

Benefits of Educational Cooperative Drama for Developing English Speaking Skills of Palestinian Students in Conflict-Affected Jenin

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Abstract: Objective: Palestinian students face significant challenges in developing English speaking skills due to the continued reliance on traditional teaching methods and the psychological pressures associated with living in conflict-affected areas. This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of Educational Cooperative Drama (ECD) in improving the English-speaking skills of seventh-grade Palestinian students in Jenin, Palestine. It also explores the role of ECD in enhancing students' creativity, self-confidence, cooperation, and emotional well-being in crisis-affected educational contexts. **Methodology:** The study adopted a qualitative research design using a purposive sample consisting of 20 students, 5 English language teachers, and 5 educational supervisors. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observation checklists, and various educational artifacts, including plays, videos, worksheets, presentations, and online learning sessions. The collected data were thematically analyzed using NVivo™ software. **Findings:** The findings revealed that Educational Cooperative Drama significantly improved students' English-speaking skills, particularly oral fluency, pronunciation, interaction, and communication confidence. The approach also enhanced creativity, teamwork, cooperation, dramatization abilities, academic engagement, and self-esteem. Furthermore, ECD contributed to reducing the psychological effects of trauma and stress experienced by students living in conflict-affected environments. **Conclusions:** The study concludes that Educational Cooperative Drama represents an effective pedagogical approach for developing English speaking skills and supporting students' psychological and social well-being in crisis-affected educational settings. Integrating drama-based cooperative learning strategies can create more engaging, supportive, and student-centered language learning environments. **Recommendations:** The study recommends that the Palestinian Ministry of Education integrate educational drama into English language curricula and expand teachers' professional development programs related to drama-based and cooperative learning approaches. It also recommends designing classroom activities that align with students' emotional and educational needs in conflict-affected contexts and support the achievement of Quality Education (SDG 4).

Keywords: Educational Drama, English Speaking Skills, Cooperative Learning, Conflict-Affected Education, Qualitative Research.

فوائد الدراما التعاونية التعليمية في تنمية مهارات التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية لدى الطلبة الفلسطينيين في جنين المتأثرة بالنزاع

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ملخص: الهدف: يواجه الطلبة الفلسطينيون تحديات كبيرة في تنمية مهارات التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية نتيجة الاعتماد المستمر على الأساليب التقليدية في التدريس، إضافة إلى الضغوط النفسية المرتبطة بالعيش في المناطق المتأثرة بالنزاع. هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء فاعلية الدراما التعاونية التعليمية في تطوير مهارات التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية لدى طلبة الصف السابع الأساسي في مدينة جنين الفلسطينية، كما هدفت إلى الكشف عن دور هذا الأسلوب في تعزيز الإبداع، والثقة بالنفس، والتعاون، والدعم النفسي لدى الطلبة في البيئات التعليمية المتأثرة بالأزمات. **المنهجية:** اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج النوعي باستخدام عينة قصدية مكونة من 20 طالباً، و5 معلمين للغة الإنجليزية، و5 مشرفين تربويين. وتم جمع البيانات من خلال المقابلات شبه المنظمة، وقوائم الملاحظة الصفية، وتحليل مجموعة من النماذج التعليمية مثل المسرحيات، ومقاطع الفيديو، وأوراق العمل، والعروض التقديمية، والجلسات التعليمية الإلكترونية. وقد تم تحليل البيانات موضوعياً باستخدام برنامج (NVivo™). **النتائج:** أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن الدراما التعاونية التعليمية أسهمت بشكل كبير في تحسين مهارات التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية لدى الطلبة، وخاصة الطلاقة الشفوية، والنطق، والتفاعل، والثقة في التواصل. كما ساعدت في تنمية الإبداع، والعمل الجماعي، والتعاون، ومهارات التمثيل، والانخراط الأكاديمي، وتقدير الذات. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، ساهمت الدراما التعاونية التعليمية في التخفيف من الآثار النفسية الناتجة عن التوتر والصدمات المرتبطة بظروف النزاع. كما أن دمج استراتيجيات الدراما والتعلم التعاوني يسهم في توفير بيئات تعلم أكثر تفاعلاً ودعماً وتمركزاً حول المتعلم. **التوصيات:** توصي الدراسة وزارة التربية والتعليم الفلسطينية بدمج الدراما التعليمية في مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية، وتوسيع برامج التطوير المهني للمعلمين في مجال التعلم التعاوني القائم على الدراما. كما توصي بتصميم أنشطة تعليمية تراعي الاحتياجات النفسية والتعليمية للطلبة في البيئات المتأثرة بالنزاعات، وبما يدعم تحقيق الهدف الرابع من أهداف التنمية المستدامة المتعلق بالتعليم الجيد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الدراما التعليمية، مهارات التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية، التعلم التعاوني، التعليم في البيئات المتأثرة بالنزاعات، البحث النوعي.

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Introduction

Dramatic performances have been widely accepted as a perfect practice for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The author Komul (2023) states that drama can help EFL students acquire language-processing and communication skills. In the same vein, Torrico (2015) noted that drama is an essential educational method that encourages teamwork, togetherness, and the ability to express ideas in everyday life. By taking part in such activities, students will be trained in arguing and performing, which are the two main characteristics of good communicators. Neelands and Goode (2015) went even further, saying that theatre and drama are not just about entertainment; they are about making and expressing meanings and feelings, thereby providing students with a new way to connect with different experiences and viewpoints. With the same idea, Bsharat (2015) argued that drama is one of the main things humans do, particularly when encounters are unfriendly or challenging to handle.

