



Using English Plays as a Tool to Enhance the Speaking Skills of Undergraduate Students: A Multimodal Exploration

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DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.13.1.267](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.13.1.267)



Article info

Article Received: 19/02/2025
Article Accepted: 26/03/2025
Published online: 31/03/2025

Abstract

This research paper aims to examine the use of English plays for improving speaking skills of undergraduate students through the integration of multimodal methods. Using scripted texts as a source alone to teach in ESL classrooms does not engage students to learn. In this technologically advanced era, students readily acquire knowledge. The multimodal method, which incorporates multiple modes such as linguistic, aural, visual, auditory, and kinesthetic is the best way to make students learn a subject engaging and focused. Through this method of teaching, students involve themselves interestingly in learning the English language. Moreover, drama means 'to enact' which paves the way for the learners to acquire speaking skills effectively through involving them in active participation in delivering the dialogues precisely. While comparing the other methods of teaching speaking skills, this approach will be very effective for the undergraduate students. This research is based on qualitative approach where findings are based on existing research article and authors insights on how literary play can be utilized to educate speaking skills of the students by implementing multimodal technique to make learners in interested and focused. Using drama text to learn speaking skills using multimodal methods is a novel method and it will be an effective medium for the learners especially in the ESL context.

Keywords: speaking skills, English plays, multimodal methods, Undergraduate students..

Introduction

Speaking skills are a critical component of language and requires accuracy, confidence and fluency. Speaking abilities are crucial because they enable students to deal with real- world situations. They facilitate meaningful communication by allowing for the expression of ideas, feelings, and opinions. It encourages self-assurance and active engagement in others. Effective communication is beneficial for social relationships, career growth, and academic achievement. Everybody's life involves speaking, and having good speaking skills— along with reading, writing, and listening skills—is vital for expressing one's ideas and views in day-to-day interactions (Kamaliah et. al., 2018; Al-Tamimi & Attamimi, 2014; Rusli, 2018; Raba, 2017). It implies that the most important capacity we have in our daily lives for communicating and expressing ourselves is the ability to talk (Swaran Singh et. al., 2020). ESL students' speaking abilities require a great deal of attention from both teachers and pupils (Kamaliah et al., 2018; Swaran Singh et al., 2017).

In contemporary society students are inclined towards learning digital rather than traditional way of learning a subject. They use various modes to gain knowledge, both in traditional and digital way. In 1990 a forward-looking group on academics named the new London group, where they found two modes are used to understand the meaning of the single text. Academics reflected on changing cultural, social and technological advancement of the present world. Gunther Kress, a British linguist, highlighted the idea of multimodality, proposing those five modes—linguistic, visual, auditory, gestural, and spatial—are employed to describe a single piece of material. Multimodal method is used when a lesson incorporates these modalities to illustrate a subject.

In English literature we have different variety of genre like poetry, drama, fiction and non-fiction in which they have their style and

uniqueness. These genre helps in developing vocabulary, grammar, comprehension and pronunciation skills. The benefits of using literature in teaching English are numerous, including improving students' language proficiency and literary appreciation. Lee 1972 says "It is in literature that the resources of the language is most fully and skillfully used. It seems to follow that literature should enter into the language study of those who are to use the language with the greatest possible skill and effect." The genre drama emphasis more important role in language learning by promoting much involvement of both teacher and student in learning process. "The use of drama in the language classroom allows the teacher to present the target language in an active, communicative and contextualized way. Dramatisation helps the teacher address the four skills of language learning (speaking, listening, writing and reading), and it also favours and facilitates the study of some often- neglected aspects of language such as pronunciation and body language"(Mattevi, 2005).

Methodology

This research paper adopts qualitative research approach to explore how English plays can be taught to students for improving speaking skills using multimodal methods. The findings are based on existing research and authors insight.

Teaching language through English play

Play in English may be a useful technique for enhancing speaking abilities. Since they take the shape of conversations, they facilitate interaction and encourage attentive listening. This increases one's self-assurance when speaking the language. Learners enhance their speaking abilities by improving their vocabulary, fluency, and meaningful communication. While choosing a script, the teacher should ensure that the language is accessible to the learners and relevant to their needs and that the topic arouses the students' interest (Davies, 1990). "Before listening to a

recording of the text, the students are required to read it aloud to become acquainted with it. Before distributing the roles, the instructor has a class discussion on the book. A second reading of the book is played, during which the instructor pauses to highlight or solicit feedback on certain statements, dispositions, or feelings. The instructor divides the class into groups and invites each group to have a detailed discussion about the characters and surroundings. In the last step, which is most likely a later class, the students in their groups select their roles and practise the play. Because of the repetition needed, any kind of rehearsal is best for learning intonation patterns. The play or one of its scenes would be performed as the last step. Students might listen to a recording of the performance at a later time. In any event, when the performance is finished, there should be a discussion. In developing speaking skills through play these strategies can be implemented" (Byrne, 1986).

Teaching English play in Multimodal method

Traditionally, teaching English play depends only on the text, lectures and discussion where students are mere listeners and where they get an opportunity only to read aloud the dialogue in the classroom where the students' engagement is low, when the multimodal way of teaching is included, teaching becomes engaging among the learners. In a multimodal way of teaching, it promotes performance learning.

Multimodal/multiliteracies pedagogy has the potential to provide opportunities for ESL students to learn about different text types in ways that enhance the expansion of interpretation of texts. Multimodal pedagogy goes beyond language to promote alternative ways of reading, interpreting and text composing (Ajayi, 2009).

Speaking skills and multimodality

Speaking skills may be effectively taught using multimodality, which incorporates a variety of communication modes, including digital media, body language, gestures, audio,

and visual assistance. Combining these components gives students a deeper comprehension of how language is used in various situations. Images, movies, and infographics are examples of visual cues that help increase vocabulary and understanding.

Students have interesting possibilities to practise speaking thanks to digital resources including interactive platforms, video recordings, and presentation software. In addition to making learning more engaging, this multimodal method aids students in becoming more self-assured and proficient in spoken language. "It is not enough, to meet students' needs, to focus on language; teachers should begin to focus on and develop students' abilities in visual literacy, and to develop a pedagogical metalanguage to facilitate these abilities when images co-occur with spoken and written modes." (Royce, 2007, p. 366)

Findings and discussion

Multimodal methods in English play for developing speaking skills

Taking the character, teachers can prepare character charts, mind maps and story boards where undergraduate students can be asked to comprehend the story this enhances speech organisation. Thus, visual storytelling, under visual mode is used in developing speaking skills. While delivering the dialogues body gestures and facial expression gives reinforcement emotional speech, thus gestures and body language are used. Students can watch film adaptation or theatrical performances this makes them exposure to phonetic awareness and various speech styles. Articulation can be refined using the AI-based pronunciation software. Students can enact favourite scenes or dialogues makes their speech clear and helps in improving interaction and collaborative speaking skills. Students can record their performance and share among their peers for review.

Innovative Multimodal methods to teach literary drama:

- Performance-based learning can be used as innovative multimodal way of teaching which includes improvisation and role-playing benefits in deeper understanding of the emotion in a particular character. when digital scripts are given with annotation this can help them with practicing tone, gestures and pace.
- Film adaptation or theatrical performances of a literature play are used to compare interpretations.
- Students can create short videos on particular scenes.
- Students can create short videos performing important scenes.
- Augmented reality or virtual reality for immersive storytelling.
- Students can add background music or sound effects to enhance the performing scene.
- Teachers can teach voice modulation and pacing using recording apps.
- Drama-based learning apps can be used where students can interact with AI-generated characters.
- Online collaboration can be conducted for story telling where students can make dialogue contribution.
- Teachers can encourage students create podcasts where students can give their own interpretation of a play.

Conclusion

Using English plays through multimodal methods to improve speaking skills is a good resource for teachers to improve undergraduate students' language. Authentic literature-based plays are rich in cultural context, grammatical structures, and interactive dialogue and has all the facilities to develop skills in the target language, so improving speaking skills is highly achievable in classroom setting. The educational benefits of using scripted literature plays for improving LSRW skills are highly recommended by many researchers. In this contemporary era of

language learning and teaching should be improved based on the students' interests. when multimodal methods are applied to English plays for developing speaking skills, multiple teaching modes make the learners interesting, motivating and engaging.

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