

## Using Drama in English Language Teaching: Primary and Secondary School Teachers' Perspectives and Practices

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### Article information

Submission	30/06/2024	Revision received	29/08/2024
Acceptance	10/09/2024	Publication date	22/10/2024

### Keywords:

Drama  
Drama techniques  
In-service  
Primary school  
Secondary school

**Abstract:** This study seeks to deeply explore the perspectives and expertise of English teachers regarding drama use, discover the differences between the applications of state and private school teachers, and ascertain areas entailing further training. The study intends to serve as a source for future studies concerning ELT teachers' professional development. Adopting a qualitative methodology and a pragmatic interpretive framework, the researchers employed a multiple case study design to align with the research objectives. Following the interviews, classroom observations were conducted. The data derived from these sessions were analysed through thematic analysis. Teachers stated that the drama techniques positively influenced English teaching, especially the development of language skills, student motivation, and authenticity, and they used role-play, puppets, small group play-making, improvisation, and storytelling techniques to achieve these outcomes. Challenges encountered included students' demotivation, limited participation, classroom management, time constraints, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient materials. Ultimately, there was no significant difference between the implementations of state and private school teachers. The findings underscored the teachers' need for theoretical insights into the nature of drama, its efficacy in language instruction, and techniques suitable to language skill development, alongside practical experience in planning and implementing drama techniques.

### Anahtar Sözcükler:

Drama  
Drama teknikleri  
Hizmet-içi  
İlkokul  
Ortaokul

**İngilizce Dil Öğretiminde Drama Kullanımı: İlkokul ve Ortaokul Öğretmenlerinin Bakış Açıları ve Uygulamaları**

**Özet:** Bu çalışma, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin drama tekniklerini kullanımına ilişkin bakış açılarını ve uzmanlıklarını derinlemesine keşfetmeyi, devlet okulunda ve özel okulda çalışan öğretmenlerin uygulamaları arasındaki farkları tespit edebilmeyi ve öğretmenlerin ihtiyaçlarına yönelik eğitim gerektiren alanları belirlemeyi amaçlamıştır. Böylelikle çalışmanın, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin mesleki gelişimlerini konu alan gelecekteki çalışmalara kaynak oluşturması amaçlanmaktadır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda nitel bir yaklaşım izlenmiş ve pragmatik yorumlayıcı bir çerçeve benimsenmiştir. Ayrıca araştırma amaçlarına uygun olarak çoklu durum çalışması yöntemi uygulanmıştır. Görüşme oturumlarının ardından araştırmacı öğretmenlerin derslerini gözlemlemiştir. Bu oturumlardan elde edilen veriler tematik analiz yöntemiyle analiz edilmiştir. Öğretmenlere göre drama yönteminin İngilizce öğretiminde özellikle dil becerilerinin geliştirilmesinde, motivasyon ve özgünlük sağlamada olumlu etkileri olduğu görülmüştür. Öğretmenler, bunları sağlayabilmek için rol yapma, kukla, küçük grup oyunu oluşturma, doğaçlama ve hikâye anlatma tekniklerini kullandıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Öğretmenler, uygulamalar sırasında öğrencilerin motivasyonlarının düşmesi, öğrencilerin katılımının kısıtlı olması, sınıf yönetimi, zaman kısıtlılığı, sınıfların kalabalık olması ve materyal yetersizliği gibi sorunlarla karşılaştığını ifade etmiştir. Son olarak, devlet okulu ve özel okul öğretmenlerinin uygulamaları arasında anlamlı bir fark bulunmamıştır. Bulgular öğretmenlerin, drama yönteminin temellerine, dil öğretimindeki etkinliğine ve dil becerilerinin gelişimine uygun drama tekniklerinin yanı sıra drama tekniklerinin planlanması ve uygulanmasına ilişkin teorik desteğe olan ihtiyaçlarını ortaya koymuştur.

**To Cite This Article:** Ali, N., & Kani, Z. G. (2024). Using drama in English language teaching: Primary and secondary school teachers' perspectives and practices. *Novitas-ROYAL (Research on Youth and Language)*, 18(2), 183–203. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13861203>

## 1. Introduction

The English Language Curriculum of Türkiye, published in 2018, prioritises students' developing a positive attitude towards the language and their language skills. The programme, which was published to guide teachers and book authors, consists of various methods, techniques, and activities, including suggested activities such as dancing, the use of music, and arts and crafts, as well as considering drama as one of the significant methods (MoNE, 2018). Therefore, teachers' knowledge of drama techniques and their ability to use them are essential to accomplish the objectives of the English Language Curriculum.

