

*Original Paper*

# The Dramatization of Children Literature Books for the Development of the Second/Foreign Language: An Implementation of a Drama-Based Project to Students of Primary School

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## **Abstract**

*This paper presents and outlines the design and implementation of a pilot program based on activities of dramatization of children literary books aiming at developing language skills of primary school students in English as a foreign language, participating in interactive, drama play and creative activities. This project was implemented to students of the fifth grade of primary schools of Larissa (Greece) in a sample of 15 students. The collaboration, creativity, and the engagement with English literature were the main features of the program. The learning environment of the program was either the municipal center of creativity “Kalikatzoura Pasalidou” or the municipal gym. When the center of creativity was the place of learning, students analyzed the English children’s literature books, achieving the acquisition of the new vocabulary and participating in creative writing activities. When the municipal gym was the place of instruction, students participated in activities of performing theatrical plays developing spoken language and intonation of the words. The evaluation and feasibility of the program has been realized through a) a pre- and a post - test and b) by keeping a Journal by the teacher. It became so obvious that the particular application had a beneficial effect on the development of speaking and writing skills of learners and enhanced their motivation to participate in drama activities.*

## **Keywords**

*theatre, children literature, foreign language*

## **1. Introduction**

In Europe language learning has long been acknowledged as an important and integral part of the

educational programs and the current data indicate the dominance of a model in which students learn at least two languages from an early age (Euridyce, 2005). Languages are an important factor in education and the work-place and language skills improve the cognition, the flexibility and the academic performance of a person (The MCEETYA National Statement). More specifically, the student is improved as far as his mental, education and cultural characteristics are concerned while the contact with the language helps him to make comparisons and contrast elements of the one language with the target language, thus he becomes a more active member of the educational community while enriching the knowledge about the culture of the country whose language he is learning.

It can also be noted that learning a language enhances the cognitive development. The understanding of the mother tongue is enhanced by learning a foreign language (Vygotsky, 1930s). The child becomes more active and free to use words as a tool of thought and linguistic richness. So, the child becomes more flexible and freer of the main forms of communication. Also, a child who learns that meaning can be represented in more than one way has learned something important about the nature of the language and develops the knowledge of the nature of the language which is not in monolingual environments (Liddicoat, 2001).

Additionally, another benefit of the knowledge of languages is the fact that bilingual students develop more comprehensive and coherent thinking skills and have learned through their experience with dealing with both languages, organize linguistic systems and make necessary operations and functions when necessary. This helps greatly to keep control in various situations (Bialystok & Zouganelli, 2001). Even in research done has shown that when students are introduced to new knowledge through courses conducted in a second language can present a greater cognitive and linguistic flexibility due to the interaction of the languages (Eckstein, 1986). In the past, there was the view that languages were two distinct and separate systems without any interaction. However, studies have shown that not only is this false, but there is a great interaction and data transfer from one language to another and therefore improves the cognitive development of the individual (Baker, 2006, p. 168).

While learning a language, students develop communication skills and understand the social, historical cultural elements of the country whose language they learn. Students are also provided with tools through the comparison and reflection processes in order to understand a language, a culture and humanity (LOTE Introduction statement). Specifically, students learning the language of a country become what we call “intercultural competence”. As for the attitude, they are open and positively curious to know things they were not aware of, and become more ready to judge a culture and the culture of another people. Acquire knowledge about social groups and their products and the interaction of society with people individually. The student also acquire the skill to relate events and incidents with culture and with paper records and they become active members with higher level and critical thinking skills and ability to evaluate and act in new situations . (Byram, 2000; Zouganelli, 2011).

It became so obvious that learning a foreign language has significant benefits for both the person himself and for the society. Dealing with the language offers many linguistic, cognitive and cultural

benefits to people and it would be more than necessary to turn our focus to this view of the language learning and not from the standpoint of acquiring language certificate.

### *1.1 Drama and Teaching a Second/Foreign Language*

It is true that there is a large literature regarding the teaching of a second or foreign language. Learning a language is reasonably considered as an important process and a unique course on both old and young students. Positivity, motivation and encouragement of students are a necessary characteristic for students to pursue and achieve the best possible language result (Arnold, 1999; Tomlinson, 1998c, 1998d). This language experience should be part of a context, and understood by students (Krashen, 1985). The target language must be obvious and of major importance while students engage in language learning (Maley, 1998; Tomlinson, 1998d) and finally, students need to gain a deep and complex use of the language (Masuhara, 2005; Tomlinson, 2000a, 2001b ).