In EFL, effective teaching methods are essential for developing both language skills and communication. The field of education has been moving towards more personalized, interactive, student-centered, and cooperative learning methods (Namaziandost et al., 2020). The change reveals the significance of teamwork, as group learning has been shown to enhance learners' participation and motivation, thereby making the process of acquiring a second language more effective (Ahmad & Mahmood, 2010). Moreover, Wang (2020) demonstrated that such practices lead to participation in communicative activities characterized not only by fluency but also by confidence in speaking.

Despite these pedagogical advancements, teaching speaking skills in EFL settings remains a persistent challenge. Teachers often

struggle to design classroom activities that balance linguistic appropriateness with sufficient communicative challenge Yasin (2024). Consequently, learners in many contexts continue to experience limited opportunities for authentic language use and oral practice. This issue is particularly evident in conflict-affected regions such as Palestine, where contextual and socio-political factors further constrain language learning.

This study, therefore, aims to identify effective strategies for enhancing English-speaking skills among Palestinian EFL learners, focusing on the role of educational drama as a communicative and cognitive tool. Drawing on data collected from English language supervisors, teachers, and 7th-grade students under the Ministry of Education in Jenin, West Bank, Palestine, the study examines how drama-based pedagogies can support both linguistic and critical thinking development. As Hu and Shu (2025) observed, integrating drama into EFL instruction fosters creativity, problem-solving, and self-confidence competencies essential for building communicative proficiency. The research also seeks to address the primary challenges faced by Palestinian students in learning English, which can be broadly categorized into three areas: low English proficiency, the impact of ongoing conflict, and the persistence of traditional, teacher-centered instructional methods.

Conceptual Framework

In this particular study, the aim is to investigate the features of the Educational Cooperative Drama (ECD) for seventh-grade students in Jenin. The study is based on constructivist theory, principles of experiential learning theory, active learning theory, and cooperative learning theory. As the researcher explains, these theories can best be applied via ECD; for instance, by allowing the student and

teacher to use language productively and engaging the student actively. The recommended approach, educational cooperative drama (ECD), focuses on developing an interactive learning atmosphere that promotes student collaboration and communication skills to improve their English-speaking skills.

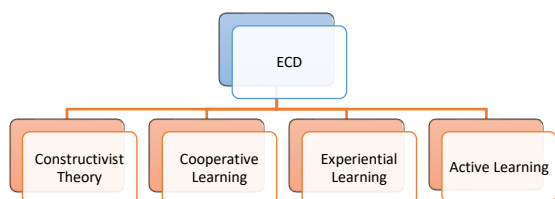


Figure (1): shows the Conceptual Framework of the Study.

Statement of the Problem

Palestinian Students Facing Learning English as a Foreign Language These four main problems, according to the researchers, can be divided into three categories: Differences (a) low English proficiency, (b) the war on Palestine, and (c) the ordinary methods and strategies employed by EFL teachers. First, students do poorly in English, especially speaking. This phenomenon is highly frequent for EFL students in Jenin, whose students have been affected by the ongoing attacks by Israeli forces on the city. As it stands, the seventh-grade assessment system awards 15 percent of the grade for speaking and listening skills, 15 percent for vocabulary, 30 percent for reading, 20 percent for grammar, and 20 percent for writing, the researchers noted. As per the Ministry of Education's 2024 records, the speaking part only stands for 7.5% of the overall score. This highlights the importance of various methods and strategies in bridging this gap and improving students as speakers. A further factor remembered for this consistent low level of English capability as a rule is the

kind of instructional strategies used by numerous primary school instructors. These educators often prioritize accuracy over fluency, valuing literacy skills more than language as a means of communication. Furthermore, the consideration of specific factors relevant to the situation, including the impacts of the current conflict and the difficulties posed by the local assessment system, gives the study greater substance and importance by highlighting the intricate realities that govern the teaching of English in Palestine. These contextual factors are key to understanding the difficulties in learning and the possibilities offered by creative solutions, such as educational drama, to address them.

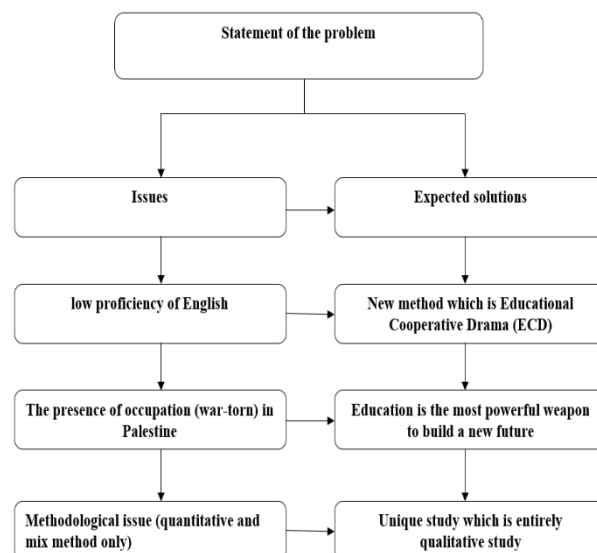


Figure (2): Problem Statement: Issues and Solutions Expectation.

Research Questions

What are the benefits of educational cooperative drama for developing English speaking skills of Palestinian students in conflict-affected Jenin?

Objective of the Study

To explore the benefits of educational cooperative drama for developing English speaking skills of Palestinian students in conflict-affected Jenin.

Significance of the research

This research is fundamental because it aims to improve English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, enabling learners to speak English with greater fluency and confidence. The application of Educational Cooperative Drama (ECD) is expected to make classroom interactions more vibrant and authentic, thereby supporting the development of language skills and, at the same time, learning how to work together. In the case of Jenin City, where the psychological and social effects of the conflict that lasted for so long are still felt, ECD is a method that provides a secure and enjoyable environment for the students to be themselves, assert their presence, and acquire the skills to communicate in a language that they can understand. By working on dramatizations, students not only get the chance to use real language but also to disconnect psychologically and socially through the arts amid the stressors of war.

Moreover, the application of ECD aligns with the goals of the English for Palestine (E4P) program, as it emphasizes best practices such as learner-centered teaching, experiential learning, and the integration of the communicative and affective domains in language education. ECD promotes best practices in communication, creativity, and problem-solving, characteristics that are also reflected in modern communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based learning (TBL). Its fit within the E4P framework could thus enhance the program's ability to meet students' language and psychosocial needs.

Moreover, the integration of ECD underscores the need for creative, environmentally friendly methods in English teaching. ECD is not merely a technique, but rather a methodology for transforming that urges teachers to constantly change and upgrade their practices in response to the

conditions of conflict-driven classrooms. This is especially important in Jenin, where the lack of resources, interruptions in schooling, and barriers related to trauma often obstruct language acquisition.

The research also adds to the literature on creative ways in conflict resolution and post-war education. Although some authors have already dealt with drama in EFL contexts, the specific issue of how these methods can support learners in areas experiencing conflict and instability has yet to be addressed. Thus, the research on the use of ECD in Jenin, by its very nature, seeks to bridge the theoretical gap and to provide new educational perspectives on the simultaneous fostering of linguistic, emotional, and social development through creative, cooperative learning.

In the end, improving the speaking fluency of Palestinian students is not only a matter of academic achievement but also a socioeconomic and mental-health necessity. In Jenin, knowing English can lead to higher education, global networking, and job offers, hence liberating students from the restrictions of their situation. The results of this research will support English language supervisors in the Ministry of Education by demonstrating the educational value of ECD in developing communicative competence. To sum up, the work encourages upcoming researchers to conduct similar studies in different areas and to provide variations on the existing one based on students' different proficiency levels, thus contributing to the understanding of new English teaching methods in conflict-affected education settings.

Literature Review

Education in Conflict-Affected Palestinian Contexts.

The matter of discussing educational improvements in Palestine should take place with the understanding that the Israeli

occupation is still the biggest obstacle to sustainable development and educational equity. Palestinians in the occupied territories have endured for more than 50 years a systematic occupation that has been constantly disrupting their lives and the normal functioning of social services. These restrictions have caused public commotion, blocked the flow of goods and capital, and undermined the stability of the community and the economy, thereby having a long-lasting impact on governance and the provision of public services (Kubursi & Naqib, 2008; UNCTAD, 2026).

The education sector has been one of the most affected by the situation. Military actions, school closures, and the destruction of infrastructure have led to a continuous decline in the level of education across the West Bank and Gaza over the years. Schools have been attacked, students and teachers detained, and educational resources restricted, leading directly to the denial of the right to education (Iriqat et al., 2025). For instance, in Jenin, students experienced periods of anxiety, displacement, and academic backwardness due to the disruption of their education caused by armed confrontations and curfews. In regions such as **Jenin**, frequent armed confrontations and curfews have disrupted schooling cycles, leaving students anxious, displaced, and academically behind. These challenges are exacerbated by chronic underfunding, limited access to international aid, and checkpoints that restrict the delivery of educational materials (Manor & Masry-Herzallah, 2025). Consequently, generations of students are growing up under conditions that compromise not only their academic progress but also their psychological well-being and motivation to learn (Reingold & Zamir, 2017).

Language education in Palestine operates within a politically charged environment. While Arabic remains the mother tongue, the

education system mandates Hebrew and English instruction, with English introduced only after literacy in Arabic and Hebrew has been established (Amara, 2018). This trilingual framework creates both linguistic and cognitive challenges, as students often lack sufficient exposure to English communication in authentic contexts. Moreover, instruction in English typically relies on traditional, teacher-centered methods that prioritize reading and grammar over speaking and interaction.

In the broader political landscape, Hebrew instruction has been criticized for functioning as an instrument of assimilation, reinforcing dominance while undermining Palestinian linguistic and cultural identity (Lefkowitz, 2004). Conversely, the marginalization of Arabic and the limited institutional support for English further entrench linguistic inequality and alienation (Quneis & Rafidi, 2023). Within this environment, Palestinian students in Jenin face unique difficulties: the trauma of ongoing violence, limited access to interactive learning environments, and a lack of confidence in speaking English due to insufficient communicative practice. In this sense, "education is a means of emancipation of liberation within the Israeli Palestinian context" (Hamamra, 2021, p. 1).

Cooperative Language Learning (CLL)

The method of Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) is mainly directed towards students, as it supports the educator's construction of knowledge through interaction, teamwork, and shared responsibility for the learning process (Dendup & Onthanee, 2020; Harianto, 2024). In the process of collaboration, learners build meaning together, help each other with their linguistic problems, and gain a better understanding of linguistic forms and functions. Many studies have shown that the CLL method leads to academic success, increased student motivation, and social

inclusion (Harianto, 2024; Johnson & Johnson, 2018).

However, still, the use of CLL in the Palestinian EFL classrooms is not frequently reported. Specifically, in Jenin, where students frequently face the conditions of anxiety and disengagement due to the disturbances around them, cooperative learning can be a powerful tool to regain the trust and confidence of the students. The very characteristic of CLL, cooperation, enables students to overcome English-as-a-foreign-language speaking fear by practicing in a non-judgmental atmosphere created by peers, thus achieving fluency without fear of judgment and promoting it through peer support. Besides that, such an approach would also lessen students' loneliness caused by trauma and displacement, offering them the chance to be socially connected and learn together.

The idea of encouraging students to celebrate their success together is a feature of CLL that not only aligns with but also upholds the community-centered, cooperative values indigenous to Palestinian culture. Hence, it is both a good pedagogical and cultural approach. Consequently, it has the potential to be a great teacher for those affected by the conflict in places like Jenin, helping them speak fluently and interact more confidently, with less anxiety and greater motivation.

Drama in Education

Drama-based learning is a new method that has been recognized as a very effective tool for teaching foreign languages. It is based on the emotional, cognitive, and experiential parts of learning. Traditional methods of teaching foreign languages emphasize grammatical correctness. In contrast, drama involves the whole person, the learner, who is then to express creatively, participate in role-play, and use honest communication (Celik, 2019). Wijaya et al. (2025) concluded that students'

listening, speaking, and pronunciation skills were significantly improved through participation in drama activities. Practicing with scripts and playing roles improved fluency and pronunciation accuracy, while fostering confidence and creativity. Nanda and Susanto (2021) also showed that drama helps create interactive encounters and social bonding, allowing learners to express their feelings in culturally appropriate and safe ways.

In the context of Palestine, the use of drama in education is even more promising than as a teaching method. Dramatization for students in cities that have been affected by war, like Jenin, will give them a chance to have a safe place to deal with their trauma, tell what happened to them, and also, through language, regain some power over their lives and the situation they are in. The interactive and group aspects of drama not only develop communication skills but also foster strong character development and train empathy. By acting, students can indirectly live through difficult situations, learn to control their emotions, and, at the same time, use English to express themselves and heal.

Drama also complements CLL by integrating cooperation, imagination, and authentic communication, making it a fitting foundation for the Educational Cooperative Drama (ECD) approach examined in this study. As Bozkurt and Aydin (2023) observed, collaborative classroom interactions can reduce speaking anxiety significantly, especially in face-to-face learning environments- an outcome particularly relevant for EFL learners in Jenin who often struggle with performance-related stress.

Bridging the Gap

Although studies have been conducted on the use of CLL and drama and shows, which highlight not only linguistic but also affective advantages, research on their combined or specific use in the region of Palestine remains

scarce. Thus, this inquiry will seek to span that gap by analyzing the impact of Educational Cooperative Drama (ECD), a method that incorporates the harmonious dynamics of CLL along with the invention and expressiveness of drama, on the peculiar educational and psychological problems of Jenin students. ECD done right would not only raise students' speaking fluency, pronunciation, and reliability but also help them regain their confidence in a conflict-oriented and displacing environment by nurturing togetherness, honest communication, and emotional strength.

Research Design and Approach

For this study, a qualitative case study design enabled the determination of the impacts of Educational Cooperative Drama (ECD) on the acquisition of English-speaking skills among seventh-grade Palestinian students in Jenin city, located in the northern West Bank. The qualitative method was selected because it provides real-life context for the community and people affected by political and social turbulence, thereby enriching the data and making it more descriptive of students' experiences, feelings, and language development in the classroom, which is the primary interest of the study.

The emphasis was on providing a detailed account of the ECD's role in developing English learners' communicative competence, self-esteem, and group work in the classroom through the application of ECD methods despite such conflicts in their educational environment. To maintain the study's methodological rigor, multiple data sources were employed to combine their strengths and weaknesses, thereby increasing the validity and reliability of the findings.

Research Context

The investigation was carried out in Jenin, a Palestinian city known for its tenacity during the war and its strong support for education, no

matter the situation. The schools in Jenin face many problems, including a lack of funding, student stress, and interruptions caused by the political situation. In such a scenario, ECD was introduced as an interactive and creative learning method, offering students a secure, fun, and expressive environment for practicing English-speaking skills.

By sitting in the research within this distinctive socio-political and educational context, the study not only assessed the pedagogical results but also sought to find out how drama-based cooperative activities could play a role in the students' well-being, motivation, and communicative fluency during hardships.

Participants

The research population included English language supervisors, EFL teachers from public and private institutions, and students from secondary schools in Jenin under the Palestinian Ministry of Education (MoE). The two educational institutions were singled out for the study: one government school and one private school. These institutions have a total of about 1,400 students.

The study sample included 20 seventh-grade students (10 boys and 10 girls), 5 English language supervisors from the Jenin Directorate of Education, and 5 English teachers (both male and female).

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring that the chosen schools and individuals represented a wide range of educational settings and experiences with drama-based teaching. This sampling method was suitable for qualitative research, providing deep, contextually rooted insights rather than generalization.

Data Collection Instruments

Following the qualitative case study methodology, several tools were employed to ensure thorough data triangulation and to

capture both observable behaviors and personal reflections on ECD implementation. The tools used included:

Classroom Observations (Actualizations): Classroom actualizations refer to the observation and documentation of educational cooperative drama sessions conducted in the schools participating in the study. The researcher observed student interactions, levels of participation, and communicative behaviors during role-plays, improvisations, and group performances. These observations were recorded through detailed field notes and video recordings, allowing for analysis of verbal and nonverbal communication, collaboration patterns, and student engagement.

This tool directly addresses the question of observable changes in speaking fluency, confidence, and interactional competence resulting from ECD activities.

Semi-Structured Student Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students to gain insight into their personal experiences, perceptions, and attitudes toward learning English through ECD. The flexible format allowed the researcher to explore in depth issues related to motivation, confidence, and the emotional safety that ECD provided in the war-affected context of Jenin. These interviews contributed to research on students' emotional and attitudinal responses to ECD as a strategy for enhancing speaking skills.

One-on-One Interviews with Teachers and Supervisors: The individual interviews with EFL teachers and MoE supervisors aimed to gather professional insights on the pedagogical effectiveness and practical application of ECD within the English for Palestine (E4P) curriculum. The questions explored implementation challenges, observed outcomes, and recommendations for broader adoption of ECD. These interviews contributed

to addressing the research question regarding teachers' perspectives on the pedagogical value of ECD and its alignment with national curriculum goals.

Document and Artifact Review: Additional data were collected from the students' written artifacts, reflective journals, classroom worksheets, and ECD performance scripts. These documents not only provided evidence of linguistic growth and creativity but also corroborated the findings from observational and interview data.

Instrument Validation and Consistency

To ensure the validity and consistency of the qualitative instruments, the semi-structured interview questions underwent a rigorous validation process.

Three English professors from the university reviewed the questions for linguistic appropriateness and relevance to the research objectives.

Three experts in psychology and education, each with over 15 years of research and teaching experience, evaluated the questions for sensitivity, clarity, and suitability for qualitative inquiry.

A pilot interview with five teachers was conducted to test question clarity and flow, and the questions were adjusted based on their feedback.

Prior to data collection, formal permission was obtained from the Ministry of Education (MoE). Participants were invited to volunteer after being fully informed about the purpose and procedures of the research.

Ethical Considerations

Given the contentious research environment in Jenin, extreme caution was exercised in addressing ethical issues. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and in the case of minors, parental consent along with student assent was secured. Participants were

volunteers, and their anonymity was protected through the use of pseudonyms and data anonymization.

Sensitive issues related to trauma, displacement, or violence were not addressed through drama activities or interviews to prevent psychological harm. The researcher maintained communication with school counselors to monitor students' well-being throughout the process.

All written records and recordings were securely stored on encrypted drives, and participants could withdraw at any time without penalty.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data was analyzed following the six steps outlined by Hsieh and Shannon (2005) in their thematic analysis framework. This unfolded in three main stages. The responses were numbered according to each participant, with all of the responses collated into one file and the data systematically cleaned to ensure that it was accurate, marking the first stages of preparation for thematic analysis. Stage 2 found the unit of analysis which in this study are what we call phrases or sentences dealing with teachers' use of drama based on the participants' reports. This was inspired by previous research on drama in education, with the studies by Dougall (2019), Giacetti (2021), etc. The next task was to develop a coding manual based on literature review and construct thematic categories. These themes were categorized into significant issues such as perceptions of Educational Drama, personal creativity, collaborative learning, and the benefits and challenges of implementing ECD. Once the coding manual was developed, the researcher pre-tested the coding scheme by recruiting an external researcher to apply the codes on 10% of the data sample. It was an important step for the validity and reliability of the coding process. Next, in the process the

researchers coded the whole dataset, which was the last stage of the data analysis. After coding was complete, an audit of the data analysis was carried out to assess its trustworthiness.

Researcher Positionality

The investigator accepted her insider status as a Palestinian educator and scholar who is familiar with the socio-cultural dynamics of Jenin's educational institutions. This positionality provided significant contextual understanding and made it easier for the researcher to get along with the participants. Still, it also called for critical reflexivity to reduce the risk of bias. The research was made sure to be interpretable, accurate, and ethical through the use of reflective journaling and peer debriefing.

To sum up, this qualitative case study aimed to explore the role of Educational Cooperative Drama in developing English-speaking skills and learners' confidence among seventh-grade students in the challenging educational environment of Jenin. The research comprehensively illuminates the pedagogical effectiveness and socio-emotional value of ECD for EFL learners in conflict areas, employing carefully validated instruments, ethical sensitivity, and rigorous thematic analysis with NVivo.

Findings

This is done by using NVivo 12 to analyze replies from participants, in order to answer these questions. Data showed several advantages to using ECD - according to the 30 study participants. The participants' comments reflected significant experience with ECD in a fragile context. To clarify this data, the researcher coded just under 200 thoughts in the moment from 30 middle school students in context. The main themes and sub-themes of these opinions were categorized based on their proven characteristics in several prior research.