Drama is a process in which the participants present what they have created at that moment, in line with the group directions made by a leader, taking place without any judgement by the leader and without worrying about the correctness of the production. (Köksal Akyol, 2003). Since drama is a method suitable for the active use of language by its nature, it is included in the curriculum not only as a method to be used in the course but also as a technique that can be used to test students' language skills. This situation awakens the need for teachers who are knowledgeable about the drama method and capable of applying it. Therefore, the drama course became a part of teacher education in 2006 (Değirmenci Uysal & Zehir Topkaya, 2017) and has taken its place in the teacher education programme as an elective course (Özkahya, 2019). Concerning all these processes, it becomes apparent that teachers who graduated from the relevant departments of universities before 2006 did not have the chance to receive drama education within the scope of the teacher training programme. Although previous studies investigated English Language Teaching (ELT) teachers' perceptions of using drama techniques, they did not analyse their in-class drama practices. As a result, the difficulties faced by ELT teachers while using drama techniques cannot be fully revealed. On this account, the current research sought the perceptions and needs of teachers in detail through interviews and observation sessions to compare their perspectives with practices and reveal their training needs. This study intends to answer the following questions:

1. What are the roles ELT teachers attributed to drama techniques?
2. What drama techniques do teachers use in their classroom practices?
  - 2.1. For what purposes do they use these techniques?
  - 2.2. Is there any difference between the applications of teachers who work at private schools and state schools?
  - 2.3. What are the effects of classroom size and environment on the application of drama techniques?
  - 2.4. What are the necessary training subjects for English teachers to be able to use drama techniques in language teaching?

### 1.1. Drama in English Language Teaching

Drama is considered an art of theatre and has various definitions. It can be defined as acting out an event, memory, concept, or topic using techniques such as role-playing and improvisation in a workshop environment (Köksal Akyol, 2003). On the other hand, drama can be defined as a state of pretending and a holistic process involving the transformation of imagination into behaviour. According to this point of view, drama is the expression of fiction created in the mind through creative drama, improvisation, role-playing, and theatre (Courtney, 1990). In addition to the definitions above, drama is associated with the things occurring in the flow of daily life. According to Wessels (2003), drama is a situation in which a person encounters difficulties in daily life, such as doing and being.

The definition and perception of drama change from teacher to teacher as well. Some perceive drama as a performance, while others consider the drama method as effective when it contributes to the student's learning and development of language skills (Dora To et al., 2011). However, there needs to be a balance in-between (Dunn & Stinson, 2011), and drama is a valuable method to provide this. The student who has an active role in the process both physically and cognitively during drama activities finds the opportunity to observe, research, discuss, and act out the encountered situations and the solutions to these situations (Selvi, 1999). According to Emin (2019), in this process, students can compare their own behaviour with their behaviour. By identifying similarities and differences, they can criticise and develop themselves and find the opportunity to discover their own feelings and thoughts. Additionally, drama allows students to improve their personality, imagination, or social skills and contributes to their communication skills and fluent speaking by offering them a meaningful context (Dal, 2017).

Drama activities in language learning focus on the process rather than the outcome. The teachers aim to encourage students to engage actively and use the language creatively and effectively. Dramatisation and improvisation enhance language awareness and emphasise interpersonal communication (Zafeiriades, 2009). İkinci (2019) also notes that drama activities teach students to use body language effectively and develop higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). In summary, drama techniques have numerous benefits that enrich language learning and teaching, such as preparing students for real life and developing their personalities, imagination, and HOTS. Furthermore, it makes learning permanent by supporting active participation (İkinci, 2019; Kujalová, 2018; Emin, 2019).

## **1.2. Previous Studies on the Use of Drama Techniques in ELT**

There are many studies in the field of ELT on using drama techniques. Some research focuses on teachers' perspectives, while others examine the effect of drama methods on students' development. Additionally, some studies specifically explore how teachers implement drama methods in their teaching.

