scene that displays different aspects of human experience. Moreover, the story makes the scene alive by making improvisers spontaneously involve various characters, environments, relationships, decisions etc. In that way the participants of any improv workshop learn more about themselves and their storytelling abilities. Those abilities enable them to bring different characters to life while improvising a certain scene. Overall, practising storytelling through improv may make the participants more creative, intuitive and open to their and others’ ideas, as well as develop language skills.

3.4. The qualities of an improviser

Those who decide to take up an improv course or workshop realize that they may not always succeed in engaging in new activities. However, failure in improvisation is completely acceptable since it makes improvisers more relaxed, stronger and wiser. Johnstone in his book *Improv for Storytellers* explains that “real learning means ‘getting it wrong’” (61). He also claims that each time his students failed he greeted their failure with a positive attitude which “treats their failure as survivable” (62). Also, Ryan Madson agrees that mistakes should be perceived as something natural so that improvisers can relate to their mistakes as “friends [and] partners in the game” (103). Moreover, Ryan Madson and Johnstone agree that it is important to encourage students telling them to “be average” because being average “allows automatic processes to take over” and takes off the pressure that improvisers may feel if they are convinced they have to be flawless (Johnstone 65; Madson 60-61). As for beginner improvisers, there are situations when they are

too shy to volunteer hoping someone else would step in instead of them (Johnstone 61). However, Johnstone has a habit of talking to them about volunteering which encourages them to relax since it is only natural to feel that way in the beginnings (Johnstone 62). Furthermore, Carol Hazenfield notices that “there are always some smart students for whom improv comes very hard [because] smart students think that if they understand enough, they will be good improvisers” (12). Moreover, lots of students discard their first thoughts “because they’re afraid of being unoriginal” but Johnstone stresses that “the improviser has to realise that the more obvious he is, the more original he appears” (87). He simply puts it:

The obvious choice is the one you would have made if you hadn’t been taught to be ‘clever’, or ‘artistic’. Your obviousness may seem worthless to you, but your obviousness is not mine, and it expresses your true self, whereas ‘being original’ conceals your true self by substituting something previously defined as original. (88)

Additionally, Hazenfield states that “as each individual becomes more skilled, the overall quality of the scene work improves, which makes class more fun to be part of” (53). She suggests that the more improvisers practice, the more flexible they become, and their acting vocabulary becomes greater (Hazenfield 114). Moreover, what Del Close believes truly makes improvisers achieve greatness is to have the courage to “embarrass themselves” while contributing in a scene (qtd. in Libera 115). Similarly, for Johnstone, great actors are those improvisers that can make the audience laugh and cry at any moment they wish (341). He adds that when inspiration kicks in all limits seem to disappear and the great improvisers are born (341). Also, he adds that “good improvisers seem telepathic” since everything they do or say seems to be flowing naturally (Johnstone 99). Likewise, Patricia Ryan Madson in her book *Improv Wisdom: Don’t Prepare Just Show Up* states that “a good improviser is someone who is awake, not entirely self-focused, and moved by a desire to do something useful and give something back” (15). Also, there are times when improvisers appear clever on stage, but truly it is only attributed to the fact that they were paying attention to what was happening. Therefore, one of the greatest improvisers’ assets is their ability to pay attention (Ryan Madson 70). Furthermore, improvisers are the “most able to learn, create and improvise” when they are most themselves (Salinsky Frances-White 41). What Salinsky and Frances-White also state is that people watching improvisers during their performances want to see bold and fearless improvisers who are able to quickly come up with

confident offers without hesitation (Salinsky and Frances-White 155). According to Ryan Madson, “the improv ‘talent’ which involves listening carefully, observing the actions of others, contributing, supporting, leading, following, filling in the gaps, and looking for the appropriate ending, can be taught and learned” (126). Improvisers open up to these actions and are rewarded by various new skills that can be applied in their improv work or even in their daily life. Also, it is necessary to stress that even non-professional improvisers are able to apply the skills they have acquired during improv workshops to their everyday lives. Likewise, Patricia Ryan Madson in her book *Improv Wisdom* encourages average people to use the improv techniques in their daily lives in order to expand their points of view and experience the adventures filled with possibilities (Ryan Madson 27). Not all the improvisers end up improvising in theatre. Surely there are people who improvise in lots of everyday situations and find themselves acquiring skills they never knew they had. Those improvisers are more adventurous, more proud of themselves after engaging in situations they would normally reject, they are more self-confident, more relaxed and definitely more optimistic.

4. HOW DOES ONE BENEFIT FROM ENGAGING IN IMPROV?

Kathleen Franks (2013) states that “improv theater training is not just for actors”. Moreover, she claims that engaging in improv creates “the experience” that can improve person’s life in “a variety of contexts, such as: communication skills, corporate team building and personality explorations”. Flegar states that the improvisation theater techniques have been used for decades for lots of different and useful purposes (Flegar 61). She stresses that the application of improv techniques is broadly used in theater but also in a non-theatrical context; for example, in educating actors, in working with children with special education needs, with social workers, with business teams, in attempts of changing one’s lifestyle, etc. (Flegar 61). She adds that improvisational theater easily interlocks with lots of different fields, and as such, provides high development of communication skills, focus, spontaneous reactions and creative thinking (Flegar 62). Moreover, the process of improvising can transform people if they let themselves be transformed because in order to be changed people have to be willing to do so (Hazenfield 206). Not only is impro fun, but it also has a potential influence on the development of one’s personality, social skills, language and communication. Accordingly, Carol Hazenfield in her book *Acting on Impulse* says that “improvising opens channels [improvisers] didn’t even know [they] had: channels of perception, communication, and emotion” (12).

4.1. Influences on personality

Accordingly, Carol Hazenfield states that “improvising holds up a clear unerring mirror and challenges us to look at ourselves” (12). She adds that “the fact that we get to learn about ourselves is a beneficial by-product of the process” of improvising (49). Likewise, Arthur Morey in the preface of Viola Spolin’s book *Theater Games for The Classroom* says that the exercises in that book “help students in developing performance skills [as well as] make students more knowledgeable of themselves [and] go beyond the theatrical to nurture skills and attitudes that are useful in every aspect of learning and life” (Spolin, Preface). Johnstone explains that the moment improvisers decide to do or say things spontaneously they are being who they truly are (Johnstone 119). Furthermore, improvisers may experience a boost in their confidence, e.g. Johnstone explains that “[he] increase[s] the confidence of the actors by getting them to play

sequences of status exercises” (46) which “involve the conscious manipulation of [improvisers’] level of dominance” (219). Furthermore, improv helps improvisers lower their anxiety levels and the fear of public speaking. Johnstone explains that people in general are extremely anxious when they are “being looked at on stage ...” (30). Owing to Wolpe’s work on curing phobias, Johnstone applied some of his methods to work with some of the overly anxious students in order to make them feel more relaxed (Johnstone 30). In his book *Improv for Storytellers* he writes about numerous benefits of playing Theatresports, explaining that it can “alleviate the universal fear of being stared at, turn ‘dull’ people into ‘brilliant’ people, develop storytelling skills, improve interpersonal skills and encourage a life-long study of human interaction etc.” (24). As far as personality trait of risk-taking goes, Salinsky and Frances-White simply put it that “improvisation is about taking a risk” (163) and that “good improvisers are risk-takers” (128)”. Accordingly, Johnstone is known to shout “Take risks! Who said you have to be perfect?” anytime his students are over thinking their choices (63). Johnstone explains that all people have “some special area that [they] reserve for ‘risk-taking’ ... the improvisation stage should be one of those special areas” (68). To conclude, some of the aspects of personality that can be affected by improv training are becoming more adventurous by opening to new life situations, getting out of one’s comfort zone, starting to trust one’s instincts, and feeling more confident and less anxious when giving a speech or presenting something in public. Those are some of the greatest assets when it comes to getting by in life and handling demanding situations.