The impact of ECD on English language acquisition

Some of the benefits of using cooperative learning and instructional theater in the classroom my participants outlined were While reading the extracts of the participants, there were various advantages such as enhancing speaking and acting skills, increasing success, lowering the effects of war, encouraging students to learn, and matching their learning style. The benefit of these is summed up in figure 3 below.

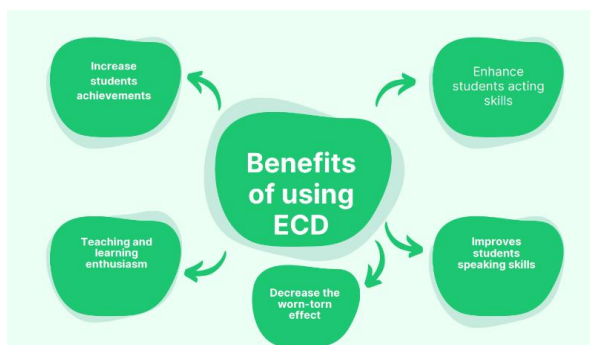


Figure (3): Benefits of using ECD for developing English speaking skills.

Enhancing Students Acting Skills

The majority of survey participants indicated that their EFL classes utilizing ECD helped them develop acting abilities. For example, Student 17 stated that ECD made them brave to perform in front of their classmates with the phrase, " Now, I am able to perform in front of my classmates" (Int. St 17).

A different student revealed to me that ECD enabled him to play out a new role, which left his level of involvement and fulfillment when performing highly enhanced. "If I use drama I act out a character and I like that" (Int. St. 5) is an example that supports this view. Acting through theatre exercises was noted by a few other students as important for their language development during discussions and performances. For example, in her own words, Student 12 noted, "I enjoy engaging in dialogue through acting" (Int. St 12).

Another student, Student 16, reported that traditional teaching approaches can be so repetitive they are downright boring. On the other hand, speaking English comes naturally and easily in an acting or role-playing situation. Acting and role-play enhances participation and enthusiasm for speaking the language compared to simply learning English. "Acting is more interesting than doing the traditional way, it is certainly very boring and makes you bored almost always. Acting in order to speak English, it makes me enthusiastic" (Int. St 16).

Improve Students' Speaking Skills

In this regard, Supervisor 5 described the common way of teaching English in Palestine to be skills that is being taught such as writing, reading, listening and there are no skills like speaking that is being focused. This situation deprives students of their right to speak, as the following excerpt reveals: "In Palestine, speaking and listening skills are not prioritized, they do not exceed 8% of the available points and that is why teachers have no alternative but to focus their efforts on reading and writing over speaking and listening." (Int. S 5).

In addition, given that the kids already had so much experience in reading, writing, and listening, Teachers 4 and 5 emphasized the importance of placing more focus on the speaking skills. Teacher 4 also cited that learners already have these skills and ECD provides support to overcome speech phobia and shyness. The following excerpt indicates that he feels that the performance aspect of ECD is key to improving his students' speaking skills: How I am going to incorporate the drama stage for more dialogues between the students so that they can gain a good understanding to the concept I want them to learn and also be able to improve these skills in their daily lives. This technique seems to greatly improve my students' speaking skills. Certainly, drama is a wonderful way for them

to practice their speaking skills as well as letting them take on roles and enjoy, share and practice the English language without the fear of feeling shy, feeling nervous or making a mistake. I have to say that in speaking my students face difficulties while they hit a band score in writing, reading and listening. Their oral competence is limited to 7.5 out of 10, which is insufficiently and unreasonably high, which is why speaking skills must be developed. (Int. T 4).

The participants in the study thought that ECD improves students' verbal skills and provides them an opportunity to practice speaking English (Int. St 1, Int. St 3, Int. St.5, Int. St.7, Int. St.9, Int. St.11, Int. St 13, Int. St15, Int. St.17, Int. St 19). Also, a variety of observations in the classroom and material samples, for example worksheets, student presentations, plays, and video, confirmed the effectiveness of ECD interactions as follows: "New vocabulary, new phenomenology, more sentences, and grammar rules open the door that speaks to me with such strength (Int. St 1).

Student 3 mentioned that drama-based methods, including role-play as already mentioned, could benefit his English, and mentioned for how that change takes place and how he used to improve speaking in English: Lets have an approach to the drama technique such as role-play when speaking the English Language, because it makes me feel comfortable with it as the news says (Int. St 3). In this point, Supervisor 1, emphasized that since ECD works through cooperative and performative means, it is the most effective method that can be used for teaching English language skill, especially speaking skill: "To me, cooperative learning and educational drama is a powerful and effective in teaching English language, especially the speaking skills through integrating cooperation and acting" (Int. S1). According to Supervisor 5, theatrical activities play an important role in maintaining

the and improving students' engagement and fluency in English, he stated that, "The educational drama method has many techniques such as improvisation, storytelling, role-play, and games. All these are elements of the dramatization technique. Drama provides students with engaging activities and encourages them to speak the English language fluently" (Int. S5).

Increase Students' Achievements (Performance)

The implementation of the ECD has now contributed largely in terms of student performance and most of the respondents emphasized that drama activities can improve students' performance specifically driven towards their English language performance.

Educators in Palestine, where the days could use all the support they can get and educational drama is not so common, want to make better students, stronger leaders, and better speakers of English. Teacher 5 and Teacher 2, for instance, stated they had integrated drama into their lessons repeatedly on view of how beneficial it was in assisting students grow.