There are many researchers who accept the beneficial effects of implementing programs of language development through theater classes. Specifically, the material must expose the student to the use of authentic language. It should help the student and drives him to watch the language and it should also provide students with opportunities to use the target language to participate in communicative situations and to provide the student with opportunities of feedback which is very important and constructive. All these are examples and integral parts of the theater and it is worth mentioning that most researchers agree and accept the existence of the six basic principles of acquiring a second / foreign language which are strictly related with the dramatization and the engagement with theatre while acquiring a second/foreign language.

#### *1) 1<sup>st</sup> Principal of Second/Foreign Language Acquisition*

As the first and most important principle of acquiring a second / foreign language is justly considered the exposure of the student in a rich, semantic and fully understood environment of language use (Krashen, 1982; 1993; 1999; Long, 1985). The theater by nature is a source of language and thus an incentive for functional use of language. Specifically, while a student is trying to acquire the ability to use a language effectively, he should experience real-world situations using the language, experiencing a variety of ways and communicative situations and generally given great importance to the repetition of elements of the language which he comes in contact with. The student will be activated and will acquire and thus will use the language effectively when he meets the language constantly and in various ways (Nation, 2003). The student will have a positive attitude towards the language, he will consider himself as an active participant and as a result he will be able to become aware of and use the target language. It is therefore, justifiable to support that the theater, the drama and the involvement of pupils in them is in consistent with this language teaching principle.

#### *2) 2<sup>nd</sup> Principle of Second/Foreign language Acquisition*

A second principle of acquiring a second / foreign language is the need to participate effectively in cognitive and linguistic experience (Arnold, 1999; Tomlinson, 1998c, 1998d) which is evident in the preoccupation with the theater. A particularly important element in the process of dramatization and of

course of learning a language is the thinking. If students do not think and do not understand, it is impossible to acquire any element of language. To think and learn a language is full of advantages and so students achieve deep understanding of the target language resulting in effective learning (Craik & Lockhart, 1972) and thus students transfer elements and mechanisms, such as guess, links, reviewed by one language into another. These mechanisms are very important and students are constantly in touch with functions and correlations of the two linguistic codes and transport mechanisms and thus they may be able to achieve greater cognitive development. Also, as mentioned above, it is very important for the students to “feel” during the language experience. If the student does not feel joy, excitement, fun, empathy, enthusiasm, etc., then he will not gain anything from the new language which he comes into contact with. As mentioned above, the student acquires a language when he is positive towards this language, is motivated and excited thanks to this language and so he/she has a very positive experience from this. Not to miss, many scientists (Braten 2006; Damansion, 1994; Pavlenko, 2005; Schumann 1997, 1999; Stevick, 1999; Green, 1993) have conducted a variety of research on emotions and cognitive development in relation to learning a foreign language.

### 3) 3<sup>rd</sup> Principle of Second/Foreign Language Acquisition

Following the second principle, the third principle of acquiring a second/foreign language puts more emphasis on the language learning environment. So when the student has a positive effect of the language experience has also so many chances to achieve communicative competence in relation to those who have no positive effect (Arnold, 1999; Tomlinson, 1998c). Students of a second / foreign language should be positive to the target language, so the student will be able to meet and acquire the language, otherwise the student will achieve no results or if he does, the result will not be essential. Besides, what else would offer the theater students from a pleasant, positive and helpful environment. Also, the student must be positive to the learning environment and to the teachers, to peers, since they will be participants and peer helpers and mentors of him/her. If the student feels aversion to the learning environment and particularly to the teacher then this language experience will have negative effects and difficulties in its implementation and its success. If the student is not positive towards their peers, then the teacher as facilitator and coordinator must make some changes or something with which all students will understand that all assistants among themselves and between them should prevail mutual aid and mutual respect with the common goal of achieving the learning of target language. Furthermore, the student should be also positive to the teaching and learning material, since this is the basic teaching material and training on the target language. If the learning material is not fair by students, then there are many possibilities that there are no positive effects on language learning as teaching material loses its true role and it is not supervisory but most inhibitory. Also, it is necessary for the students to gain self-esteem and feel that they achieve something very important, so the student will be open and receptive to all the language experience and this can help him to overcome some obstacles in the process.

#### 4) 4<sup>th</sup> Principle of Second/Foreign Language Acquisition

Another important principle of acquiring a second/foreign language is the “benefit” of a L2 student to use cognitive resources typically when acquiring or using a L1. In particular, students gain many benefits from the multi-dimensional representation of the language and the language they intend to produce. Learning and using the L1, students create mental images, use inner voice, react emotionally using correlations from their personal lives, provide, evaluate, etc. In learning and using a L2, students focus on linguistic encoding and decoding (Tomlinson & Avila, 2007b). The multidimensional representation of a language which has been contacted, can help the student to enrich the learning process in order to promote the dual acquisition, transfer of learning activities to use in everyday life, develop the ability of students to use the language effectively in a variety of situations and uses. There is a vast literature on the inner voice in L1 and L2, Sokolov (1972), Vygotsky (1986), Akhutina (2003) etc are just some of the many scientists who have dealt with the above mentioned issue. Finally, the literature has shown that inner voice and the mental images that students use in L1 can be used for the development of L2 and that requires adequate training of students in it and always in conjunction with the development of relationships of both languages, which can be achieved through their involvement with theatrical performances and theater games

#### 5) 5<sup>th</sup> Principle of Second/Foreign Language Acquisition

As further principle of acquiring a second/foreign language is considered the fact that students of a language can benefit from the observation of the main features of the language. Specifically, students can observe the language in use and develop linguistic sensitivity. Through the theater, the students not only observe and use the language but they can practice the intonation of words, pronunciation and style. This principle is considered to be very important and students come in contact with authentic language and its use, observe its components, observe the rules—even superficially—and then can take out the best study and analysis.

#### 6) 6<sup>th</sup> Principle of Second/Foreign language Acquisition

The sixth and last principle of acquiring a second/foreign language is the need for opportunities for students to use the language in order to try to achieve communicative results. Students need to be pushed in communicative situations leading to complete communicative results having as an ultimate aim a better and more substantial use of the target language. Through dramatization and performing theatrical plays and games, students benefit from communicating and using functionally the target language. Students would do well to participate in interactive activities and through them they will increase the development and effective use of language, and the feedback and comments that each student will earn is very likely to be of great help in the language of this experience.

## 2. The Proposed Project

### 2.1 *The Rationale and Objectives of the Project*

According to current literature, the effect of writing and performing theatrical plays in learning a

foreign language encompasses a number of advantages, which are not related only to the language development of students in the foreign language, but are beneficial to the development of social, cognitive and meta-cognitive skills of students.

However, the limited research in our country about the effect of the theater in learning a foreign language led to the conduct of this research. More specifically, the present study attempted to investigate the efficacy and potential advantages of implementing a program of teaching English as a foreign language through a program of writing and performing drama plays by students in primary education and more specifically in the fifth grade.

In addition, the researcher noted the following research questions:

- a) Does the implementation of a program of writing and performing theatrical/drama plays contribute to the development of the oral language skills of students in a foreign language?
- b) Does the implementation of a program of writing and performing theatrical/drama plays help the development of the writing skills of students in a foreign language?
- c) Will the implementation of a program of writing and performing theatrical/drama plays develop the cognitive and meta-cognitive skills of students?
- d) Will the implementation of a program of writing and performing theatrical/drama plays enhance the interaction of students?

## *2.2 Implementation Procedures*

The experimental intervention was applied to students of the fifth grade from various primary schools in Larissa, for the development of spoken and written language of students in a foreign language and the obtain of a plurality of individual goals through activities of creative writing and performing drama plays through the interdisciplinary approach and the use of new technologies. More specifically, students were aged 11 years and dealt with theatrical children literature books.

The pleasant learning environment, the effortless learning and fun and entertainment during the intervention were the main objectives of the training. Particular emphasis was given to the interests of students, in particular talents and inclinations and learning styles so as to achieve the best possible results. Finally, particular emphasis was placed on development of cooperation and to provide multiple learning opportunities through a variety of activities free expression, creativity and general activities.

As mentioned earlier the intervention conducted in elementary school students performed weekly in 5 credit hours with themes based on children's literary books and the theatrical play produced.

In the first class period, the teacher operated a program of instruction based on hourly motivation of students and reading the children's literature books for students. So, they consolidated the new vocabulary in the context of book's story and not- non-contextualized. The literature books that were used in this project was: Snowwhite, Gulliver's Travels, Around the world in 80 days, the three little pigs and the wolf, Cinderella, Heidi and Oliver twist.

In the second class period, the teacher tried to start discussions, descriptions of images and written or oral exercises and creative writing and expression activities. With the completion of this process,

students came into contact with songs and videos related to the books in order to achieve dual code teaching. With the completion of the second teaching period, students in groups undertook the writing of the plot of theatrical play, assigning roles, writing dialogues, the scenographic design and directed the story over five days.

During the third, fourth and fifth class period, students discussed with the teacher and they were given feedback regarding the grammar—syntax errors as well as the director issues. This is perhaps the most significant phase of the program since students receive the comments of the teacher and their peers and thus they realize correction and improvement of written and spoken language, which help the students greatly.

After the completion of the fifth teaching period, students presented, the theater to their classmates, parents, etc.

### 2.2.1 Special Objectives of the Intervention

In particular, there were language, cognitive and social—emotional goals, which are:

#### *Language—cognitive objectives*

Students were expected to develop and enhance their speaking and writing skills in English as a foreign language, using the language as a means of communication in authentic situations based on literature books.

#### *Emotional—social objectives*

Students were expected

- a) to use their imagination to achieve their goals.
- b) to learn through the literature books analysis of language and the drama plays
- c) to develop curiosity and their feelings toward the literature.
- d) to be familiar with the group and form collaborative teaching and learning
- e) to raise awareness about the arts and reading literary books

### 2.2.2 Participants

This experimental intervention implemented in a sample of 15 students. The participants were students of the fifth grade of primary schools of Larissa while it is worth noting that all the children have the Greek language as a mother tongue. The teaching intervention was implemented during the months of September 2013—April 2014. During these months, the students were taught English as a foreign language with a program based on writing and performing plays with the aim of taking Test of Interactive English exams of the Department of Education of Ireland.

### 2.2.3 The Learning Environment and the Teaching Material

The teaching and learning environment had been the municipal center of creativity “Pasalidi” and the Municipal Gym apartment of the community of Omorfochori in Larissa. When the center of creativity was the learning environment, the desks-style varied based on the needs of each thematic teaching, so there used team-working style, traditional design etc. Also, during the intervention there used electronic display, computer and a cd-player.

When the gym was taken as a learning environment, there used large computer speakers and flashcards. The floor of the gym as well as the special seats changed before students begin the learning process while the equipment of props constructed by the students with the teacher helped the conduct of the teaching process.

### **3. Evaluation of the Experimental Intervention**

#### *3.1 Evaluating Tools*

Regarding the evaluation of the effect of the intervention on the development of spoken and written language skills of students in the foreign language and the fulfillment of the targets set there used the following three methodological tools:

a) A pre-test before the implementation, and a final test (post-test) upon completion of the intervention. A pre-test was distributed to all students in the experimental and control group before the implementation of the intervention. The test focused on identifying the skill of speaking and writing in a foreign language. The post test was distributed to students after the completion of the experimental intervention (April 2014). It should be noted and emphasized that the two tools focused on the same skills, so that the results that were to be collected, give the most accurate possible information on the effectiveness of the intervention (Stocking, 1999). The initial and final assessment tested the proficiency of students based on the criteria of the Common European Framework of Reference of the Council of Europe. Regarding the evaluation of the written skill, students were asked to produce two reports on topics of general interest and they were evaluated on their text production, task achievement, accuracy, range and complexity and the grammatical—structural correctness. Regarding the evaluation of the spoken skill, students were asked to produce spoken triggered images in everyday matters such as pets, hobby, tourist destinations and evaluated on the interaction, communicative effectiveness, accuracy and range and complexity.

b) Keeping the journal of the teacher and researcher during the whole intervention.

Journal was chosen as a research data collection tool by the teacher—researcher because it is a very effective tool to assess experimental and educational interventions organized by teachers (Altrichter et al., 1993). The keeping of journal took place at the end of each instruction. Regarding the structure of the calendar, it was based on “questions to guide the reflection journal entries” of Richards & Lockhart (1994: 16 -17). As journal questions used by the teacher - researcher there were based in three areas a) questions related to the teaching, b) questions related to students and c) a general evaluation of the teaching. The journal applied in this intervention included 6 questions as

#### A. Questions about teaching

1) What goals did I have? Did I fulfill them? 2) What teaching aids are used? How effective were they? and 3) What were the forms of communication among students and between students and me?

#### B. Question about students

1) What was the attitude of the children at the beginning, during and at the end of the activity (positive,



negative, indifferent, asking for clarification or assistance)? How did I respond to them?

### C. Questions evaluative

1) What went well, what did not? What is a possible explanation? and 2) What could I change? Why?

## **4. Results of Intervention**

### *4.1 Profile of the Participants*

This experimental intervention involved a sample of 15 students of the fifth grade of primary schools of Larissa. The students of the experimental and control group had the Greek language as another tongue and of course they have learnt English being students of the fifth grade and attending English lessons at school. They are all originally from Greece.

### *4.2 Evaluation of the Intervention*

For data processing the pre-test and the post-test, there used the statistical package SPSS for Windows.

#### *4.2.1 Profile of the Sample*

This experimental intervention involved a sample of 15 students of the fifth grade of primary schools of Larissa. The Table 1 presents the distribution of students by gender. Essentially, the experimental group consisted of 8 girls and 7 boys, while the control group consisted of other 15 pupils of the fifth grade.

**Table 1. Distribution of Students by Gender—Experimental Group**

Gender	N	Percentage
Male	8	54%
Female	7	46%
Total	15	100%

**Table 2. Distribution of Students by Gender—Control Group**

Gender	N	Percentage
Male	8	54%
Female	7	46%
Total	15	100%

#### *4.2.2 Text—Production*

Regarding the evaluation of the written skill, the first criterion was the production (text-production) when participating in activities. The following tables 3 & 4 present the results of evaluating the “Production” in the pre- and post- test for both the experimental and the control group. Specifically, although the students were placed in a level between the “vantage” and “threshold” (Score: 7.5) the results of the post test placed them in a level between the “operational proficiency” level and the “vantage level” (Score: 8.6), that is to say the students seemed to have developed this specific skill in a

successful way. Nevertheless, the students of the control group seemed to have developed less this language skill according to the results of the pre test (Score: 7.6) and the post test (Score: 7.8), compared with the results of the students of the experimental group. (10= mastery level, 9=effective operational proficiency, 8=vantage, 7=threshold, 6=Waystage).

**Table 3. Mean and Std. Deviation—Experimental Group**

<b>Experimental Group</b>			
<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
7.5	0.5	8.6	0.4

**Table 4. Mean and Std. Deviation—Control Group**

<b>Control Group</b>			
<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
7.6	0.5	7.8	0.3

#### 4.2.3 Task Achievement

Task achievement is the second criterion that was applied in the assessment of writing skill of students. The tables 5 and 6 below present the results and the standard deviations for the Control Group and the Experimental one. The students of the experimental group developed their “task achievement” comparing their pre-test results (Score: 7.4) with the post test results (Score: 8.5). Talking about the performance of the students of the control group, it could not be but stated that there was a less development in this field talking advantage of their pre-test results (Score: 7.3) and the post- test ones (Score: 7.8). (10= mastery level, 9=effective operational proficiency, 8=vantage, 7=threshold, 6=Waystage)

**Table 5. Mean and Std. Deviation—Experimental Group**

<b>Experimental Group</b>			
<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
7.4	0.5	8.5	0.5

**Table 6. Mean and Std. Deviation—Control Group**

<b>Experimental Group</b>			
<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
7.3	0.4	7.8	0.3

#### 4.2.4 Accuracy

The accuracy also belongs to the category of the criteria for assessing the adequacy of the writing of the students. The following tables 7 and 8 present the mean and standard deviation for the Experimental Group as well as for the Control Group. The students of the experimental group seemed to be more accurate in their writing in the end of this education program (Score: 7.8) than in the beginning (Score: 6.5). Although the students of the control group had achieved the same average performance score in the beginning of this program (Score: 6.5), they did not achieve a higher development, according to the results of the post test (7.0). (10= mastery level, 9=effective operational proficiency, 8=vantage, 7=threshold, 6=Waystage)

**Table 7. Mean and Std. Deviation—Experimental Group**

<b>Experimental Group</b>			
<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
6.5	0.6	7.8	0.5

**Table 8. Mean and Std. Deviation—Control Group**

<b>Control Group</b>			
<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
6.5	0.6	7.0	0.5

#### 4.2.5 Range and Complexity

The criterion Range and Complexity is one of the most crucial parts in the evaluation of the written skill. The following tables 9 & 10 present the mean and standard deviation based on the results of the students in the experimental and the control group. To be explicit, the students of the experimental group managed to achieve better results upon the completion of the program (Score: 7.4) compared with the ones of the pre-test (Score: 6.3). Concerning the results of the post test of the control group students, they show that the development was not so high considering the results of pre-test (Score: 6.4). (10= mastery level, 9=effective operational proficiency, 8=vantage, 7=threshold, 6=Waystage)

**Table 9. Mean and Std. Deviation—Experimental Group**

<b>Experimental Group</b>			
<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
6.3	0.5	7.4	0.5

**Table 10. Mean and Std. Deviation—Control Group**

<b>Control Group</b>			
<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
6.4	0.5	6.9	0.7

#### 4.2.6 Grammatical—Structural Correctness

Besides the criteria of the macro-level, at the micro-level the researcher clearly assessed the progress been realized in grammatical and structural correctness and in Tables 11 and 12, it is presented the mean and standard deviation of the results of students in the experimental and control group. In relation to the grammatical-structural correctness criterio, the students of the experimental group seemed to be have developed it, as shown from the post-test (Score: 8.4) higher than the performances of the students of the control group (Score: 7.6). (10= mastery level, 9=effective operational proficiency, 8=vantage, 7=threshold, 6=Waystage)

**Table 11. Mean and Std. Deviation—Experimental Group**

<b>Experimental Group</b>			
<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
7.1	0.4	8.4	0.5

**Table 12. Mean and Std. Deviation—Control Group**

<b>Control Group</b>			
<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
7.2	0.4	7.6	0.4

### *Speaking skill*

#### 4.2.7 Interaction

In assessing the skill of speaking, interaction was used as the first criterion since it is an essential piece of communication in a language (mother, second/foreign). The following tables 13 & 14 present the mean and standard deviation of the students in the experimental as well as the control group. The students of the experimental group became more interactive through their participation in this educational program and although they were placed in the “vantage level” (Score: 8.1) in the beginning of the program, they benefited from it and they achieved to develop their interaction with the other members (Score: 8.9) while it is worth noting that students of the control group achieved lower results (Score: 7.9) than theirs in the beginning (Score: 8.0). (10= mastery level, 9=effective operational proficiency, 8=vantage, 7=threshold, 6=Waystage)

**Table 13. Mean and Std. Deviation—Experimental Group**

<b>Experimental Group</b>			
<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
8.1	0.3	8.9	0.2

**Table 14. Mean and Std. Deviation—Control Group**

<b>Control Group</b>			
<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
8	0.3	7.9	0.2

#### 4.2.8 Communicative Effectiveness

Concerning the criterion of communicative effectiveness, the researcher assessed students' ability to communicate. The following tables 15 & 16 present the mean and standard deviation of the students in the experimental group as well as the control group. Both of the groups (experimental and control) were placed in the same level with the same results (Score: 7.8 and 7.7 respectively) but upon the completion of the project students of the experimental group showed higher results of communicative effectiveness (Score: 8.6) than the results of the control group (Score: 8.2). (10= mastery level, 9=effective operational proficiency, 8=vantage, 7=threshold, 6=Waystage)

**Table 15. Mean and Std. Deviation—Experimental Group**

<b>Experimental Group</b>			
<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
7.8	0.6	8.6	0.5

**Table 16. Mean and Std. Deviation—Control Group**

<b>Control Group</b>			
<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
7.7	0.50	8.2	0.45

#### 4.2.9 Accuracy

Regarding the criterion of accuracy in the spoken language, the researcher assessed students' ability to properly use words and grammatical structures to convey a spoken message. The following tables 17 & 18 present the mean and standard deviation of the students in the experimental group as well as the control group. The experimental group's members achieved higher levels of accuracy (Score: 8.4) while speaking the target language from a starting level of "threshold" (Score: 7.3) compared with the development of accuracy of the control group's students (Score: 8.2) from a starting level (Score: 7.4).

(10= mastery level, 9=effective operational proficiency, 8=vantage, 7=threshold, 6=Waystage)

**Table 17. Mean and Std. Deviation—Experimental Group**

<b>Experimental Group</b>			
<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
7.3	0.5	8.4	0.5

**Table 18. Mean and Std. Deviation—Control Group**

<b>Control Group</b>			
<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
7.4	0.5	8.2	0.45

#### 4.2.10 Range and Complexity

By this criterion, the researcher evaluated the variety of words and grammatical structures used by the student but also the ability to choose correctly within a wide range of options. The following tables 19 & 20 present the mean and standard deviation of the students in the experimental group as well as the control group. Both of the groups achieved the same results at the pre-test (Score: 7.2), however, the students of the experimental group developed their range and complexity ability in the spoken language higher (Score: 8.3) than the students of the control group (Score: 7.8). (10= mastery level, 9=effective operational proficiency, 8=vantage, 7=threshold, 6=Waystage)

**Table 19. Mean and Std. Deviation—Experimental Group**

<b>Experimental Group</b>			
<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
7.2	0.7	8.3	0.61

**Table 20. Mean and Std. Deviation—Control Group**

<b>Control Group</b>			
<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
7.2	0.88	7.8	0.56

## 5. Discussion

This experimental intervention had as its main purpose to evaluate the efficacy and the potential advantages that can be brought by a drama play program based on children's literature books for the development and further enhancement of the speaking and writing skills of students in English as a foreign language.

The experimental intervention was applied to students of the fifth grade of Greek primary schools, to develop the spoken and written language of students in English as a foreign language and achieve a number of specific objectives, through activities of reading literature books, dramatization, interdisciplinary approach and the use of the new technologies. This experimental intervention implemented on a sample of 15 students (15 students in the experimental group and 15 students in the Control Group). Students were attending the fifth grade of various elementary schools in Larissa, Greece while the duration of the teaching intervention was seven months of a school year (September – April). During these months, the students were taught English as a foreign language within a drama play program based on children literary books by writing and performing theatrical plays.

To evaluate the effects of the experimental intervention the researcher used two main tools as a means of data collection. More specifically, the tools were a) a pre- and a post- test & b) the Journal of teacher. The collection and analysis of results has shown that this experimental intervention was successful. The students were characterized with a great joy and an extremely important interest about how they learned English. The success of the intervention was the result of several factors. The students worked together, danced, wrote and performed theatrical plays. So, they achieved an active learning and of course a meaningful learning. The learning environment was either the center of creativity “Pasalidi” or the municipal gym, and it was characterized by warmth, organization, much of incentives and mainly use of the target language.

The multisensory learning through a variety of teaching aids and teaching techniques were a fact. Providing a variety of stimuli and incentives helped the students to develop the target language and have substantial encouragement and help to involve students in drama play activities. The dramatization of stories and role plays were instrumental in the development of spoken and written language of students in English as a foreign language. In such a context, learning is perceived as a cognitive, psycho-dynamic, cultural and social process (Illeris, 2001). Indeed, according to McGregor’s findings, the dramatization helps students express their opinions more efficiently in everyday situations.

It is worth mentioning that students were able to develop their language skills as shown by the results and comparing the pre - and post-test facts. There are many scientific findings that enhance the fact that drama has a positive effect on the language development of students. Bason (2005) found out that drama enhances the verbal and non verbal expression of ideas while it improves voice projection, articulation of word, fluency with language and persuasive speech. Ustundag’s researches (1997) have shown that drama extends both the range and quality of the child’s language usage. It provides an opportunity for trying out different models of discourse and can create an impetus for a wide variety of oral and written forms. Dervisaj (2006), supported that students learn and appreciate language in meaningful, communicative contexts while Heathcote also put emphasis on the way that dramatization *encourages enactment of many different social roles and engages many levels, styles, and uses of language.*

With regard to the written skill, students were able to develop a great level to produce text as well as their ability to respond and meet the challenge without being out of the topic. Indeed, Haruyama's (2009) researches have proved that the writing activities in drama projects can help students develop their writing skills and of course their reading one. Even in the evaluation of accuracy and range and complexity, students in the experimental group showed greater and better results compared with the results of the control group and the comparison of pre-test and post-test. Finally, in the grammatical and structural correctness, it could be mentioned that the researcher noticed a significant increase in the performance of students in the experimental group compared with the control group students' performance. It is also worth mentioning that other researches have shown that through a theatrical performance, students explore the linguistic and conceptual elements of the written text, without focusing on the mechanisms of language. (Gasparro Marie-Falleta, 1994)

Regarding the speaking skill, students in the experimental group showed brilliant results through their participation in drama plays activities after the writing of the scenario. Besides, the research of Koutsavou (2002) has shown that students in their improvisations, preceding dramatization, make free dialogue. Also compare and contrast cultural attitudes, analyze and investigate the linguistic and conceptual differences between written and spoken word, and interact to orchestrate the dramatizations and improvisations. In particular, the participants of this project seemed to develop a significant degree of interaction and their communicative skills which is very successful for the development of the speaking skill of students. About the accuracy and range and complexity, it could be indicated that students developed their skills in speaking and of course there was a considerable mutual oral and written language development and as it is reasonable, the significance in range and complexity of the written skill implies the same attention or the adoption of the same principles in the spoken skill. Thus, the students of the experimental group showed a remarkable increase in the development and enhancement of the foreign language. Indeed, Oyabu (1999) came to the conclusion that drama creates the suitable environment for students in order to use the target language and speak rather than remaining silent.

According to the analysis of the journals, it can be argued that there was a substantial effort to develop the spoken and written language of students in the foreign language. More specifically, the young students were doing it excellent in every teaching, after which every objective was achieved. The students showed a great preference for the literature books, the analysis of each plot and of course the drama plays. Always, at the end of each activity the students asked for repetition until they came into contact with the next activity. Behavioral problems did not exist at all, while cooperation among students and between the teacher - researchers and students was excellent and it was very important for students to feel the safety and begin to develop and use the foreign language. It is true that in every meeting, students became better and better.

All the activities that were designed and implemented in the program were designed to help students produce spoken and written language in a foreign language so the teacher strengthened the activities



that enhanced their language development by using literature books that students liked and books that could help the further language enhancement and could be much of language input. In a pedagogical context, stories, games and drama activities provide opportunities for children to use different combinations of their Multiple Intelligences (linguistic, visual, spatial, musical, logical-deductive, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist) as “entry points” to learning (Gardner, 1999). Finally, by keeping journals the researcher observed that students developed their cooperativeness, their inclusiveness as well as their motives. Also, Courtney has found out that through the drama students understand the essence of human experience within focused meaning and collaboration in which ideas are mutually explored. Each activity was for them a new incentive to produce speech and use the foreign language. Moreover, the findings of San’s research (1991) have shown that drama and play can help student extend themselves creatively and constructively something that is obvious in the journal’s keeping.

Also, the activities of the teacher- researcher as seen from the journal favored particularly the connection of knowledge with reality. Thus, he can achieve the functional use of the language through activities which characterize the real communicative situations of everyday life. Of course, not to miss the fact that the theme of the intervention, with the aim to develop the foreign language was taken from classic children’s literature books which are known to the students and many times the protagonists were role models for the students. Children delight in imagination and fantasy. According to Halliwell (1992, p. 7), “it is more than simply a matter of enjoyment, however, in the language classroom this capacity for fantasy and imagination has a very constructive part to play”.

As mentioned above, this experimental intervention was a complete success and all the objectives were achieved. However, it is worth to pinpoint that the teacher/researcher and his job to evaluate not only the language level of the students but also the inclinations, the interested and the general hobbies of the students and to use this information for the proper implementation of this project achieved its goal, to make this intervention successful.

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