4.2. Developing social skills due to group collaboration

In her book *Improv Wisdom* Ryan Madson claims that “nearly everyone who joins the improv world as spectator or participant cites ‘because it is a lot of fun’ as a reason for their involvement” (138). Also, as class is more fun, people feel freer to take chances, therefore the scene work improves, and the cycle becomes “self-perpetuating” (Hazenfield 53). As already mentioned, Johnstone in his book *Improv for Storytellers* agrees that improvising should be fun while advising his students to “keep checking up on [their] partners to make sure they’re having a good time” (59). Similarly, Patricia Ryan Madson stresses that “each [improviser] works for the welfare of the others” and that “consummate improvisers are marked by their generosity, courtesy, and ability to watch out for the needs of their teammates” (123). Also the “safety, welfare, and reputation of each player” are in the hands of his team members because in practical

terms team members agree to take care of each other (Ryan Madson 123-124). Most of the times an improviser's first instinct is to join a player who appears to be struggling on stage by doing something to improve the situation; and once members of a group have experienced the security that comes from that kind of support, they recognize that it is the heart of working together" (Ryan Madson 124). Moreover, the essence of improvisation is learning how to work together moment by moment without a known formula (Ryan Madson 126). Salinsky and Frances-White agree that:

Learning to work together means happily giving up the initiative and either looking to your partner for guidance or trusting that an idea will emerge from 'nowhere'. Many people will resist this – it feels unsettling to take off so much of your social 'armor' – but it's essential to get the best out of your partner, to create a happy atmosphere on the stage and to keep the audience engrossed in the process of creation (124)

Spolin in her book *Improvisation for the Theater* states that "improvisational theater requires very close group relationships because it is from group agreement and group playing that material evolves for scenes and plays" (10). Also, since the group is participating and is agreeing on various offers and choices, it is able to "remove all the imposed tensions and exhaustions of the competitiveness and open the way for harmony" (Spolin 11). Summing up all of the information already listed, it is easy to comprehend why successful companies hire improv coaches in order to aid their workers to improve team work collaboration. According to John Harthorne (2014) improv training can teach startup founders and future entrepreneurs about interacting with employees, investors and mentors. Harthorne believes that good communication between work colleagues is the key to success of a certain company (Harthorne para 1). He also adds that encouraging other people's ideas during the business meeting fosters innovation since there is no fear of turning someone's idea down (Harthorne para 2). In conclusion, each individual that decides to get involved with improvisation within an improv workshop might experience the beneficial changes in their social skills. Improvement in their social skills might include a form of natural communication with other group members that may result in overall improvement when communicating with other people. Moreover, one may experience possible bonding with other group members because of the feeling of being comfortable around each other.

4.3. Communication

What seems clear, though, is that improvisers communicate throughout the whole period of time while engaging in improv. They are continuously engaging in various forms of communication. In addition, Dale Carnegie in his book *Communicating Your Way to Success* states that people communicate exclusively by giving the impression of themselves through the way they look, express and through what they do and say (Carnegie Prologue). Hazenfield strongly agrees saying that “when we communicate, we use words, body language, vocal tone, facial expression, and emotion to convey our meaning” (74). Since words themselves are not as crucial as the non-verbal way of communicating, Hazenfield advises improvisers to open their eyes and be all ears in order to get the full picture of what the person is communicating to them (74). Similarly, Lockford and Pelias state that actors are “engaged in an ongoing communicative exchange” by being encouraged to attentively listen to what is being said (433). Lockford and Pelias also stress that “the performer’s work requires a communicative connection” which leads improvisers to become “aware communicators” who are able to use their “cognitive, affective and intuitive abilities ... in order to absorb interaction details, create characters, and establish relationships” (434). Furthermore, Carnegie in his book talks about the qualities of good and bad listeners saying that in order to be a better listener, a person needs to focus on what the other person is saying without rushing them, interrupting them or showing no respect (38). Moreover, Bettina Matthias in her article explains that improvisational theatre is not made just for one player, but for players who interact with other players or their environment, and therefore develop improvised scenes in which they are focused on the same issue which leads to broad communication (Matthias para. 2). However, the most important medium through which improvisers communicate are their bodies, i.e., as Spolin refers to it, *physicalization* (qtd. in Matthias para. 2) which “opens up communicative possibilities, and it eventually enables students to overcome cognitive and psychological barriers to successfully move towards greater linguistic proficiency and communicative freedom” (qtd. in Matthias Abstract). Lockford and Pelias agree, suggesting that improvisers “must be artists with expressive bodies...establishing a communicative connection [while] opening themselves up to their bodies’ expressive potential” (434). In addition, improv workshops might actually have a huge effect on people who decide to get involved in them. Some of the aspects of human communication that can be affected by

improv training are that people may notice the improvement in their listening and speaking skills and may notice the improvement in their communication skills in general. Moreover, people may start to read other people's body language much better than before, and become better listeners. Finally, they may engage in lots of different conversations with others much more easily than before.

4.4. Foreign language acquisition

It is commonly known that people thrive at learning in an environment where they are not being criticized, discouraged by disapproval or punished for making mistakes. The same applies to the acquisition of a foreign language, especially in the context of theatrical improvisation. Therefore when acquiring a foreign language in the improvisational context people start to use the target language more freely and spontaneously which leads to great improvement. When it comes to spontaneous storytelling and acting, in his book *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre* Johnstone encourages students to speak before they overthink their decisions saying that “once [they] say whatever comes to [their] mind[s], then it's as if the story is being told by some outside force” (131). Also, Flegar in her book *Kazališna improvizacija, jezik i komunikacija* states that in improvisational theater which functions within the structure of an improvisational game, the emphasis is on the actual communication and spontaneous language production (Flegar 55). She also agrees that improvisational techniques used as communicational and psychological strategies in foreign language teaching foster foreign language acquisition in terms of acquiring vocabulary, grammar and developing four of the language skills which include speaking, listening, writing and reading (Flegar 56). Furthermore, Bettina Matthias (2007) in the abstract of her article “Show, don't tell” gives good reasons for using the format of an improvisational theater workshop in beginning foreign language teaching. In addition, “‘Show – don't tell’ is one of the key mantras in improvisational theater” (Gellman, qtd. in Libera 44). However, in the article Matthias explains that she initially introduced improvisational activities as warm-up games in her regular beginning German classroom, but soon after that she started a voluntary course for anyone adventurous enough from her beginning German class to participate in her short experiment (Matthias para. 1). Eight students agreed to participate in her improvisational theater workshop that took place five times for 75 to 90 minutes per session for three weeks (Matthias para. 1). When the workshops finished, she was able to claim that “improvisational theater and

systematic work with its basic directive ‘Show, don’t tell!’ encourage students to communicate in a foreign language environment before they may feel prepared to do so in the target language itself” (Matthias Abstract). Furthermore, quoting Spolin and McNeece, she explains that when students are fully focused on solving the basic task during the improvisational activity they forget about the fear of disapproval and therefore do not feel concerned if their speech is not completely correct (Matthias para. 2) Therefore Matthias agrees that:

Under these circumstances, students are then also more open to language acquisition as a kinesthetic experience: listening to preparatory discussions and side-coaching leads to processing linguistic input as meaningful and noteworthy almost automatically, and it is not rare for students to use new linguistic material (vocabulary or structures) that they hear in the early stages of developing a scene in the later phases of problem-solving. (Matthias para. 2)

Additionally, Matthias compares the improvisational techniques with language acquisition and learning theories such as “Total Physical Response, Krashen’s “input theory”, Curran’s “counseling learning” and Gattegno’s “silent way,” proving her point that “spoken output does not have to be the focus in the early stages of language learning” since there is a “possibility of a silent linguistic gestation phase before students can successfully produce language or structures that they are taught” (Matthias para 2). She adds that improvisational theater relies on actors’ skills to react to a certain situation appropriately while encouraging “a personal and creative response to whatever the linguistic input may be” (Matthias para 2). All in all, Flegar concludes that the highest influence of the improvisational techniques can be noticed in both language spontaneity and conversational fluency, and as well as in overcoming the fear of public speech and the fear of the language itself (Flegar 56). She adds that improvisational theater can create an adaptive environment for students who fear the language by introducing the strategies that may influence students’ behavior and the sole process of learning (Flegar 60). Additionally, all of the improv techniques are applicable with pupils and students of different age and background. Children are very curious by nature and therefore ready to unconsciously acquire the foreign language by playing numerous improv games without overthinking their decisions. To conclude, participants of improv workshops in foreign language may start to perceive the foreign language they are learning quite differently and in a positive way. They may start to speak freely in a foreign language without the fear of making vocabulary or grammar mistakes, since there is no

fear of punishment. They may also start to speak the language more fluently and may expand their vocabulary.