Dal (2017) aimed to reveal teachers' opinions about using drama techniques to develop speaking skills. The study revealed that, despite having positive attitudes towards using drama techniques, teachers were hesitant to implement them in practice. They expressed concerns about the inadequate education on drama at universities and insufficient training provided by MoNE. However, the results suggested that teachers did not engage in sufficient reading and research on the topic. Similarly, Hişmanoğlu and Çolak (2019) found out that although primary school English teachers believed drama techniques could improve students' speaking skills, their knowledge of classroom practices was moderate. Notably, teachers who had undertaken university courses on drama exhibited a more positive approach than those who had not.

Bsharat's study (2015) shows that primary school English teachers believed drama boosts students' self-confidence, fosters cooperation, and enhances understanding and decision-making skills. It was also highlighted that students were more confident discussing imaginary situations and used the language more effectively. There are also experimental studies that support Bsharat's study. Baykal et al. (2019) revealed that the 20 pre-service teachers who had taken drama lessons believed they had developed academically and professionally. They were also willing to use drama techniques in future classes and positively viewed its benefits. Horasan-Doğan and Cephe (2020) found that pre-service English teachers' creativity,

spontaneous decision-making, and body language use were improved through workshops on drama.

Lastly, researchers are concerned about training ELT teachers to use drama techniques in their classrooms. Korkut and Özmen (2023) suggested that teachers need to develop a drama teacher identity to internalise implementing drama techniques; however, it depends on some variables such as institutional context, coordination of potential actions, professional beliefs, and self-image. Likewise, Ding (2023) argued that immersive engagement is crucial for teachers to use their drama knowledge in practice. This requires reflexivity and can be achieved through long-term institutional support and by providing teachers with active training opportunities.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Research Design**

The current study follows a qualitative approach to identify the underlying reasons behind teachers' problems and correctly analyse their training needs. Qualitative research studies aim to make sense of events and interpret the current situation with the meanings people attribute to them (Mertens, 2015). Likewise, the current study seeks to determine what teachers think about using the drama method, what roles they assign to drama techniques in their classrooms, and what kind of support they need. Therefore, the study must follow a qualitative approach to deeply understand the situation and its reasons.

Comparing implementations of state school English teachers and private school English teachers is another aim of this study. Accordingly, the multiple case study design is applied. It is essential as case study research allows the researcher to study the in-depth perspectives of participants on a phenomenon in its natural context (Halkias & Neubert, 2020). Moreover, in contrast to other traditional ethnographic case studies, data are meaningful and comparable across cases in multiple case studies (Greene & David, 1984). The multi-case study design not only compares the implementations of English teachers working at the state and private schools but also enables the comparison of other physical and environmental factors.

### **2.2. Participants**

This study involved 16 participants, all female ELT teachers aged between 23 and 40. The majority of teachers were between the ages of 26 and 30. Nine participants were graduates of ELT departments from universities in Türkiye, while six graduated from other departments, such as English Language Literature (ELL) and Translation and Interpretation (T&I), which were irrelevant to teaching. However, they received pedagogical formation during or after their university education. Most participants were relatively new graduates with 1-5 years of experience, while seven were considered experienced with more than five years of experience working in ELT.

The research involved English teachers from primary and secondary schools, both state and private, in the provinces of Tekirdağ and İstanbul. This inclusion aimed to assess whether environmental factors influenced the use of drama techniques in teaching. Sixteen English teachers who employed drama techniques in their classrooms were identified using criterion sampling, where specific criteria are set, and cases meeting these criteria are selected (Mertens, 2015). Consistent with multiple case study methodology (Greene & David, 1984), purposeful sampling ensured an even distribution of teachers across different school types.

Participants were chosen based on two criteria: their employment at either primary or secondary schools and their familiarity with and usage of drama techniques in their teaching. The primary and secondary school English curriculum aims to foster positive student attitudes and active participation through various games and activities, emphasising drama studies' importance. Therefore, teachers were selected from both educational levels.

### **2.3. Data Collection**

The data collection procedure encompassed two primary phases: gathering teachers' perspectives and observing their practices. In the first phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted, utilising closed- and open-ended questions to elicit comprehensive responses and enable follow-up inquiries (Adams, 2015; Erlandson et al., 1993). The interview and observation checklist, formulated by the researcher and validated by two experts, underwent revisions based on feedback to ensure adequacy and reliability. The interview comprised five main questions and seven sub-questions, focusing on teachers' backgrounds, perceptions of drama techniques in English teaching, and experiences. The main questions were to find out what the roles of drama are according to teachers, why they use drama techniques, which techniques they use, the difficulties faced during implementations, and what they suggest on using drama techniques in ELT. Conducted individually at times and locations chosen by the teachers to create a comfortable environment, the interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes each. With participants' consent, the conversations were audio-recorded for subsequent transcription and analysis.

In the second phase, the first researcher observed the teachers to determine consistency between their stated perspectives and actual practices. This direct observation method, where the researcher acted as a complete observer (Baker, 2006; Ciesielska et al., 2018), provided additional data through notes, video recordings, and transcriptions, enhancing the accuracy of the findings (Maxwell, 2013; Pajares, 1992). An observation checklist, developed by a review of the literature (Lia, 2016; Sikorski et al., 1994; Subban & Round, 2015), was employed during classroom observations. It consisted of five sections: teachers' lesson plans, setting objectives and selecting drama techniques, lesson flow, student participation, and evaluation methods. The part related to teachers' lesson plans was filled out with the teacher according to their planned lessons. Other parts of the checklist included a scale with three choices: observed, not observed, and not applicable. The researcher was supposed to choose one and write additional comments if necessary. Four teachers were observed: one from a state primary school (T4), a private primary school (T9), a state secondary school (T5), and a private secondary school (T16). Each teacher was observed for four 40-minute lessons, with the researcher completing the checklist and video-recording the sessions for a thorough analysis. Notes from interviews and observations were also utilised as data sources.

### **2.4. Data Analysis**

During the stages of data collection and analysis, a reflexive insider perspective was adopted as "recognising behaviour and actions as being relative to the person's culture and the context in which that behaviour or action is both rational and meaningful within that culture" (Holmes, 2020, p. 5). This perspective was grounded in the researchers' existing familiarity with teaching English through drama and their awareness of the potential challenges and advantages teachers encounter. The researcher's familiarity with the research topic can provide advantages such as appreciating the participants' perceptions, analysing and interpreting their experiences precisely, and appreciating the diverse realities (Berger, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Interviews and observations were conducted in this study, providing

comprehensive data. Field notes, observation checklists, audio and video recordings, and transcriptions were utilised during the analysis phase, enabling a comparative analysis for more valid conclusions. The data above were also used for triangulation, avoiding the suspicious results of a single method and single perspectives and ensuring the trustworthiness and credibility of the data analysis process (Cohen et al., 2007). Moreover, constant comparison was utilized to find similarities and differences among the data and ensure validity and reliability (Fram, 2013). The codes and themes derived from the analysis were consulted by an expert for more reliable and valid results. The data were analysed using thematic analysis, a flexible method for identifying, analysing, and reporting themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide was followed for the analysis: familiarising with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (p. 87). The researchers creatively engaged with the data, ensuring themes connected with existing knowledge (Vaismoradi et al., 2016).

Initially, the interview data were transcribed, and transcriptions were read multiple times to capture essential points, with keywords highlighted for clarity. Codes were generated from recurring words and ideas. Themes emerged from these codes, and tables were created to organise themes, codes, and research questions, reflecting Maxwell's (2013) approach to data analysis. A deductive thematic analysis approach was applied to the observation checklists, using pre-defined codes as templates (Fereday & Muir Cochrane, 2006). Themes were derived from the checklist items. After observation sessions, checklists were reviewed alongside video recordings, which were also transcribed. Data from each observation were individually analysed, and details were organised into tables for each teacher's lessons. Subsequently, all data were categorised according to themes. Interview and observation results were compared to determine teachers' training needs. This comparison identified areas where teachers faced difficulties or required more development in theory and practice.

### **3. Findings**

The findings of the first research question indicate that teachers employed drama techniques to enhance students' motivation, personal and social development, language knowledge and skills, engage them with the lesson, and provide authenticity. As for the second research question, which included sub-questions, role-play was the most commonly used technique to engage students and develop their speaking and listening skills. Despite complaints from state school teachers regarding limited allocated time for English, large class sizes, and challenging classroom environments, there was no significant difference in the implementation of drama techniques between state and private school teachers. Additionally, teachers required further training in classroom management during drama activities, lesson planning with drama techniques, and their effective implementation.

#### **3.1. Findings From the Interview Analysis**

Participant teachers were asked to rank language skills according to their importance to better understand their perception of language teaching. The findings indicated that teachers valued speaking skills the most, followed by listening and reading skills. Notably, none of the teachers mentioned reading as a top-priority language skill. The interview sessions intended to gain insights into the role of drama in ELT according to the teachers, the techniques and purposes of use, and the difficulties teachers encountered during their drama implementations and their solutions.

3.1.1. *The role of drama in language teaching*

The first research question explored English teachers' perceptions of the role of drama techniques in language teaching and their impact on language skill development. The analysis of their responses identified six main themes, as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1.  
*The Role of Drama Method According to English Teachers*

Theme	Codes
Students' engagement	Active participation Learning by doing and living The practice of daily language Student-centeredness More and permanent learning
The development of language knowledge	Build language knowledge
Providing authenticity	Natural context
Enhancing motivation	Fun Develops self-confidence Draws attention Encourages students Lowers the stress level
The development of language skills	Develops all skills Develops speaking and listening skills
Personal and social developments of students	Collaborative learning/social communication

The first theme concluded from the interview results was student engagement, which was identified as a significant positive impact of drama techniques. Teachers' responses indicated that drama facilitates learning by doing, practising daily language within the classroom, and fostering active participation. These elements and the student-centred nature of drama contribute to permanent and meaningful learning.

T9 highlighted that drama creates a fun and engaging environment, making learning more accessible for students. T15 noted that drama involves students in teaching, transforming them from passive recipients to active participants. T14 observed that students take on more active roles. T1, T4, and T10 explained that drama enables students to learn by doing and experience real-life situations, enhancing long-term retention and practical language use.

*T4: Drama makes the lesson enjoyable and fun. It is a student-centred method that requires active participation. Students cannot just sit in their chairs and listen to me. They need to have an active role, as the activities require it.*

The teachers' responses indicated that students extend and develop their language knowledge through various drama activities. They can build their knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and other linguistic components and develop their understanding of the prosodic features of the language, such as intonation, pauses, and rhythm.

*T2: Students do not need to use the language productively. Even if you give a script to students to act it out, it helps students build language knowledge and learn new vocabulary items and structures.*

*T5: They experience the daily language. I am not talking about only the vocabulary and grammar. I mean the rhythm of the language, intonation, pauses. They also develop in such things with the help of various drama techniques.*

Another critical feature that teachers valued was the authenticity of the drama techniques. They reported that drama techniques create a natural, authentic context for students to use the language. By setting up different scenarios and situations in the classroom, teachers can provide students with opportunities to practice various language functions and communicate in ways that mirror real-life interactions.

*T1: Through drama, teachers can create an authentic environment where students can learn by doing. If we teach how to tell one's age, we can organise a birthday party and bring party materials to the class. Students can ask questions to each other. We can provide this environment through drama.*

*T11: Students do not feel like they are to do something, but they naturally take place in the activity thanks to the authentic nature created by drama techniques. As a result, they embrace the language as they do in their native language.*

The teachers also attributed drama techniques to enhancing motivation. They believed that drama activities' fun and attractive nature motivated students, lowered their anxiety levels, encouraged them to participate in the lesson, and developed their self-confidence.

*T6: The drama method attracts students' attention regardless of grade level. Students' age does not matter. Instead of completing an activity from a book, they prefer participating in something during which they can be active; that is drama!*

*T7: When drama techniques are used, students are encouraged to contribute more to the lesson. Drama also makes students physically active and appeals to different senses.*

*T16: Drama encourages students to participate in the lesson. When students become aware of their ability to speak English, they are more eager during the lessons. They participate in the activities more. They listen to me more carefully and learn more things.*

Teachers held varying views on the contribution of drama techniques to language skill development. Some believed drama techniques enhanced all four primary language skills, while others felt they primarily addressed speaking and listening skills.

*T3: Drama develops all language skills. Let's say we are doing a role-play activity. I want students to write a dialogue in pairs to be performed for their classmates. They write it down and practise writing. When acting it out, they talk to each other and develop their speaking skills. Finally, they must listen and understand each other to smoothly perform their dialogue. That develops listening skills.*

*T4: Drama activities prioritise speaking and listening skills. This is very effective in developing these two skills. Students watch and listen to someone else and learn something in this way. Additionally, they move to the production stage, where they display what they have learned. However, the drama method is not as effective in improving reading and writing skills as it is in developing speaking and listening skills.*

The teachers recognised that the drama techniques, which require teamwork, can also contribute to students' personal and social development, particularly in collaborative learning and social communication. T3 and T12 asserted that drama techniques helped students learn how to communicate with each other or compromise:



*T3: ...Besides, it helps to develop collaborative learning and social communication. Let's say students are writing a dialogue. They need to handle conflict by using their social skills when there is a conflict between them. This is also a way to learn how to work together.*

*T12: ...They learn how to communicate with each other. They have to find a way to agree. Otherwise, they fail in the activity altogether. Moreover, some dialogues and scripts teach them how to adjust their speech according to the place and person. For example, they learn how to talk with a cashier at a supermarket.*

### 3.1.2. Drama techniques teachers used and the purposes of use

The second research question explored the drama techniques the teachers use in their classroom practices, their purposes, the differences between state and private school teachers, and the overall training needs of teachers. Teachers were first asked about their general purposes for using drama techniques, and it was discovered they used drama techniques with four different purposes: language-focused, teaching and learning-focused, assessment, and motivational purposes.

Table 2.

*Main Purposes of Using the Drama Techniques*

Themes	Codes
Language-focused purposes	Developing speaking skills
Teaching and learning-focused purposes	Practicing
	Permanent learning
	Exemplifying the use of knowledge in real life
	Learning through doing and living
	Introducing a new topic
Assessment purposes	Reviewing a topic
	To observe students
Motivational purposes	Attracting students' attention
	Increasing motivation
	Increasing student participation
	Building self-confidence in students
	Making the learning process enjoyable

The purpose of teachers' language-focused teaching included developing only speaking skills. They did not mention any other language-focused purposes. T2, T5, T9, and T12 mentioned that they used drama techniques mainly for developing the speaking skills of students:

*T5: I use drama techniques as much as the time allows as I see speaking as an important part of learning a language. I prefer applying drama techniques based on a text. Even if they read from somewhere, I think it helps them to become better English speakers.*

Teachers highlighted various teaching and learning-focused purposes, including practising, permanent learning, exemplifying the real-life use of the language, experiential learning, topic introduction, and review. T1 emphasised experiential learning through drama to enhance retention, citing limited lesson time as a challenge.

*T2: I prefer using drama techniques to review the topic and teach them how to use the things they have learned. As they practised the topic, they understood better how to use the information they had. When*

*we do not practice, they feel lost about what to say during a conversation. It starts by repeating only what I say and what we learned; then, they produce their own sentences.*

T3 and T8 also employed drama techniques to practise and demonstrate real-life usage, with T3 focusing on practice and T8 on introducing new topics.

*T3: I sometimes use drama techniques to teach new things, mainly to practise what I have taught. After teaching something new, I apply drama techniques to exemplify how it is used in real life.*

A minority of teachers utilised drama techniques to observe students' progress for assessment purposes, suggesting that these techniques enabled students to learn from their peers and teachers by observing their performances. T5 noted that drama facilitated self-observation and peer observation, allowing students to monitor their progress. Moreover, the regular use of drama techniques provided the teacher with valuable insights into students' development. Similarly, T14 highlighted that drama encouraged active participation, enhancing student talking time and enabling the teacher to assess students' understanding and identify areas of difficulty.

The findings reveal that the teachers apply drama techniques with motivational goals, recognising their benefits for language development and fostering a positive learning environment. They highlighted several motivational reasons for employing drama, including attracting students' attention, enhancing motivation, increasing participation, building self-confidence, and making learning enjoyable. T16 emphasised using drama to reduce students' fear of speaking English, while T7 noted that it helped students recognise their language abilities, increasing their willingness to participate. T3 mentioned that reading texts with varied tones engaged young learners, and T15 asserted that these techniques made learning more enjoyable and effective than traditional methods.

When asked about teachers' specific drama techniques, role-play was identified as the most frequently used technique, followed by puppets, small group play-making, improvisation, and storytelling.

Table 3.  
*Common Reasons for Using the Specified Drama Techniques*

Common reasons	
Engagement	Being more active Becoming more attracted/focused Feeling more comfortable/confident Helping students to explain themselves
Practicality	Practical to apply
The Development of Language Skills	Listening and speaking Speaking Listening Effective for all four skills
Familiarity	Students like Familiarity with the technique T enjoys
Adaptability	Convenient to practise and reinforce what is learned Suitable to the curriculum The most useful technique for the young Easily adaptable

Table 3. outlines common reasons for using the specified drama techniques cited by teachers, such as engagement, practicality, the development of language skills, familiarity, and adaptability.

Teachers mentioned several reasons for utilising specific drama techniques, with student engagement being a prominent theme. They employed these techniques to capture students' attention, enhance comfort and confidence, increase classroom activity, and improve self-expression. T4 and T8 observed that students became more focused and active with puppets and role-play techniques, which are particularly effective in fostering participation and confidence.

The teachers also suggested the practicality of the drama techniques as an essential factor. Some teachers favoured role-play and improvisation for their ease of implementation. T1 highlighted role-play as straightforward, noting its applicability to the dialogues in the book and student-created scenarios. Conversely, T7 preferred improvisation for its adaptability to daily topics without prior preparation.

Despite the variation in the targeted language skills among different teachers, all aimed at developing language skills. According to T6, small group play-making activities engage all language skills, as students must listen to one another during the process. However, she noted that sometimes students are required to work individually rather than in groups, which hinders speaking skill development. T16 stated that she used role-play to develop students' speaking and listening skills. A different approach was taken by T12, who preferred using puppets to enhance speaking skills and mentioned that the physical appeal of the puppets motivates students to speak more, thereby improving their speaking proficiency.

The teachers perceived students' familiarity with the utilised drama technique as an advantage. They also revealed that they enjoyed some of the drama techniques more. T5 noted that students' familiarity with role-play allows them to navigate the process smoothly and articulate themselves effectively during such activities. T11 mentioned that she preferred storytelling as she and her students enjoyed it, listening attentively even when unfamiliar vocabulary was introduced, affirming the teacher's sense of efficacy and satisfaction. T9 highlighted that students enjoyed communicating with each other and performing on stage, and therefore, she favoured conducting role-play activities in front of the class to make them more effective.

The adaptability and practicality of specified drama techniques were crucial considerations for the teachers. They believed these techniques allowed students to practice and reinforce their learning and were compatible with the curriculum. T5 indicated that she used role-play to practice, for example, dialogues from textbooks, and it can be easily adapted to the curriculum's topics and themes. T10 noted that role-play offers practical application of the material learned and enhances students' ability to use English effectively. Flexibility was a key reason for T6. She remarked that small group play-making can be easily adapted to different topics.

### *3.1.2.1. The difficulties teachers encountered and their solutions*

The second research question was also to discover teachers' difficulties when applying drama techniques in their classrooms and the solutions to overcome these problems. They mentioned three main themes, as demonstrated in Table 4 (e.g., problems concerning students, problems concerning teachers, and external problems). Teachers claimed

motivation-oriented, attention-oriented, material-related, and process-related solutions to their problems during the implementations.

Table 4.

*The Difficulties Teachers Faced During the Drama Activities*

Problems	<i>f</i>	
Problems concerning students	Distraction	4
	Native language use	3
	A reluctance to participate	3
	Limited participation	2
	Backgrounds of students	1
	Demotivation	1
	Shyness	1
	Physical damage	1
	Peer pressure	1
	Difficulty in understanding instructions	1
Fear	1	
Problems concerning teachers	Classroom management	7
	Out of topic	1
	Guidance	1
	Controlling/observing	1
	Lack of education on drama	1
External problems	Limited time	6
	Crowded classrooms	5
	Lack of material	3

Teachers reported various issues related to students, as presented in Table 4. T3 mentioned she preferred pair work to provide students with feedback; however, it caused noise and easily distracted students, causing them to lose focus during the lesson. T5 observed that while one group presented their work, others were preoccupied with their preparations, leading them to miss their peers' performance, which demotivated the presenting group. T11 referred to the possibility of distress and crying during role-play activities or competitive events, as students sometimes bullied each other. T13 highlighted that drama activities took longer since the students needed more detailed and repeated instructions.

Problems concerning teachers included challenges related to teachers' own skills or insufficient knowledge. Classroom management emerged as the most commonly cited problem. T4 remarked that students tend to go off-topic during pair or group work, and they exceed the allocated time. T10 noted that drama activities led to noise and disorder, resulting in a challenging classroom environment. T5 emphasised the difficulty of guiding and consulting with a large class of 30 students. