

# EFFECT OF DRAMA ACTIVITIES ON PERFORMANCE OF LEARNERS IN ENGLISH IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN GASAKA SECTOR, RWANDA: THE CASE OF E.P SUMBA

<sup>1</sup>NIRYAYO ANTONY, <sup>2</sup>NIRINGIYIMANA THEOPHILE, <sup>3</sup>MAZIMPAKA ESRON, <sup>4</sup>NUMVIYUMUKIZA ETIENNE, <sup>5</sup>MBONIMANA Gamariel

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18923343>

Published Date: 09-March-2026

---

**Abstract:** The present study aimed to examine effect of using drama activities on performance of learners in English in primary schools of Gasaka Sector. Drama technique encourages the participations of pupils in the learning of English language. In other words, language practice is the driving force in language learning. By participating through drama activities learners acquire communicative skills, fluency, self-confidence, creative skills, and reading skills and so on. In order to achieve the objectives assigned to this study, four kinds of research methodology have been used in order to know the extent to which drama activities are used and their importance in English classroom in Rwandan primary schools. These methods are the questionnaire, interviews, documentation, and observations of live teaching sessions. The study reveals the positive effect of teaching English through drama on pupil's physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development. It sheds light on the method of putting pupils in authentic situations to help them discover their hidden creativity and overcome their fears. It is to promote their sense of critical thinking; problem solving, reasoning, analysis, interpretation, synthesizing information, research skills and practices; interrogative questioning, creativity; artistry, curiosity, imagination, innovation, personal expression and perseverance; self-direction, planning, self-discipline, adaptability and initiative, drama approach should be adapted to improve the academic performance. This study revealed the importance of engaging pupils in the process of teaching and learning of English through dramatized lessons and related strategies in order to enhance English language mastery in primary schools; ended with recommendations to enable pupils and teachers benefit greatly from drama activities. E.P SUMBA is recommended to provide all facilities needed to help teachers and pupils to use drama activities in the process of teaching and learning English language. Teachers of language are recommended to integrate drama in their teaching and learning activities for pupils to become fluency in English language.

**Keywords:** Drama Activities, English Language Learning, Primary School Pupils, Communicative Skills Development, Academic Performance.

---

## 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### Background to the study

Rwanda is composed of two main language groups: The French-speaking majority and the English-speaking minority. On 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019, the Ministry of Education leaders held a consultative meeting with the Legal representatives and Head teachers of private primary schools. One of its resolutions was the following: all schools (Private, Public and Government Aided) are required to put in place strategies to strengthen the teaching and learning of all languages, specifically English as a medium of instruction from early grades to achieve appropriate language proficiency. (MINEDUC, meeting 2019)

In 2008, English became the official language of instruction in primary with implementation of this policy change starting in 2009. This was modified in 2011 when Kinyarwanda started to be used for the first three grades, with English remaining from P4 onwards. The policy was then revised in 2019 so that all children should be taught in English from P1, which is not happening. In practice, successfully implementing such rapid shifts in language policy has been nearly impossible. (MINEDUC, Pursuing an Inclusive and transformative Reform Agenda for Improved Inclusive quality teaching and learning in Rwanda march 2023)

Apart from its status as one of the official languages and a language of instruction in Rwanda, English has recently become a language of high interest in Rwanda. In this respect, it is taught in all schools from lower primary education up to university levels. (Abubakar, English as a Medium of instruction and academic performance of pupils in primary schools March, 2018)

In addition, English as a second and foreign language in Rwanda has to be taught early at that crucial period so that its mastery is achieved at all levels: fluency in speaking, listening, writing and reading. Emphasis should be put on the way Elementary schools to enhance the quality of education. (Abubakar, English as a Medium of instruction and academic performance of pupils in primary schools March, 2018)

For the improvement of English language skills, dramatized lessons are used from earlier periods of one's life up an adult period when the youth is capable. Drama activities are powerful instruments in teaching. They can be of great relevance since they engage the students in the teaching-learning process by giving them enough opportunities to practice English. (Yildirim 2022)

### Statement of the problem

National learning assessment results have revealed critical learning gaps, and such gaps justify the renewed focus on *Improved foundational literacy and numeracy*. The Learning Assessment in Rwanda (NESA, 2022, LARS conducted in 2021) indicated reading fluency and comprehension for P3 students was 10% in English. Children with low numeracy and literacy at primary level, serve as a predictor for poor performance at higher levels and subsequent poor human capital development. (MINEDUC, Pursuing an Inclusive and transformative Reform Agenda for Improved Inclusive quality teaching and learning in Rwanda march 2023)

Therefore, this research project seeks to solve this problem by analyzing the importance of the use of dramatizing techniques such as role-plays in teaching and learning English.

The purpose of the study is therefore to evaluate the academic performance in terms of the frequency of the use of drama activities in public primary schools, and thereby show the overall importance of the use of drama activities in classes.

If it can be claimed that the academic performance is still low, this may be due to lack of English language practice as almost pupils come from monolingual community and thereby speaking Kinyarwanda all the time. Thus, the classroom should be a place where, guided by the teacher, pupils can get an opportunity to speak English and do a lot of English practice through the drama activities.

### Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the Effect of drama activities on performance of learners in English selected primary schools in Gasaka sector, Rwanda.

The specific objectives are the following:

- i. To determine the mean scores of pupils taught English using dramatization method.
- ii. To analyze the Effect of English proficiency on academic performance in primary schools taught using dramatization method.
- iii. To assess the influence of drama activities in English proficiency and academic performance in primary schools.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Empirical review

A global research study across nine countries, showed that today's parents are increasingly aware of the power play has to shape their child's personality, skills and emotional intelligence in the early years. More than 9 in 10 parents believe play is essential to their child's wellbeing, happiness and development. They recognize play helps build the skills that lead to academic success, but also how play helps foster creative, sociable, emotionally-resilient adults. (Rwanda 2021)

Parents increasingly feel that life skills and playful teaching should be part of child's schooling from the earliest possible opportunity.

95% of parents think play should be used as a tool for child development and learning in schools. And 91% of parents think play has a role in helping their child to succeed in school. The 91% of parents think children who play more will achieve greater success in higher education and work later in life. (Rwanda 2021)

### **Drama**

The word drama is derived from a Greek word '*dran*' that means "to do." This is understandable because in a play, on stage, we are always presented with dialogue and actions. A play is a story that is written for actors to perform on stage. A play usually has a dialogue that is spoken by the characters.

Therefore, drama is a performance in which actors represent characters and act out a story. (Reb, Student's Book of Literature in English 2017)

From the definitions above it can be seen that drama can be used as a technique that helps students to practice language. Frankly speaking, drama has many advantages as an instructional medium in the English classroom. For this reason, different authors and people talked and wrote a lot about the use and advantages of using drama activities in the English language classroom.

### **Importance of play in 21<sup>st</sup> century learning**

Children's drive and motivation to learn, their ability to come up with ideas and imagine alternatives, as well as to connect with others and their surroundings in positive ways, is essential in a 21<sup>st</sup> century world. Through active engagement with ideas and knowledge and also with the world at large, children are better prepared to deal with both today and the future. (Rwanda 2021)

### **Importance of better knowledge of English language as a medium of instruction**

In Rwanda, English is of high interest as it is an official language and a medium of instruction. To make full use of this language, a good mastery of all language skills namely reading, writing, listening and speaking, should be acquired. However, a large number of techniques and methods have been developed through which the teaching-learning of language can be carried out for the improvement of language skills. To this end, drama activities can eventually be productive and a learner-centered approach is recommended to be used here.

Before Rwanda adopts English as both an official language and a language of instruction in Rwandan schools; Rwandans could not effectively communicate and transact or seize the many business and other opportunities present in East Africa, the Commonwealth and rest of the English-speaking world. It is with the introduction of English in Rwanda that these problems can be solved.

A language is the vehicle through which knowledge is transmitted. It therefore bounds up with the process of education at all levels. In schools, the English language is an essential tool in accessing content and skills in other subjects whose materials are written in English. Language for learning is found in most L2 situations: Here, the learner already has a L1 which is for within a curriculum (English/French Teaching methods, EDC 203(2014). "The mastery of everything usually starts from early age," the teacher of languages should bear in mind that second language acquisition should start at an early age for better learning and that early grade pupils need to be exposed to contextual activities that stimulate their language learning. (Reb, English Teaching Methods and Practice (TMP) Tutor's Guide 2020)

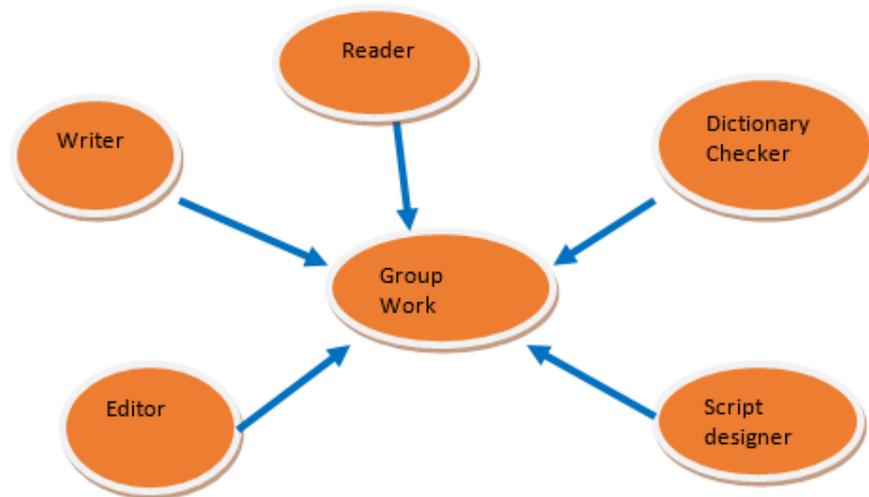
### **Use of drama in teaching and learning**

This study aims at analyzing impact of drama activities on the performance of elementary learners in English subject. EFL classroom involves giving English course to non-native speakers of English. The teacher uses different methods depending on learners' level of English proficiency. There is an old native American Proverb which says: "Tell me, and I'll forget. Show me, and I may not remember. Involve me and I'll understand".

My credence is that knowledge and skills are power students should love to study. While I feel that all sorts of the arts can be effective learning tools, drama is very and extreme powerful. Using drama in the classroom as a means of teaching helps pupils to learn academically, socially and developmentally.

Apart from improving the four main language skills, drama presents motivational advantages in the English classroom. As noted earlier children like to learn by doing. Using drama can help the teacher to know children's thoughts and feelings and

also to get feedback of from learnt subject. For example, the teacher can realize whether or not (learners) use articles, adjectives, and grammatical structures effectively as he/she taught them.



**Figure 2.1 Drama-Based Approaches in English Language Teacher**

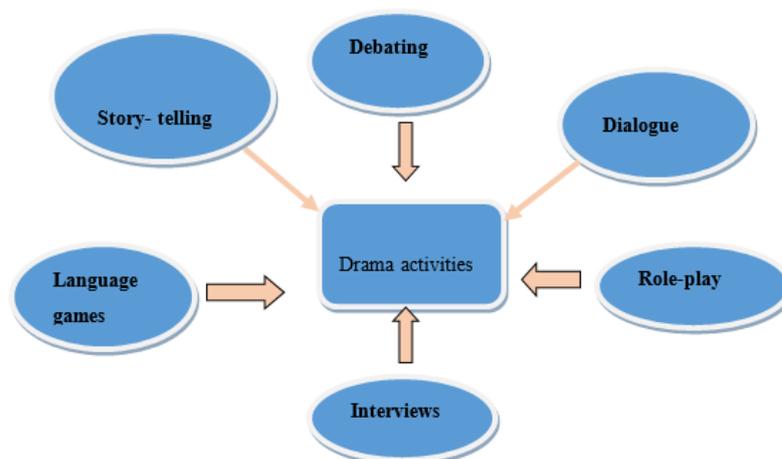
#### Some Drama activities in the English classroom.

Drama activities that can be introduced in any language classroom are those activities that can really engage and motivate learners for the subject matter.

Therefore, drama forms/activities that can be introduced in an English classroom include following: drama, role-plays, reading aloud, choral reading, debates, language games, dialogues, storytelling, retelling a story, sketches and comedies and so on.

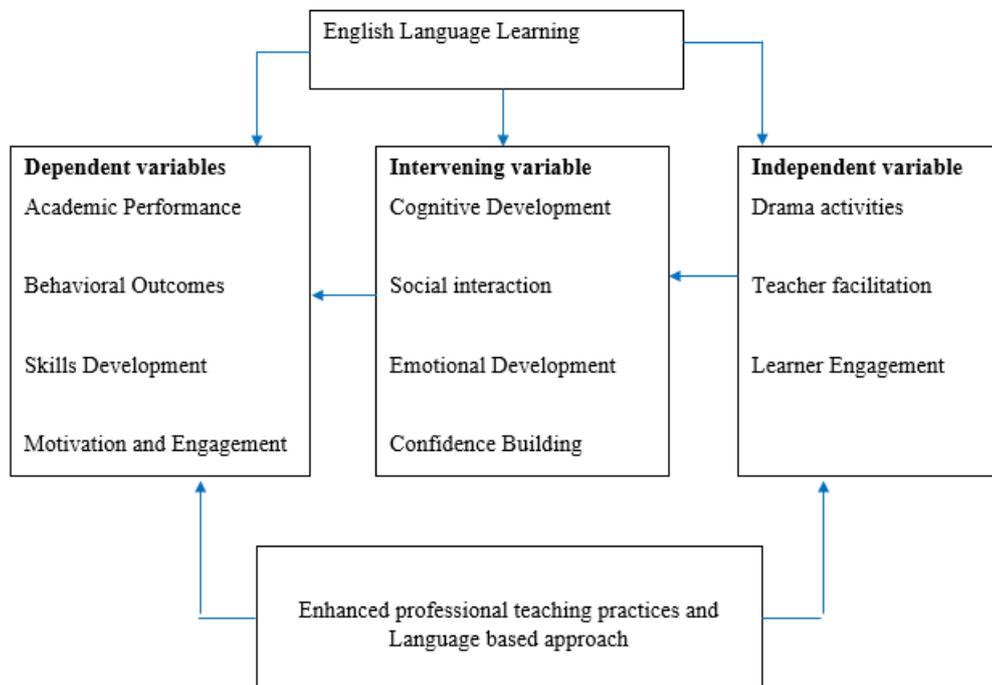
A point to remember is that CLT is an approach that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. It helps to teach how and what people communicate through language. For pupils who are studying English in a non-English- community setting, it is very important to experience real communicative situations in which they learn to express their own views and attitudes. Pupils should be given activities that improve performance and generate interests for students. Learning is more effective if pupils are actively involved in the process, and it is far more important that these activities train pupils to use their knowledge of the foreign language flexibility.

The activities engaging students in the teaching-learning process as we may come to realize are many. So we deal with some of them. All these drama forms stated above can be productive in the sense that they provide students with language practice. (Zarog 2021)



**Figure 2.2 Drama activities for English classroom**

### Conceptual framework



**Figure 2.3: Conceptual framework.**

The conceptual framework provides a comprehensive approach to understanding the impact of drama activities on the learners' performance.

Drama activities support learners' English performance by improving language skills, boosting confidence, encouraging creativity, and fostering teamwork and cultural awareness. The integration of drama into language learning creates an engaging and interactive environment that can significantly enhance student outcomes. (Aryn 2021) Drama activities can positively influence English performance, but their effectiveness can be shaped by various intervening variables such as motivation, confidence, social interaction, and teaching methods. These variables act as mediators that can either enhance or hinder the relationship between drama and language learning outcomes. (Altweissi 2022) Drama activities affect learners' performance in areas like speaking fluency, comprehension, vocabulary usage, and confidence in using English. (Asli Akyuz 2020)

This approach helps educators understand how drama can be used strategically to foster a more engaging and effective learning environment, ultimately leading to enhanced learner performance in multiple domains.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Research Design

This study investigates quantitatively and qualitatively the attitudes of pupils toward the use of effective approaches in classroom environment and their acquired experience. (Kothari 2008) states that a research design is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted; it is constituted of the plan for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. The design includes all necessary activities to conduct research. The quantitative method and qualitative method were adopted in this research. The researcher used an approach of mixing methods. (Dubey 2022)

Tashskori defined mixed methods as adopting a single study and using both quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect and analyze data, draw inferences and interpret findings. This study adopted this approach because it involves both qualitative data analysis and quantitative data analysis. (Adhikari 2024)

According to Onwuegbusie the strengths of using both quantitative and qualitative methods are that both methods complement each other. The methods combine strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative methods, and findings become complex. It involves putting together multiple strategies, methods, and approaches in innovative ways.

Therefore, the strengths of mixing both quantitative and qualitative methods is greater than using quantitative alone or qualitative alone. (Leech 2023)

### Population and location of the study

The population in this study is made up of a single elementary school located in Gasaka sector, Nyamagabe District, Southern province.

**Table 1: Target Population**

The distribution of the sample of students and English teachers according to the school

School	Low primary	Upper primary	English teachers	Total
EP Sumba	415	376	7	798

**Source: Nyamagabe district 2023**

In visiting this school, the objective is to find out whether drama or drama activities are being used in primary school for improvement of English proficiency in order to improve academic performance.

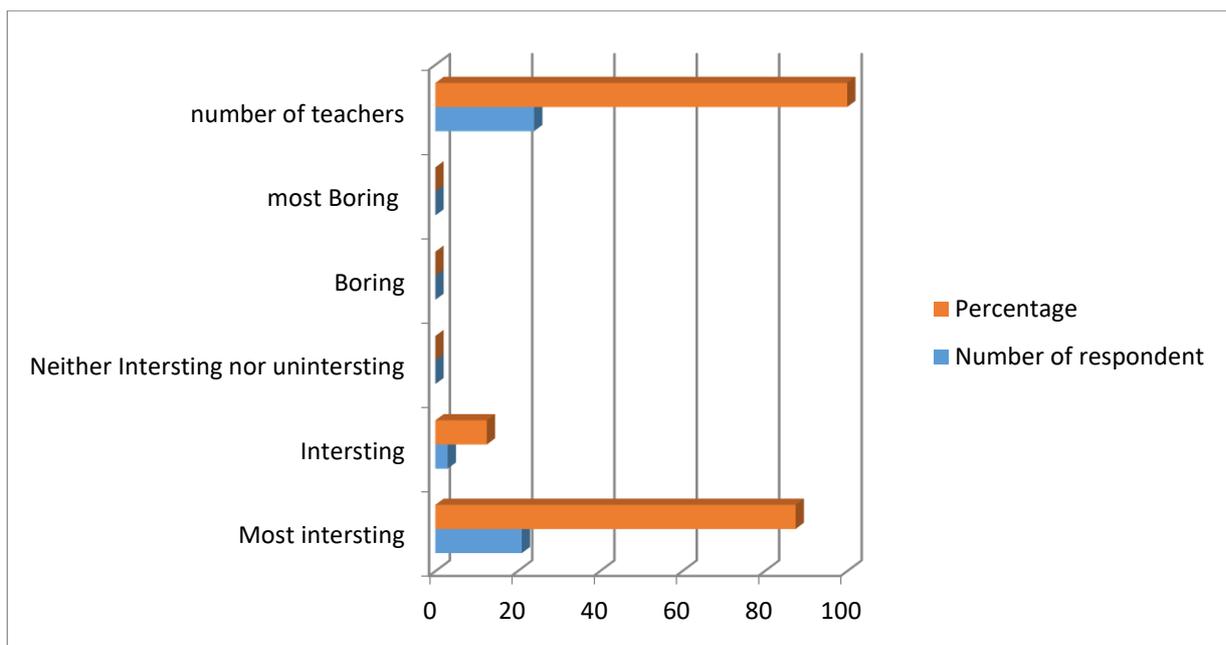
In fact, this primary school has been taken at random to serve as the basis from which the sample would be selected. The information gathered from this school can be generalized to the all primary schools in Gasaka Sector. This Sector has 10 primary schools in total which comprise 3 private primary schools and 7 public primary schools.