To conclude, owing to commedia dell' arte performance troupes presenting theatricals, Viola Spolin's approach described in her most famous book *Improvisation for the Theater*, Keith Johnstone's contribution to improv as one of the best improv teachers in the world, and to Close's constant improv innovations, theatrical improvisation has become more known and accessible to people from all over the world. Fundamentally, improv is all about making spontaneous decisions and saying the first thing that comes to one's mind while simultaneously abiding to the rules of improv and observing the actions of others while supporting their ideas. As improvisers learn from their mistakes, they become more skillful and the whole process of learning while improvising becomes even more beneficial. However, not only is improv entertaining, but it also has a potential influence on the development of one's personality, social skills, language and communication. One's personality may be affected in a way that a person might become more adventurous by opening up to new life situations, getting out of one's comfort zone, starting to trust one's instincts, and feeling more confident when with other people or when giving a presentation in public. Improvement in one's social skills might include the development of skills required when working together as a group fostering the acts of support, compassion and generosity for other teammates. Also, improvement in their social skills might include a form of natural communication with other group members that may result in overall improvement when communicating with other people. Furthermore, people may notice the improvement in their listening and speaking skills, i.e. overall communication skills due to a constant interaction between other group members. Moreover, people may start to read other people's body language much better than before and become better listeners. Additionally, improvement in their language skills might occur due to the fact that people thrive learning in an environment where they are not being criticized, discouraged by disapproval or punished for making mistakes. Therefore, the acquisition of a foreign language in the context of theatrical improvisation might lead to great improvement because people use it more freely and spontaneously.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1. Research goal

The main aim of this research was to discover if the students, i.e. the participants of the course Drama Workshop in English Language benefited in some certain areas by using improvisational strategies in their real life situations. More accurately, the aim was to determine the potential influence of improv on the development of personality, social skills, language skills and communication in real life.

5.2. Hypothesis

The research is being conducted under the hypothesis that people who attended Drama Workshop in English language at the Faculty of Education in Osijek and people taking up an improv class elsewhere in the world who shared their experience on web articles that appear in the analysis, noticed the beneficial changes regarding their personality development, their social skills, language skills and communication in their daily life.

5.3. Method

The basic method of collecting data was to create an anonymous questionnaire for the former and present students of Faculty of Education in Osijek to fill in. Fifty-three students that attended the course Drama Workshop in English Language filled in the questionnaire which later on provided the researcher with information regarding the participants' impressions during the course and their self-perception after the course. The questionnaire consists of four different sections. The first section includes basic information about the respondents, such as age, gender, work status, period of time of studying English language, improv workshop attendance etc. The second section refers to the respondents' impressions during their attendance of Drama Workshop in English Language, while the third section refers to their self-perception in real life situations after Drama Workshop in English language. The second and the third section include five-point Likert scale that determines the levels of the participants' agreement or disagreement with the provided statements. The last section summarizes the respondents' final thoughts. To

clarify it by way of example, final thoughts include questions that reveal if the respondents were affected by the course Drama Workshop in English Language, if they still used some of the improvisational techniques in real life etc. The additional method of collecting data was to interview two of the participants, Dinko Antun Kandjera and Sara Vasiljević, who attended the course Drama Workshop in English Language and remember the time spent within the course in great detail. One of the interviews was conducted via email, while the other in person. The interviewees answered rather similar questions which covered four of the most important aspects that might be altered by the mentioned course: development of personality, social skills, language skills and communication. The questions included the reasons the interviewees have taken up the mentioned course, their self-perception while improvising in front of other group members, their impressions while improvising in the English language throughout the whole course, and their changes in English speaking and communication skills. In addition, the researcher also included the comments from web articles written by people that were closely in contact with the concept of improvisational workshops reporting positive changes that engaging in improv has on the participants. The mentioned articles deal with benefits of engaging in improv listing health benefits, benefits of improving one's business career, bolstering one's confidence, or improving one's communication skills.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With regard to the analysis of responses to a questionnaire it is important to note that altogether fifty-three respondents filled it in with most of them being women (N=50) and only a few men (N=3). As for their age, the youngest respondents were 19 (N=2), while the oldest was 34 (N=1). The mean of age is 23.45 while the spread around the mean i.e. standard deviation amounts to 2.9907. The median is 23.00 and the range is 15.00. However, most of the participants were in between the ages of 24 and 25 (N=19). Furthermore, 30 out of 53 respondents are students (56.6%), 8 of 53 work as teachers (15.1%), 6 work as trainee teachers (11.3%), 6 work but not as teachers (11.3%), 4 graduated but are not yet employed (7.5%) and 2 of 53 are either unemployed or have dropped out of school (3.8%).

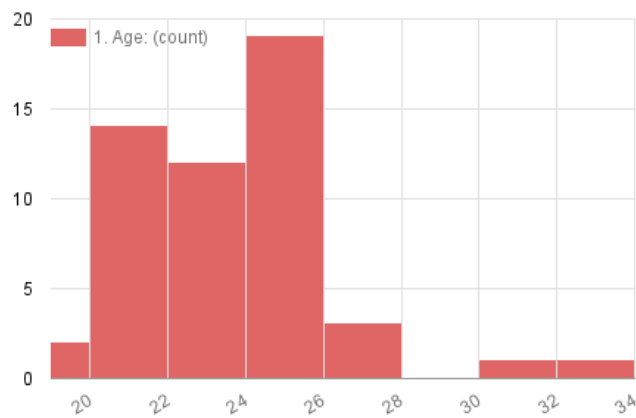


Figure 1: Histogram of the respondents' age

As for the module the respondents were enrolled at the Faculty of Education, Module C counted the most respondents (N=45), Module A (N=7) and Module B (N=1). Concerning the questions connected to the course Drama Workshop in English Language, the majority of respondents (N=35) reported that while choosing an elective course, Drama Workshop in English Language sounded by far more interesting than the other elective courses. However, it is important to note that the next two main reasons for taking the above mentioned course were that the respondents had always liked everything connected to acting and the theatre (N=13) and that they wanted to improve their English speaking skills (N=13). Furthermore, none of the respondents have ever attended some other improvisational workshop except the one that was

carried out within the course Drama Workshop in English Language. When asked to shortly define the term improvisation in their own words most of them agreed that improvisation is the ability to spontaneously and intuitively say or do something without previous preparation or too much thinking about the future. Some of the genuinely reproduced definitions of improvisation provided by the respondents in questionnaire were that improvisation is:

A skill of doing the right thing in a certain moment, not planned in advance.

Improvisation is spontaneous act of doing something.

Being spontaneous and intuitive, while not thinking about 'what will I say now.'

Finally, when being asked if they still tend to improvise in their daily life 90.6% of the respondents answered affirmatively.

6.1. Analysis of the possible influence on personality

While analyzing the second section of the questionnaire that refers to the respondents' impressions during their attendance of the Drama Workshop in English Language, it was shown that about the same number of respondents either suffered or did not suffer from stage fright during the course. To clarify it by way of evidence, 23 of the respondents strongly disagree or simply disagree with the statement that they suffered from stage fright, while 24 of them agree or completely agree with the provided statement. However, the analysis of the third section of the questionnaire that refers to respondents' self-perception in real life situations after Drama Workshop in English language showed that despite suffering or not suffering from stage fright, the great majority of respondents (77.4%) reported that they could deliver a speech or a presentation less anxiously. Similarly, Lanell Pena (2013) explains that those who take up an improv class become more self-aware and able to acquire skills that help them handle every mishap that usually occurs when a person is giving a presentation (*HOW ADULT IMPROV CLASSES CAN BENEFIT YOU* para. 2). As for the feeling of anxiety right at the beginning of the course, 32.1% of the respondents reported that they did feel anxious, while 50.9% admitted just the opposite. What is interesting, however, is that when asked to decide whether they felt fear but

did the activities anyway, a rather high number of respondents (N=36, i.e. 67.9 percent) agreed or completely agreed with the provided statement of feeling anxious but engaging in the activities anyway (see Figure 2).



Figure 2: Histogram depicting respondents' levels of disagreement or agreement with the statement "I felt fear but did the activities anyway."

In addition, the majority of the respondents (88.7%) reported that they liked the activities and the games they were playing which afterwards made them feel more adventurous in their real life (73.6%). Similarly, when asked to decide if they agreed with the statement that the course made them feel more confident 73.6% of the respondents agreed or completely agreed with the provided statement. Similarly, Jason Caldwell (2015) states that taking an improv course brings "a sense of self confidence that [participants] never knew they had" because engaging in improv includes tackling one's fears while being the center of attention (*Health Benefits of Practicing Improv* para. 2) Furthermore, Jake Livengood (2015) explains how improv games help build confidence and agility which come as great assets when having a job interview. Livengood (2015) himself stated that "improv has helped [him] develop confidence" which resulted in being "more confident during [his] teaching and workshops" ("Learning From Improv" para. 1). Also, when asked if owing to Drama Workshop in English Language she felt less anxious when she found herself in stressful situations, the interviewee Sara Vasiljević wrote:

Yes! And I know I am not the only one who agrees with this. We noticed that students that were taking this course were more relaxed and had more self-confidence while presenting something in front of the group. It helped me to become more confident. (Sara Vasiljević, personal communication, December 5, 2016)

Theatrical improvisation allows players to be who they wish to be, do what they feel like doing and say what they wish to say, therefore it is not surprising that the majority of respondents (69.8%) agreed or completely agreed with the statement that they saw themselves saying or doing things they would not normally say or do. That led to already expected results that after the course the great majority of respondents started to trust their instincts more often (77.4%). Furthermore, 66 percent of the respondents agreed or completely agreed that they saw themselves getting out of their comfort zone which helped them bolster their self-confidence. According to that, Smith (2011) in his article claims that people who decide to engage in improv “are guaranteed to be pushed outside of [their] comfort zone” to which he refers to as “the saboteur” that lures people into thinking that they are not good enough or that they cannot do something. Smith (2011) also stresses that one of their goals in an improv class is to get people to ignore their saboteur and encourage them “to live up to their true potential” (*5 Reason to take an Improv Class that have nothing to do with comedy* para.1). Furthermore, what does not come unexpectedly is that almost 90% of the respondents claimed that they enjoyed the time spent within the course while only 22.6% of the respondents stated that they would not take the course again even if they could. However, the rest of the respondents (77.4%) claimed they would take it again saying that:

It was interesting, fun and a great opportunity to learn about myself.

Yes, I learned a lot about myself, about others, I become less self-conscious, I overcome my fear of public speaking. I would do it again anytime without thinking.

To sum up, while analyzing the respondents’ impressions during their attendance of the course Drama Workshop in English Language it can be seen that about the same number of respondents either suffered or did not suffer from stage fright. Moreover, half of the respondents reported they were not feeling anxious at the beginning of the course even though about 70% of them all admitted that they felt fear but did the activities anyway. Furthermore, a great majority

of the respondents liked the activities and the games they were playing, saying and doing things they would never have done if they had stayed in their comfort zone. However, analyzing the respondents' self-perception in real life situations after the course led to some quite expected results. To clarify it by way of example, the majority of the respondents reported that the course made them feel more adventurous and more trusting of their instincts. Also, the majority of the respondents felt more confident and claimed that they could deliver a speech or a presentation less anxiously. When asked if they would take the course again if there was a chance for that, 77% of the respondents answered affirmatively.

6.2. Analysis of the possible influence on the development of social skills

Since improvisation is all about collaboration, teamwork and the acceptance of partner's offers, this research aimed to discover if taking up an improv course may cause some positive changes regarding participants' social skills. First of all, it is important to note that the participants, i.e. respondents belong to different age groups. Therefore, they attended the course at different times in different groups resulting in the different number of people in groups. Therefore, 55% of the respondents reported that there were approximately 20 participants in their group during the course, 22% reported approximately 10 participants, 21% reported 30 participants and only 2% specifically reported 4 participants of the course Drama Workshop in English Language. Furthermore, analyzing the respondents' impressions during their attendance of Drama Workshop in English Language it is clear to see that 66% of the respondents agreed or completely agreed with the statement that at first they were afraid of the possible embarrassment they could experience while improvising in front of other group members (see Figure 3), as it is perfectly reasonable that people feel insecure when engaging in something that one has never engaged before.

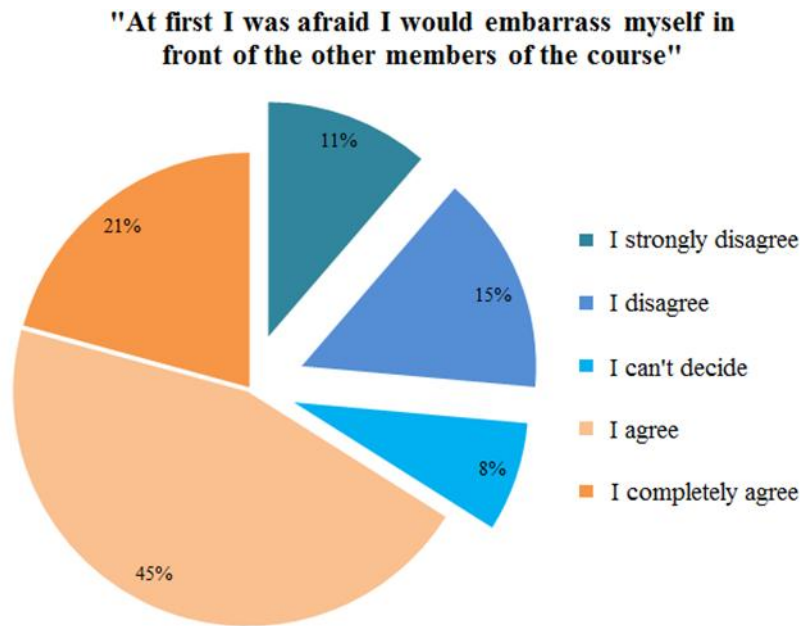


Figure 3: A pie chart showing respondents' levels of disagreement or agreement with the statement "At first I was afraid I would embarrass myself in front of the other members of the course".

However, when asked to decide whether later on they felt comfortable being around each other, it simply came naturally that 73% of the respondents agreed or completely agreed with the provided statement. This is because improv makes people feel more relaxed in groups they are in since they are all going through the same ordeal. Because of that, it was not difficult to assume that the majority of the respondents (61%) would have reported that they developed a sense of trust with most of the group members. That led to another fulfilled assumption that the majority of participants (72%) reported that they could feel that the group they were in was bonding. Likewise, the interviewee Dinko Antun Kandjera made a comment on the topic on how he felt while improvising in front of other group members saying that:

At the beginning it was a bit weird, because we didn't know each other as well as we did after the course and so we were a bit to say stiff, but we became relaxed throughout the class and the teacher used great methods for relaxation... (D. A. Kandjera, personal communication, December 1, 2016).

Similarly, Linda Flanagan (2015) in her article on the topic of learning through improvisation quotes Deana Criess, director of ImprovBoston's National Touring Company, saying that "improv depends on the group providing categorical support for every answer, participants also grow in confidence and feel more connected to others". Flanagan adds that in order "to persuade students to abandon their fear of mistakes, [Criess] insists on unconditional support to all answers, then works to build trust among the group and invite risk-taking". In addition, Flanagan states that "support, trust, risk, confidence and fun [is] what improv is all about" (Criess, qtd. in *How Improv Can Open Up the Mind to Learning in the Classroom and Beyond*). Furthermore, when participants are free of judgment and when there is a feeling of acceptance people are able to relax and bond with each other. Since improv is mostly about having fun, it does not come as a surprise that 98% of the respondents agreed or completely agreed with the statement that during the course there were times when they laughed a lot. In that positive atmosphere people easily make friends with others which is proven by fact that more than the half of the respondents (56%) agreed or completely agreed with the statement that after the course they became great friends with the people from their group. Likewise, Jason Caldwell (2015) states that "practicing improv with friends builds a camaraderie because you are each other's therapy. You bring great joy to the people around you and they bring you joy as well. There are few activities that bring happiness like practising improv" (*Health Benefits of Practicing Improv* para. 3).

In conclusion, since improv is similar to social interaction whereby participants accept each other's offers and keep the scenes going while having fun without being judged, it is no wonder that most of the participants experienced specific changes regarding their social skills. To clarify it by way of example, at the beginning of every improv course most of the participants feel the embarrassment while performing in front of other group members, however after some time the same participants become more relaxed and they feel more comfortable being around each other. Furthermore, participants developed a sense of trust with other group members which results in group bonding. Since participants are having fun engaging in improv laughing a lot, it only comes naturally that new friendships are being made. All in all, feeling more relaxed in social situations is a specific skill that can be developed and improv is a great medium through which it can be accomplished.

6.3. Analysis of the possible influence on communication

Communication between improvisers is an inevitable aspect of every improv course. Thus, analyzing the second section of the questionnaire that refers to the respondents' impressions during their attendance of the Drama Workshop in English Language the data showed that 91% of the respondents agreed or completely agreed with the statement that they constantly interacted with each other throughout each session of the course. As a result, 54% of the respondents reported that they became better listeners while other 40% simply could not decide or disagreed (6%). Accordingly, Rob Asghar (2015) claims that "improv teaches us to listen more patiently and to respond more slowly than we may be accustomed [which] allows us to be present to colleagues and friends in ways that we may never before have been" (*Four Reasons To Take An Improv Class* para. 9). Furthermore, as 81% of the respondents agreed or completely agreed that during the course most of the activities were based on a variety of improvisational conversation topics, later the data showed that after the course the majority (66%) of the respondents noticed that they could easily get into and develop a conversation with others while 28% could not decide, and only 6% of the rest disagreed. Moreover, people communicate by using verbal expressions but also body language, so when asked to decide whether they agree or disagree with the statement that most of the activities included body language as a tool of communication, 85% of the respondents agreed or completely agreed (see Figure 4).

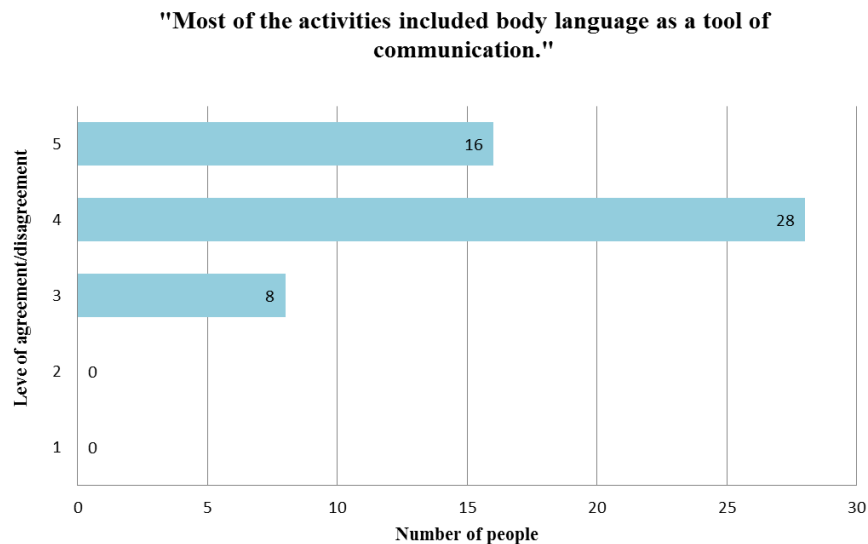


Figure 4: A bar chart showing respondents' levels of disagreement or agreement with the statement: "Most of the activities included body language as a tool of communication".

Furthermore, after the course 59% of the respondents agreed or completely agreed with the statement that they could read someone’s body language much better than before, while 26% could not decide and 15% of the rest disagreed or completely disagreed. Likewise, Steven Handel (2015) in his article writes about some of the games from the book *Yes, And: How Improvisation Reverses “No, But” Thinking* that are “designed to build on an array of different communication skills”. He accentuates the benefits of playing games like Mirror Body or Gibberish Games explaining that the Mirror Body’s purpose is “to help individuals tap into their nonverbal skills” since communication is not only what we say but “also what is communicated through our bodies and faces”. However, in Gibberish Games it is all about working on improvisers’ body language and “tone-of-voice to communicate what [someone is] saying” which is a great opportunity for fellow improvisers “to read those nonverbal signals and give meaning to them” (*5 Improvisation Exercises for Improving Your Communication Skills* para. 2-5). Additionally, 81% of the respondents of the course Drama Workshop in English Language agreed or completely agreed with the statement that the activities taught them more about verbal as well as non-verbal communication which led to the discovery that the majority of respondents (N=37, i.e. 70%) noticed improvement in their communication skills (see Figure 5).

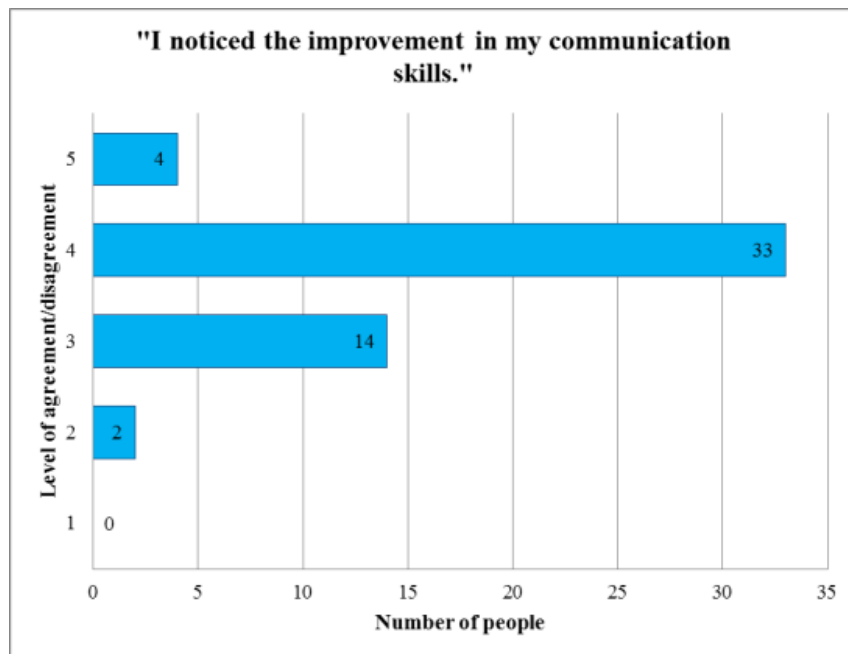


Figure 5: A bar chart showing respondents’ levels of disagreement or agreement with the statement “I noticed the improvement in my communication skills”.

Scientist Vicky Miller (2013) writes in her article about what she learnt about improv and how she applied it to her work and everyday life. Miller concludes that “improv has been an excellent way to develop [her] communication skills and has opened [her] eyes in ways that [she] never expected” (*IMPROVing My Communication Skills* para. 4). Also, another article that deals with the topic of scientists engaging in improv is written by Rachel Bernstein (2014) in which she states that improvisation games can solve the problem of possible failures that occur when scientists communicate to each other or the public (*Communication: Spontaneous scientists* para. 1).

All in all, comparing how respondents felt about their communication skills during and after the course Drama Workshop in English Language it is clear to see that owing to constant interaction throughout the course and the activities that were based on a variety of improvisational conversation topics, the ones that included body language as a tool of communication and those that taught the respondents more about verbal as well as non-verbal communication, the majority of the respondents did feel the benefits of the constant communication between other group members. To be more accurate, the majority of the respondents agreed or completely agreed that they became better listeners, that they could also easily get into and develop a conversation with others, that they could read someone’s body language much better than before, and that they generally noticed an improvement in their communication skills.

6.4. Analysis of the possible influence on foreign language skills

At the beginning of a questionnaire on a question: *Since when have you been studying the English language?* most of the respondents answered that they have been studying English since primary school (N=43) which makes up 81% of all 53 respondents. Later most frequent responded answers were since kindergarten (11%), since secondary school (6%) and since nursery school (2%). None of the respondents started studying English at the Faculty (see Figure 6).

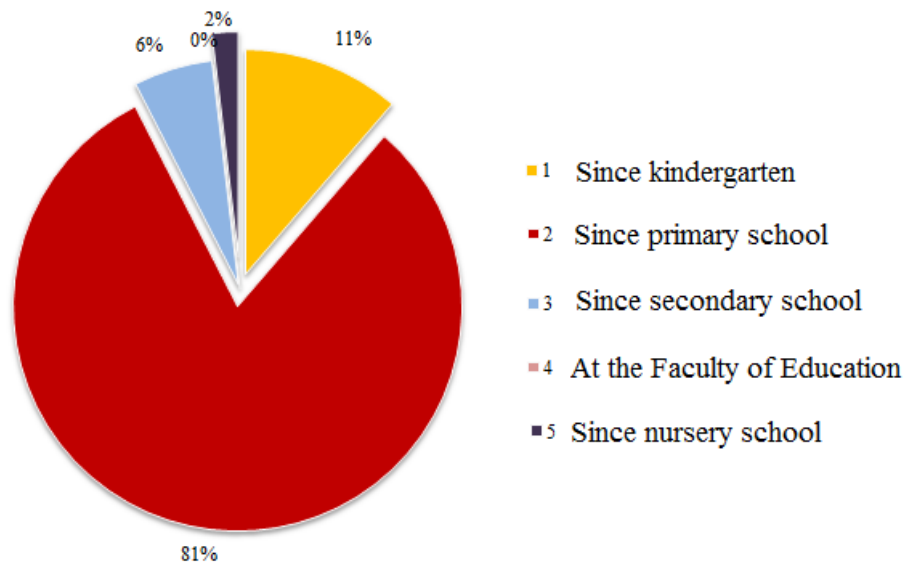


Figure 6: A pie chart showing the participants' background in second/foreign language learning

That is an important piece of information since it is known that the course Drama Workshop in English Language was the course throughout which the participants spoke English at all times. To be more precise, almost 90% of the respondents confirmed that they spoke English throughout the whole course. Owing to that, it is no wonder that the results of a questionnaire showed high percentage of respondents (75%) who agreed or completely agreed with the statement that they noticed that the course helped them expand their vocabulary. Also, during the course more than a half of the respondents (61%) agreed or completely agreed to have noticed that most of the participants were making language mistakes, but that none of them cared about it. This led to results showing that after the course 68% of the participants did not worry about making language mistakes while speaking English, while only 9% disagreed with the statement.

Furthermore, when asked about how she felt while interacting with her colleagues in English the whole time, the interviewee Sara Vasiljević wrote:

In the beginning I was a little unsure of myself because I was afraid I'd make a mistake. But with time we all relaxed and it was normal to interact in English. Over time, our language was getting better and we all felt more confident while speaking. I believe that my colleagues and I became more proficient and secure in speaking English. (Sara Vasiljević, personal communication, December 5, 2016)

Also, approximately half of the respondents (53%) agreed or completely agreed that during the course they were self-conscious about their English, but that after the course they felt more confident about their English speaking skills (68%). Similarly, as it is often the case in improvisation, the participants were encouraged to say whatever comes to their minds without overthinking it. Therefore, when asked to decide if they agreed or disagreed with the statement that during the course they would say the first thing that crossed their mind rather than preparing what to say, a bit more than a half of the respondents (54%) agreed or completely agreed to it, which later on led to results showing that after the course 68% the respondents felt more self-assured when they were required to communicate in English while only 2% disagreed (see Figure 7).

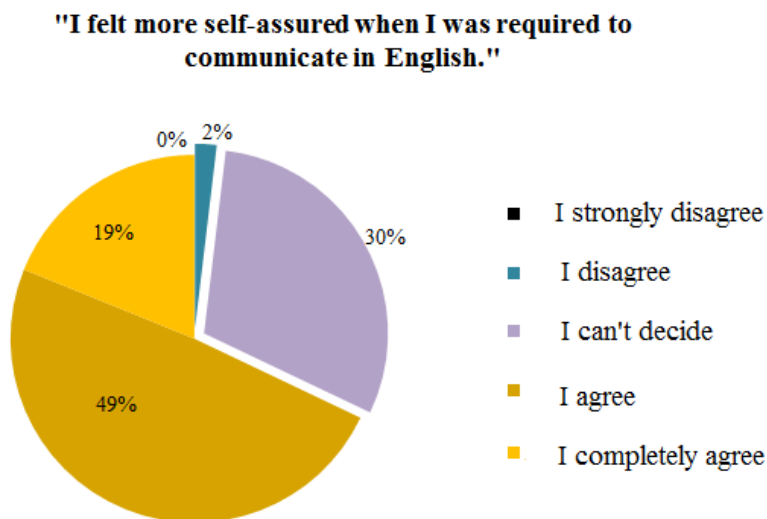


Figure 7: A pie chart showing the level of agreement or disagreement with the statement "I felt more self-assured when I was required to communicate in English".

Additionally, 58% of the respondents reported that during the course there were times when speaking English felt like using their mother tongue which later on led to the acknowledgement that 66% of the respondents agreed or completely agreed with the statement that they started speaking English more fluently, while 32% couldn't decide, and only 2% disagreed.

To conclude, because the participants used English language as a means of communication throughout the whole course, it is obvious that they were constantly exposed to a foreign language learning environment. Even though some of the participants were self-conscious about their English speaking skills, they still used the foreign language without minding their own or others' mistakes while speaking. That resulted in their vocabulary expanding and the feeling of freedom from being conscious of making mistakes while using English. Moreover, the results of the questionnaire showed that respondents' levels of confidence and self-assurance increased when it came to using English language as a tool for communication. Also, since the participants would say the first thing that came to their minds in the foreign language, there were times when speaking English felt like using their mother tongue. As a result, after the course the participants perceived that they started speaking English more fluently.

6.5. Two aspects that were influenced by improv the most

After the analysis of the four mentioned aspects it only comes naturally to wonder which of these aspects the improv workshop had the most significant influence. Therefore, after comparing the results regarding the language skills, communication skills, personality development and social skills, it is detected that the participants noticed the most significant changes in their language and communication skills. To clarify it by the way of example, during the course the participants (90%) spoke English throughout the whole course even though they were self-conscious about their English speaking skills and were making language mistakes. Owing to that, their vocabulary expanded (75%), they were more self-assured when required to communicate in English language (68%) and above all they started speaking English more fluently (66%). As for the influence on communication skills, during the course the participants constantly interacted with each other throughout each session of the course (91%) by engaging in various improvisational conversation topics learning about verbal and non-verbal communication and body language (see Figure 8). Thus, after the course the participants were able to easily get

into and develop a conversation with other people (66%), while their overall communication skills improved (70%).

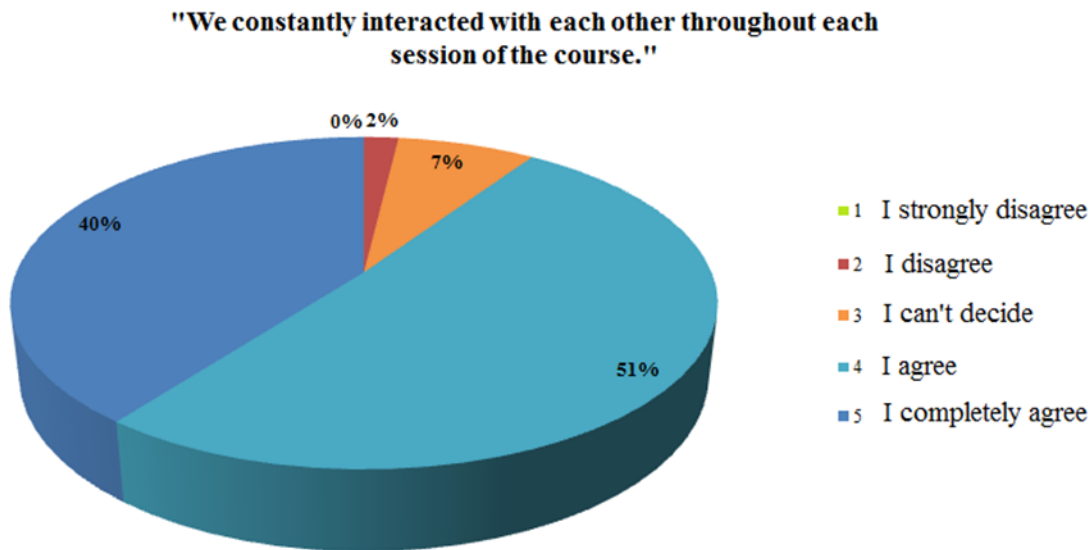


Figure 8: A pie chart showing the level of agreement or disagreement with the statement “We constantly interacted with each other throughout each session of the course”.

6.6. Analysis of the interviews

One of the methods of collecting data was to interview two of the participants of the course Drama Workshop in English Language, Dinko Antun Kandjera and Sara Vasiljević, who remember the time spent within the course in great detail. The interview via email was conducted with the student Sara Vasiljević, while the interview with Dinko Antun Kandjera in person. The interviewees answered rather similar questions which covered four of the most important aspects that might be affected by the mentioned course: development of personality, social skills, language skills and communication. The questions included the reasons the interviewees have taken up the mentioned course, their self-perception while improvising in front of other group members, their impressions while improvising in the English language throughout the whole course, and the changes in their English speaking and communication skills.

First of all, both interviewees noticed that attending Drama Workshop in English Language helped them become more proficient and confident in speaking in English. The main reason they noticed their language skills improvement was because of the constant exposure to English language throughout the whole course. They were speaking English all the time and were able to learn from their mistakes. Secondly, they noticed the improvement in their social skills. At first they were not feeling very comfortable being around each other but after they started to interact with each other, developing the necessary social skills when approaching an individual group member, they felt more relaxed. They actually began to feel that they could get by in any social situation in their daily life. Thirdly, the constant interaction between group members led to improved communication skills. They learnt how to adapt to any person and how to communicate most efficiently. At last, as for the personality development, both of the interviewees started to feel more secure in themselves, more confident and relaxed which was not the case before taking up the course.

Finally, both of the participants felt grateful for having the opportunity to attend the course Drama Workshop in English Language because it has changed their lives for the better. They learned a lot about themselves and about improvisation in general. They also improved their social, language and communication skills while simultaneously experienced personal growth.

7. CONCLUSION

The research was conducted under the alternative hypothesis that asserts that people who attended Drama Workshop in English language at the Faculty of Education in Osijek would have noticed the beneficial changes regarding their personality development, their social skills, language skills and communication in their daily life. After analyzing the respondents' answers from the questionnaire, the interview reports and the information gathered from people's experience shared on web articles, it is clear that the alternative hypothesis is supported. The overall results show that those people who participated in improvisational workshops benefited from them because the analysis shows that improv has a positive impact on the development of personality, social skills, language skills and communication in their real life.

To be more accurate, analyzing the respondents' self-perception in real life situations after the course led to expected results. To clarify it by way of example, the majority of the respondents reported that the course made them feel more adventurous trusting their instincts more often. Also, the majority of the respondents saw themselves getting out of their comfort zone due to which they felt more confident and could deliver a speech or a presentation less anxiously. Furthermore, the participants noticed the positive changes in their social skills explaining that owing to the feeling of being free of judgment and being accepted they became more relaxed and felt more comfortable being around each other. At the same time they developed a sense of trust with other group members which resulted in group bonding and friendships. As for their communication skills, it is clear to see that because of constant interaction throughout the course and owing to the activities that were based on a variety of improvisational conversation topics that also included body language as a tool of communication, the majority of the participants became better listeners, they could easily get into and develop a conversation with others, they could read someone's body language much better than before, and they generally noticed improvement in their communication skills. Furthermore, because the participants used English language as a means of communication throughout the whole course, they were constantly exposed to a foreign language learning environment. Even though some of the participants were self-conscious about their English speaking skills, they still used it without minding their own or others' mistakes while speaking in a foreign language. This resulted in their vocabulary expanding and the feeling of freedom of making mistakes while using English. Moreover, the

respondents' levels of confidence and self-assurance increased when it came to using English language as a means of communication, which after the course resulted in the participants' impression that they started to speak English more fluently.

To sum up, the most important conclusion of this research is that people who get the opportunity to engage in improv get the chance to improve their daily lives for the better. To be more precise, the majority of people that get the opportunity to engage in improv, experience a personal growth and have their social, language and communication skills improved. The results show that owing to improvisational workshops, people tend to learn more about themselves which enables them to improve some of the personal aspects of their lives, e.g. conquering the fear of public speaking, taking the risk more often and being more confident. Moreover, when it comes to developing social skills, they learn a lot about teamwork and the strategies that enable them to successfully function within a group. Also, since the attendants of improv workshops are constantly surrounded by people within their group doing various of improv exercises, working together while supporting each other's ideas and generally becoming more relaxed, they start to feel more relaxed in everyday social situations too. Similarly, since the players are constantly verbally or non-verbally interacting throughout the whole process of improvising while paying attention to what has been said or done by being present to their colleagues, they are developing their communications skills that enable them to become better at communicating information to other people in their everyday lives. Furthermore, as for the language development, the acquisition of a foreign language in the improvisational context makes people start to use the target language more freely which leads to great improvement. Therefore, because the participants are constantly exposed to the target language throughout the whole course, they stop minding their or other's language mistakes and start using the target language as much as possible, which leads to numerous of benefits of engaging in improv, e.g. their vocabulary expands, they become more self-assured when it comes to speaking in a target language, they feel more confident about their language skills etc. Overall, people taking up improv workshops notice the positive changes regarding the improvement of their social, language and communication skills and as well as personality development.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interviewer: Matea Viljevac

Respondent: Dinko Antun Kandjera

Date: 1st of December

(Conducted in person)

Interviewer: Greetings to everyone listening to this short interview. My name is Matea Viljevac and here with me is my friend and colleague Dinko Antun Kandjera.

Respondent: Hello.

Interviewer: So, since we were colleagues at the Faculty of Education in Osijek and we both actually took the course Drama workshop in English Language, I was wondering if I could ask you a few simple questions.

Respondent: Ask anything you like.

Interviewer: Thank you. First of all, could you tell me what were the main reasons you took the course Drama Workshop in English language?

Respondent: Well, the main reason was that it was an English course and that it had drama in it, because I've always loved drama and English so this was a subject that merged those two things.

Interviewer: Yes I agree with that. And now, tell me did you know that it was going to be all about improvising and improvisation?

Respondent: No I had no clue about it. And it was actually a nice surprise.

Interviewer: Ok so, since you did not know it was about improvisation, how did you actually feel while improvising in front of your colleagues, in front of your group members?

Respondent: Well, at the beginning it was a bit weird, because we didn't know each other as well as we did after the course and so we were a bit to say stiff, mhm, but we became relaxed throughout the class and the teacher used great methods for relaxation for example those ice-breakers at the beginning of the class where we would fool around, and jump all over the place, and scream,

Interviewer: Yeah, those were some interesting times. Could you agree that the course made you less anxious when you found yourself in let's say some stressful situations?

Respondent: Yes, definitely, because I believe that we are all on the spectre of extroverts and introverts where I was more of an introvert. I mean I'm still an introvert but I'm always relaxed with my friends, but when I go out I feel very anxious, so I think improvisation actually helped me to cope with it.

Interviewer: Ah, that's nice. So, since Drama Workshop was actually all about improvisation in English language, how did you feel about that?

Respondent: Well, as the name says it's improvisation so even if you screw a bit (laugh), like for example now, it's not a problem, you made a mistake, you just keep it going and everything is going to be fun and you may give a laugh to someone.

Interviewer: Okay, so since we talked in English throughout the whole course, would you dare say that your English speaking skills improved after you've taken the Drama course?

Respondent: Hm, well, I would say that I did have benefit of it, definitely, because when we, we as teachers know that when we teach children you have to encourage your children to speak, I mean students to speak more and with practice comes the benefit of speaking much better.

Interviewer: Yes, I agree with that, and what about overall communication, overall communication with other people, for example talking to somebody, starting a new conversation, meeting new people, and so on. Were there any changes?

Respondent: Yes, well as I said, the practice makes you better, and this sure was a practice.

Interviewer: Mhm, like improvising?

Respondent: Yes, and I can always use it in real life situations.

Interviewer: Okay now, since we got to the topic where you use improvisation in everyday life could you say that you still tend to use some improvisation techniques?

Respondent: At the moment, as my memory serves me I can't remember any exact improvisational methods but I improvise my whole life and I will keep on improvising.

Interviewer: Ok well, Dinko thank you very much it was really delightful and thank you everyone for listening and have a nice day.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interviewer: Matea Viljevac

Respondent: Sara Vasiljević

Date: 5th of December

(Conducted via e-mail)

Interviewer: First of all, could you tell me what the main reasons you have taken up the course Drama Workshop in English Language were?

Respondent: I have always loved to act and participate in such activities so the name of this course immediately interested me. I knew that my colleagues and I are going to have a lot of fun and also learn new things that can help us in our future career as teachers.

Interviewer: Did you know at that time that it was going to be about improvising?

Respondent: No, not really. However, I knew it was a possibility, but I was not afraid of it because I love to improvise in various situations in real life

Interviewer: How did you feel while improvising in front of the rest of the group?

Respondent: At first I was a bit nervous. I didn't know if I was going to be funny or say the right thing or have something to say at all. But after some time I relaxed and realized I have to enjoy the moment and that I have nothing to be worried about because we are all doing the same thing for the first time.

Interviewer: Could you agree that the course made you less anxious when you found yourself in some stressful situations, e.g. giving a speech/presentation?

Respondent: Yes! And I know I am not the only one who agrees with this. We noticed that students that were taking this course were more relaxed and had more self-confidence while presenting something in front of the group. It helped me to become more confident.

Interviewer: As it is already known, during the course you and your colleagues interacted in English language the whole time, how did you feel about that?

Respondent: In the beginning I was a little unsure of myself because I was afraid I'd make a mistake. But with time we all relaxed and it was normal to interact in English. Over time, our language was getting better and we all felt more confident while speaking.

Interviewer: Did you notice some changes regarding your English speaking skills?

Respondent: Absolutely. I believe that my colleagues and I became more proficient and secure in speaking English.

Interviewer: And what about your communication skills? Were there any changes?

Respondent: Yes. I became more secure in myself. I was looking forward to talking with my colleagues in English while giving my opinion on things in every English course and before Drama Workshop it was not the case.

Interviewer: Do you tend to improvise in your everyday life?

Respondent: Yes, I love to improvise. Of course I plan things, but personally I think that sometimes things turn out better than planned when improvised.

Interviewer: Were there anything that the above mentioned course taught you? Did you learn anything new about yourself?

Respondent: I learned a lot about myself. I became more relaxed and more confident. I also learned how to perform in front of people without getting very nervous. All in all, this course was very very helpful.

APPENDIX C

Survey: The benefits of using improvisational strategies in real life situations

Dear improvisers,

You are kindly requested to fill in this questionnaire which will help the researcher gain insight into the effect of improvisational exercises on the participants of the course Drama Workshop in English Language at the Faculty of Education in Osijek. This research is being conducted for the purpose of completing the graduation thesis by the student Matea Viljevac.

Your anonymity is completely guaranteed, therefore, feel free to answer the following questions truthfully.

I sincerely thank you for your time and cooperation,

Matea Viljevac

Basic information

1. Age: _____

2. Gender: M

F

3. Tick the statement that applies to you:

- I am a student.
- I work as a teacher.
- I work as a trainee teacher.
- I work, but not as a teacher.
- I graduated but am not yet employed.
- Other: _____

4. If you are a student, in which year of study are you enrolled?

5. If you are a teacher or a trainee teacher, how long have you been working?

6. Since when have you been studying the English language?

- since nursery school
- since kindergarten
- since primary school
- since secondary school
- at the Faculty of Education
- Other: _____

7. Have you ever been to an English speaking country? If yes, where and for how long?

NO

YES, _____

8. What Module were you enrolled in at the Faculty?

- Module A
- Module B
- Module C

9. What made you decide to take the course Drama Workshop in English Language?

- It sounded more interesting than the other elective courses.
- I was recommended to take that course.
- I had always liked everything connected to acting and the theatre.
- I wanted to improve my English speaking skills.
- Other: _____

10. How well do you recall the time spent on the above mentioned course?

- A LITTLE BIT QUITE WELL IN GREAT DETAIL

11. How many participants were in your group during the course?

- Approximately 10
- Approximately 20
- Approximately 30
- Other: _____

12. Have you ever attended an improvisational workshop? If yes, where and for how long?

NO

YES, _____

13. Are you still attending some form of improvisational workshop? If yes, where and since when?

NO

YES, _____

14. How would you define the term 'improvisation' in a short sentence?

15. Do you think you tend to improvise in real life situations?

YES NO

During the course

On a scale from 1 to 5 where number 1 stands for *I strongly disagree* and number 5 for *I completely agree*, choose the number which best describe your impressions during your attendance of the Drama Workshop.

1. I felt anxious at the beginning of the course.

- 1. I strongly disagree
- 2. I disagree
- 3. I can't decide

- 4. I agree
 - 5. I completely agree
2. At first I was afraid I would embarrass myself in front of the other members of the course.
 3. I suffered from stage fright.
 4. I did not volunteer to participate in the activities.
 5. I thought I would fail while attempting to engage in the activities.
 6. I felt fear but I did the activities anyway.
 7. I liked the activities and the games we were playing.
 8. I was excited to engage in most of the activities.
 9. During the activities I saw myself saying and doing things I wouldn't normally say or do.
 10. I saw myself getting out of my comfort zone.
 11. I had no close friends among my peers at the Faculty at the beginning of the course.
 12. Later on most of us felt comfortable being around each other.
 13. I could feel that the group was bonding.
 14. We spoke English all the time.
 15. I was self-conscious about my English speaking skills.
 16. I noticed most of us making language mistakes, but none of us actually cared about that.
 17. I would say the first thing that crossed my mind rather than prepared what to say.
 18. At times speaking English felt like using my mother tongue.
 19. I was not so good at communicating information to the audience when giving a presentation.
 20. We practiced engaging in all kinds of improvisational conversations during the activities.
 21. We constantly interacted with each other throughout each session of the course.
 22. The activities taught us more about verbal as well as non-verbal communication.
 23. Most of the activities were based on a variety of improvisational conversation topics.
 24. Most of the activities included body language as a tool of communication.
 25. There were times when we laughed a lot.
 26. I did not enjoy the time spent within the course.

After the course

On a scale from 1 to 5 where number 1 stands for *I strongly disagree* and number 5 for *I completely agree*, choose the number which best describes how you perceive yourself in real life situations after Drama Workshop.

1. I could deliver a speech or a presentation less anxiously.
 - 1. I strongly disagree
 - 2. I disagree
 - 3. I can't decide
 - 4. I agree
 - 5. I completely agree
2. I started to trust my instincts more often.
3. I felt I could trust myself more.
4. I felt more adventurous.
5. The course made me feel more confident.
6. I developed a sense of trust with most of the group members.
7. I became great friends with the people from my group.
8. Some of my greatest memories were created during the course.
9. I became best friends with a few of the group members.
10. I noticed I became a better listener.
11. I noticed the improvement in my communication skills.
12. I noticed I could easily get into and develop a conversation with others.
13. I felt I could read someone's body language much better than before.
14. I noticed the improvement in my listening skills.
15. I felt more confident about my English speaking skills.
16. I did not worry about making language mistakes while speaking English.
17. I noticed the course helped me expand my vocabulary.
18. I started speaking English more fluently.
19. I felt more self-assured when I was required to communicate in English.
20. I felt I could deliver a presentation more successfully.
21. I noticed the decrease in my self-confidence.

- 22. I felt more open to new life situations.
- 23. I avoided taking the risk.
- 24. I felt more successful in dealing with demanding life situations.
- 25. I felt I could succeed in doing almost anything.
- 26. The course helped me become a better version of myself.

Final thoughts

- 1. If you could, would you take the course Drama Workshop again? If yes, why?

NO

YES,

- 2. Would you say that Drama Workshop changed the way you perceive yourself? If yes, briefly respond in what ways it affected you?

NO

YES,

- 3. What was the most memorable situation that occurred during the course that you gladly remember?

- 4. Do you still use some of the improvisational techniques in your daily life situations? (e.g., when interacting with people, when preparing and giving a speech, when dealing with certain life situations etc.)

NO
YES,

5. Do you use improvisational techniques at work? (e.g., in schools with children/colleagues, at the office or some other workplace etc.)

NO
YES,

6. If there is literally anything you would like to share that is connected to the experience of attending the Drama Workshop, you are welcome to briefly write about it in the comment section below.