Teacher 2 reported that one of his higher-achieving students previously scored only 10/15 on a speaking test but had improved markedly. The student's score increased up to 13 out of 15 after applying drama with cooperative learning strategies. Teacher 2 noted, "Because when students work together and act out in English, this gives students an opportunity to develop their language in writing and in speaking, so the students' scores increased, I like the strategy." (Int. T 2).

Also, Teacher 2, acknowledged how drama can improve students' performance in English. This same student who always does well in reading and writing in English exams had had a phenomenal turn around in the speaking test since educational drama was introduced which was for him a testament to an effective strategy.

Moreover, it has been observed in the classroom that students get more engaged when they talk and act in group or pair. In addition, the idea of bringing ECD to the class could enhance interpersonal skills of students in regard to perform better as it gives a way to cooperative learning and group learning. Classroom Observation shows that Learners who often speak Arabic in class could speak in English with minimal words from Arabic.

Teaching and Learning Enthusiasm

The evidence collected showed that ECD encourages teachers and students to be engaged in teaching and learning. English language supervisors say that the setting in the play contains a lot of motivation for both teachers and their students to make the knowledge of education most effective and most inspiring for everyone. This indicates that one of the things is the willingness to learn the English language specifically the speaking English as also supported by the following quote from Supervisor 1:

“Drama is a new way to teach; it is a risk-taking opportunity for students in a safe and supportive environment. The focus is on language for socialization. Just, I think the usual form of face-to-face teaching which is almost mainly lecture based is boring”.

In addition, teachers of English language learners such as Teacher 2, have all found that incorporating drama strategies into their classrooms greatly increases student engagement, improves social interaction skills, and strengthens peer-to-peer relationships. This allows students to express themselves through acting, improvisation, and theatre work. As Teacher 2 explains, “Educational drama methods help students to reflect on themselves, and encourage them to join in the lessons, create common experiences, and create a greater insight into connection with each other. Through drama, students can learn to express

themselves through plays, acting, and improvisation, where there is drama, there is inspiration and motivation.”

Students state that they develop interest in learning more with the activities supported in English through educational cooperative drama (ECD). Many students (for example: St3, St9, St14, St15, St17, St18, St20) mentioned that ECD pushes them to regularly practice English and implicitly sustain both peer and teacher support. In addition, ECD also created excitement and engagement in learning more from them helped a lot as 1 student mentioned this by saying; "I feel more secure because I have a partner to assist me. I know that if I mispronounce something, my partner can quickly help me, which allows me to feel much more engaged and motivated when I speak English confidently.” (Int. St 3).

The students that are ambitious to learn have to put more effort, practice more and improve communications. Therefore, ECD is helpful in improving students spoken English. It also helps people involved in learning to be motivated to engage with the experience. ECD not only engages students in the process of learning but also pushes students to speak advanced English. Most students who used English during the performance said they did not want their teachers to give them roles in performances during observation sessions. This was done with worksheets and presentations creating the opportunity to speak in English. Participants, namely: students, English teachers, we supervisors of English language proficiency, perceived that ECD was an effective teaching and learning process.

Decrease the Conflict-Affected Effect

There are several benefits when using ECD to teach or learn English. One benefit is that I can reduce the effect of the conflict. Student 13 also liked using theater techniques like role played because they mitigate the impacts of

conflict. Acting, the young man said, has given him a way to cope with difficult moments in the occupation that has defined theirs - and all - of their lives for generations. In this excerpt you see how theater seems to be helping students escape the hard-bitten realities of their business and wrapping them in quotes:

“I enjoy using drama techniques, in particular role-play, to get better at speaking. Acting, with the ability for conversation, is often what I do anyways, so it goes deeper and gives so much freedom for training and practice. Because I love these drama techniques, not only for their effectiveness but for the fun factors they bring. Drama is also escapism - a reprieve from the stresses of work and daily life. These realities will never leave my mind, but I love the moments we can create to find peace and envision beautiful moments” (Int. St 13).

On the other hand, Student 16 (Bsharat, 2023) said that she enjoys watching movies with her classmates for a short time, working with her colleagues. Drama becomes a break from the ordeal of violence, murders, arrests, and the sounds of gunfire that go hand in hand with the Israeli occupation, as this excerpt demonstrates:

Yes, my English teacher always adds some drama in our English lessons; we sing songs and act in plays. In my view, drama helps me build my confidence and develop my ability, as it allows me to take part in events, competitions and to talk with my classmates. However, if only for a moment, I feel safe fleeing from our situation war, violence, the terrifying news. When we act, and when we work together, I enjoy going out to watch a movie with my friends for 2 hours; it really gives me relaxation.” (Int. St 16).

The next quote follows with a similar emotion, a nod toward the fact that drama reduces the effects of life in a war zone. Drama

is an effective form of distancing from traumatic experiences brought about by Israeli soldiers and checkpoints, 17 said. For a while, they want drama or alternative ways of thinking that get them to imagine a better future and briefly forget their troubles:

“One of my English teachers regularly uses drama to develop our accents, our confidence in speaking and our conversational English, it's great. He wants us to join in on these activities. I think it is good that we can get away from disenchantment and from what we suffer because of the Israeli soldiers and the occupation and the checkpoints. We really need to dream,” of a better future and a more fulfilling life, “and allow ourselves to forget about our problems for a while” (Int. St 17).

Student 19 said that it is fun to act out situations relevant in the classroom. He referred to how the occupation, and its bloody tools and agencies target the Palestinian people through land usurpation and loss of life, like horror scenes and film monsters. But through the medium of drama, he sees himself as a hero, one whose life would be peaceful in a safer world. This hope gives him calmness and satisfaction. This excerpt captures this sentiment:

“I like to be part of the education because drama is something transformative, it changes our mood and helps us to forget the hardship we face here in Palestine for a while. The occupation, its ongoing actions - stealing our land and taking our lives - make my reality feel like a horror movie. But through drama, I can be a hero, live in peace, which makes me feel a bit more settled.” (Int. St 19).

Moreover, Teacher 4 added that even with the Israeli occupation still ongoing, there was still a need to work towards a better life for future generations who will end up liberating Palestine. Hassan makes this clear in the following quote, as he believes that drama can

help both himself and his students process their situations and improve their abilities to speak English:

“I can write drama into conversations between kids, and they can use the lessons I want them to learn and enact in front of others. Especially here in Jenin, where I work with students and people with limited opportunities to communicate due to the many challenges resulting from the Israeli occupation, it has been useful in improving speaking skills. Kidnappings, arrests, assassinations and home demolitions have become daily attacks. This morning alone, Israeli forces injured six Palestinian civilians in Jenin while these forces perpetrated devastation and destruction in the city. Still, we need to keep living and doing all we can for our students, because they are the next generation who will liberate Palestine.” (Int. T 4).

ECD Can Be an Intervention Against the Effects of War Coaching sessions revealed teachers and students' spirits for a better tomorrow despite war suggesting that ECD minimizes the effects of war if even but temporarily. In one incident, a student was late to class after getting caught in the Israeli occupation. When he walked in, he said hello to his teacher and classmates and assumed his role in the lesson. Int. These mundane events reflect how this drama can reduce the impact of war life. St. 13,16,17,19).

Limitations of the present study include:

The study addresses a private and governmental schools in Jenin city at the West Bank- Palestine.

Time constraints: the semi structure interview was conducted in the first semester of school year 2022–2023

Restriction to the individuals: Seventh grade students (males and females), English Teachers and Supervisors in Jenin city.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that implementing Educational Cooperative Drama (ECD) with seventh-grade Palestinian students in Jenin, a city severely affected by war, can significantly improve their English-speaking skills. The study reveals that ECD offers a practical pedagogical approach to addressing the longstanding speaking deficits caused by traditional teacher-centered methods and the widespread disruptions of conflict. By integrating cooperative learning and educational theatre into the curriculum, students not only enhance their linguistic fluency, creativity, and collaborative skills but also experience a marked increase in self-confidence and classroom participation. Furthermore, the study found that ECD helps alleviate some psychosocial effects of conflict, including language anxiety, reduced motivation, and feelings of isolation, which often hinder student engagement and learning in war-affected environments.

Data collected from semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and educational artifacts analyzed using NVivo 12 software also support the finding that ECD creates a stimulating, supportive, and emotionally safe environment in the classroom. This environment not only facilitates academic development but also promotes emotional resilience and social connection among students. Therefore, ECD is perceived as an effective method of English teaching that engages both the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that the Palestinian Ministry of Education (MoE) develop professional development programs to train teachers in the effective use of educational cooperative drama. These programs could include practical workshops on drama-based methodologies, collaborative

lesson planning tailored to the English for Palestine (E4P) curriculum, and contextual adaptation strategies grounded in the realities of teaching in conflict-affected environments. By empowering teachers to design lessons that are not only linguistically rich but also emotionally supportive, the MoE can create classrooms that encourage expression, creativity, and communicative competence despite adversity.

While the qualitative design and small sample size of the study-focusing on two schools in Jenin-necessarily limit the generalizability of its findings, they do not diminish its contextual relevance. Instead, these limitations underscore the importance of conducting follow-up research in diverse Palestinian locations and school settings to explore how ECD can be scaled up and adapted more broadly. Incorporating quantitative measures of speaking proficiency in future studies alongside qualitative findings would further validate and strengthen the evidence of ECD's effectiveness.

Despite these constraints, the study provides robust evidence that educational cooperative drama can transform English language teaching in contexts of trauma and instability. Lastly, ongoing research and implementation of Educational Cooperative Drama (ECD) hold great promise for empowering Palestinian students in Jenin-helping them become better communicators, regain confidence, and build resilience as they navigate both their education and the broader challenges of their lived reality.

Disclosure Statement

The research is extracted from Bsharat (2023) PhD thesis, USIM, Malaysia.

– **Ethical approval and consent to participate:** An ethical approval and consent to participate in the research was obtained from each participant and the

Directorate of Education- Jenin, as per the methodological guidelines.

- **Availability of data and materials:** The research data and materials are available.
- **Author contribution:** All authors contributed to the study proportionally. **Dr. Tahani Bsharat** prepared the study introduction, literature review and the study implementation in the Palestinian context, **Dr. Fariza Puteh Behak** assisted with the development of the assessment tools, methodology and revised the research manuscript, Dr. **Suzanah Binti Selamat** worked on the analysis of the data Using NVivo and results presentation, and **Dr. Ismail Sheikh Ahmad** took part elaborating and revising the findings, and concluding the study.
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