## 4. PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

In this chapter a number of questions and investigations have been done with view of obtaining the contribution of drama activities in teaching-learning process.

### The use of drama activities in classroom

The main assumption was that a highly trained, qualified and experienced teacher was aware of the techniques for teaching drama and could conduct drama activities that fully engage learners in the teaching-learning process. These activities allow easy participation, communication and life movement in the classroom. The teacher is thus aware of importance of drama activities and can therefore pay attention to them.



**Figure 4.1: Motivate to use drama activities in English classroom**

This study attempts to analyze the impact of using drama activities in English language Classroom. Before doing analysis; it is necessary to find out how teachers are interested to use drama activities. It has been shown in the figure above that teachers are interesting to use drama activities. It is well illustrated that 87.5% of English teachers are most interesting in using drama activities.

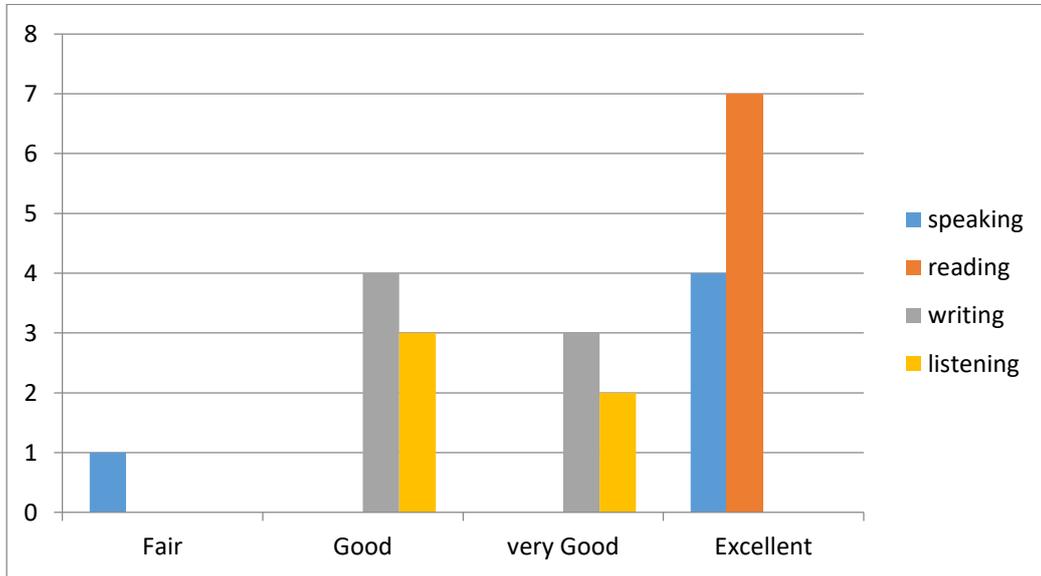


Figure 4.2 Pupils' performance in English language skills

The above figure has been shown that students are excellent in reading but have difficulties in speaking and listening. The data also shows how this interaction through drama activities increased the pupils' confidence to express themselves in English language and how this helped them to increase the listening skills.

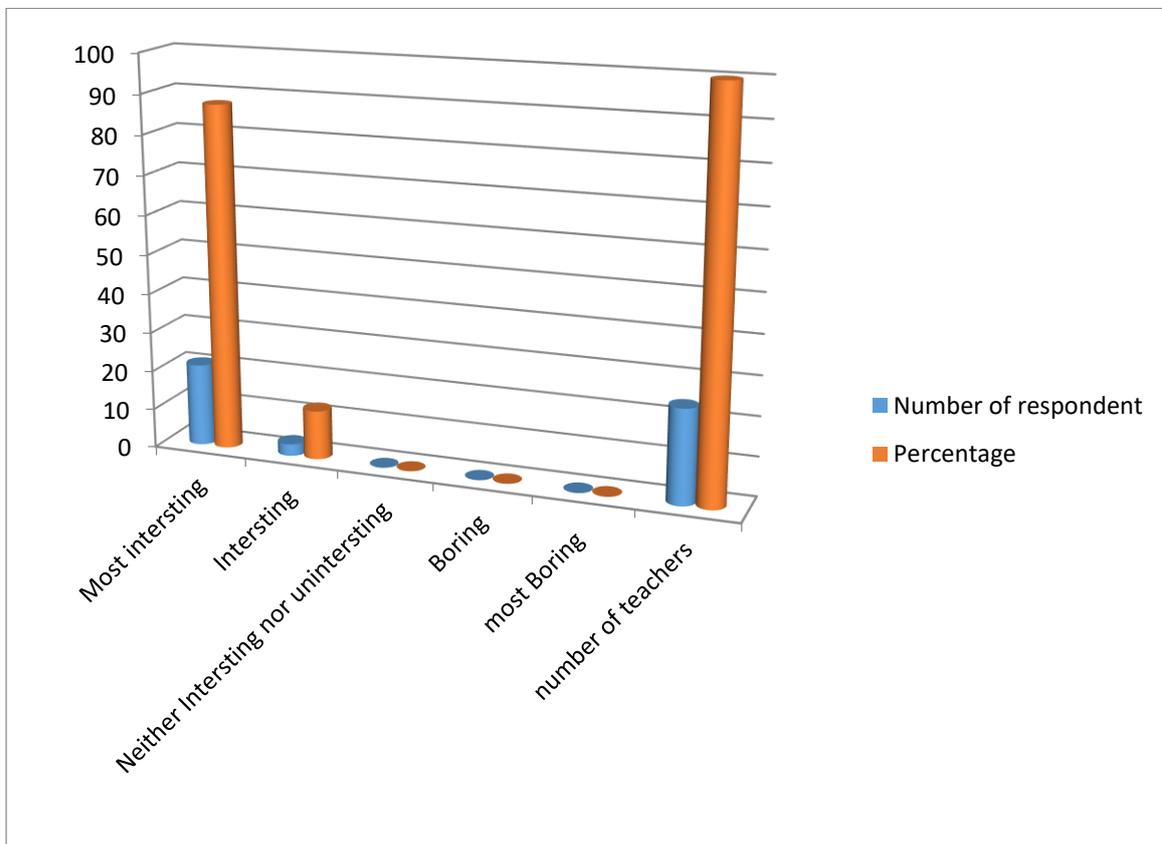
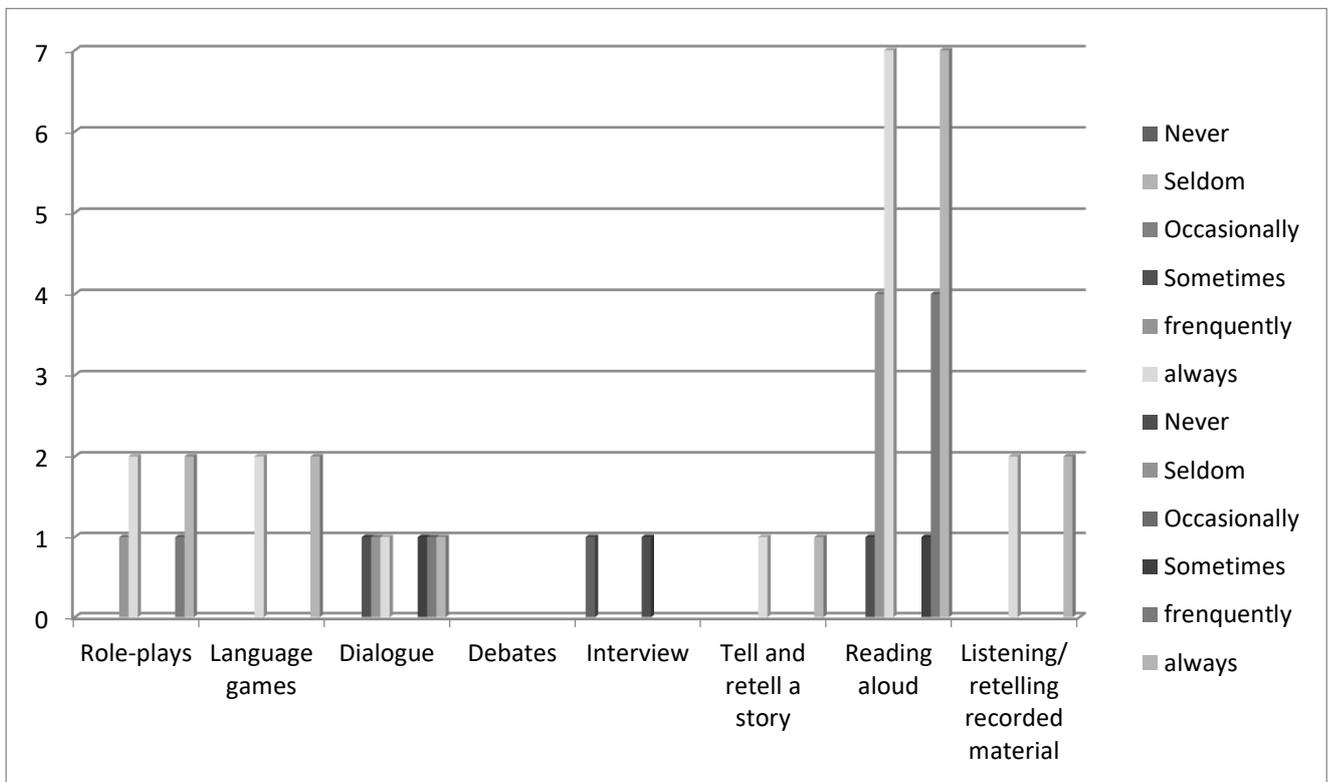


Figure 4.3 Usefulness of drama activities

The researcher intended to find out whether drama activities offer motivation toward learning foreign language because pupils interact through drama activities in English. There was also an intention to find out whether pupils learn from each other's comments and the teacher's comments. The results show that more than 88% of respondents stated that Drama activities offer a great motivation toward learning foreign language; basing on the respondents comments released on drama activities are of utmost important as they help pupils to learn a foreign language.



**Figure 4.4 Drama activities' frequency in teaching**

This research aims at analyzing the impact of drama activities in English language classroom. Teachers were asked which drama activities they use frequently in their English lesson. Results were presented in the above figure. The figure above shows that the majority of respondents have been used reading aloud. It is well illustrated that 70% use reading aloud in the intention of teaching English.

Since the majority teachers use reading aloud in teaching English, the data shows how this technique increase the pupils' confidence to express themselves in English language and how this helps them to develop the habit of reading.

#### The importance of using drama activities

Researcher analyzed the impact of drama activities in English language classroom. Results were presented in the table below.

**Table 4.1: the importance of using drama activities**

The importance of using drama activities	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
They develop students' creativity.	58.3%	34.7%	4%	3%
They can improve students' fluency.	31.25%	48.7%	14.05%	6%
They engage and motivate students.	37%	54.1%	5.3%	3.6%
I find it an easy activity to perform	35.8%	38.95%	19%	6.25%

While investigating the importance of using drama activities provide opportunity to improve students' creativity and fluency; more than 89.5% of respondents confirmed that.

The study finds that drama activities decreases hesitation and silence in classroom because there some students who hate expressing themselves in public. It is clear that the majority teachers find it is a useful tool to make the class more participative and dynamic.

#### What are factors that hinder the use of drama activities?

**Table 4.2: what are factors that hinder the use of drama activities?**

Factors	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Time consuming	49.1%	40%	5.9%	5%
Lack of materials	40%	29.1%	28%	2.9%
Large number of pupils	46%	40.2%	2.2%	11.6%
It is hard to control the discipline	39.5%	42.3%	11.2%	7%
The small classroom	21.4%	37.7%	28%	12.9%

The study investigates the factors that hinder the use of drama activities; illustrates clearly that 89.1% of respondents stated that time consuming can limit the use of drama in teaching English.

About 69.1% of respondent suggested that lack of materials can prevent the use of drama in teaching and learning English language. About 86.2% of respondents confirmed that large number of pupils can be the barrier of using drama in English classroom.

#### Comparison between Frequently drama performing and Rarely drama performing pupils

**Table 4.3: Comparison between Frequently drama performing and Rarely drama performing pupils**

	Frequently drama performing pupils	Rarely drama performing pupils
Place of using English	Drama is helpful as learners get enough time to experience the use of English language, therefore they use English anytime anywhere.	As learners aren't familiar with the use of English, they slowly use it at school.
Enjoyment in English classroom	When teachers use activities that make learning engaging and fun, pupils are more willing to participate and take risks. Having fun while learning also helps learners retain information better because the process is enjoyable and memorable.	Several signs indicate learners' disengagement in the classroom: Inattentiveness or lack of focus during class. Disinterest in class activities or assignments. Avoiding class or not completing homework. Difficulty participating in class. Difficulty staying on task or staying organized. Looking around or engaging in distractions.
Satisfied with the way they study English	The joy of learning is when the learners feel that they can value the content and manage and complete the activities they are encountering. So drama makes a classroom enjoyable as it develops students' creativity.	Boredom often arises when learners are not stimulated by the technique being taught. Highly bored learners typically avoid schoolwork, reduce their efforts in their work, are not well self-regulated, and show reduced motivation (Schwartz et al., 2020).
Language used more in group discussions	In English classroom, pupils acquire different language skills. In this research, students under treatment were asked whether drama motivates them to use English in group discussions. A motivated class is more active; students show willingness to learn new things and	It requires self-confidence to express in English especially when it is the second language; the fear of making mistakes increases when the audience contains classmates and the language teacher.

	they are actively participating in their learning activities.	
Knowledge about drama activities	Drama improves verbal and non-verbal communication skills. Learning to act and drama skills can help children develop their speech, communication and presentation skills, which are vital skills for anyone. Drama games and activities in the classroom can convince children to get involved, become more comfortable with their peers, and promotes fun. Using drama in the classroom helps to improve students' speaking, listening, and comprehension skills.	As noted in this study the students agreed that students feel frustrated with use of English. pupils depend totally on the summary of teachers. Lack of familiarity with drama activities, shortage of literary references of drama, lack of participation and discussion and lack of motivation towards drama, thus lead to negative attitude towards drama.

### Pupils' appreciation about drama activities

**Table 4.4: Pupils' appreciation about drama activities**

How much do your pupils appreciate drama activities?		
	Frequency	Percent
Highly motivated	50	41.6
Very motivated	39	32.5
Motivated	16	13.4
A little motivated	9	7.5
Not motivated	6	5.0
Total	120	100.0

The researcher gathered information from language teachers. They were asked how their pupils appreciate drama activities. About 41.6% highly motivate; 32.5% very motivated and 13.4 % motivate. Generally, 87.5% testify that motivation drives pupil behavior and performance. When pupils are motivated they will be more positive and toward their learning. Pupils are going to be more likely to take initiative in their learning and persist through difficult material, mistakes, or tasks.

## 5. RECOMMENDATION

Pupils find it difficult to get time and place for rehearsal and stage props and costumes. Drama has not yet been fully integrated in learning and teaching activities; thus some pupils take it as a tool for language learning.

English teachers complain about the Syllabus designing, training and teaching aids such as LCDs, videos, TV, and films.

Therefore,

The E.P SUMBA is recommended to avail a theater room for the English pupils to have a venue, where they could stage some relevant plays to involve all pupils. The school can train teachers and provide teaching aids such as LCDs, videos, TV, and films.

Teachers of English language are recommended to integrate drama in their teaching and learning activities because it enhances pupils' academic performance in English language.

Due to the few stage props and costumes, the school is recommended to increase them and pupils are encouraged to make and bring some from the local materials.

Pupils are recommended to sacrifice their spare time to rehearsal the relevant plays to enhance their performance.

English teachers can use more visual aids such as LCDs, videos, TV, and films in teaching English. Using visual materials creates an atmosphere for pupils to become more engaged in the process of learning and appreciating English language.

Primary school teachers should take up drama seriously as a main method of teaching, because it provides an opportunity for pupils to practice language for better competence.

Teachers should receive training courses on implementing drama in teaching and learning to enhance academic performance in English.

Syllabus designers should involve activities that lead pupils to apply drama and acting when exposing to the activities such as role-play situations, dialogue and stories.

The primary schools Administration should encourage teachers to apply drama-based teaching method to enhance the learners' language performance.

Teachers should make the process of teaching and learning attractively funny and enjoyable by involving the pupils dramatizing activities. Process of teaching and learning attractively funny and enjoyable, and motivates the pupils to interestingly continue studying.

Teachers should do their best to establish a harmony and rapport classroom atmosphere through dramatization method to improve academic performance in English.

Teachers should use drama to build pupils' self-confidence and concentration, and to reduce the degree of anxiety during the process of teaching and learning.

### REFERENCES

- [1] Abduh, Amirullah. "Self-Efficacy in Speaking Based Activities for art and Design." *International Journal*, 2022.
- [2] Abubakar, Obilan. *English as a medium of instruction and academic performance of pupils in primary schools in Gakenke district-Rwanda*. kigali, 2018.
- [3] Abubakar, Obilan. "English as a Medium of instuction and academic performance of pupils in primary schools." March, 2018.
- [4] Adiguzel. *creative drama in education*. Ankara: Yapi Kredi, 2019.
- [5] Altweissi, Ahmad. "The effect of using educational drama on developing speaking skill of the sixth graders in the English language." *The Universal Academic Research* , 2022.
- [6] Andrew, Zakhareuski. *5 reasons to incorporate Drama in Your ESL*. 2018.
- [7] Aryn, K. "The Effects of Drama Activities on students in EFL." *The Scientific Heritage*, 2021.
- [8] Asli Akyuz, Ayfer Tanis. "Effects of drama activities on EFL students' speaking skills." *ELT Research Journal*, 2020.
- [9] Bagshaw, Erica. "5 Fundamental techniques of Good stortelling." *Communication skills storytelling*, 2023.
- [10] Baland, Sek. *The effect of creative drama activities on the emotional intelligence development of primary school 4th grade students*. Ataturk: Master's thesis, Ataturk University Institute of Educational sciences., 2017.
- [11] Carl D.McDaniel, Roger H. Gates. *contemporary Marketing Research*. Business & Economics, 1991.
- [12] Churchill, G.A. *Marketing research: Methodological foundations*. South-Western Publishing company, January 2002.
- [13] kalogirou. "Vocabulary Acquisition via Drama: Welsh as a Second Language in the Primary." *The language*
- [14] Makas, Soylu. *The effect of creative Drama Method on Achievement, Attitude and learning Permanance in the Fourth Grade Mathematics lesson*. Bursa: Master's thesis uludag university Institute of Educational sciences., 2017.
- [15] Mapunda, Gastor. "Revisiting the English-Swahili debate on Tanzania's medium of instruction policy at secondary and post-secondary levels of education." *ResearchGate.net*, 2022.
- [16] MINEDUC. "meeting." kigali: MINEDUC, 2019.
- [17] MINEDUC. *Pursuing an Inclusive and transformative Reform Agenda for Improved Inclusive quality teaching and learning in Rwanda*. kigali: Mineduc, march 2023.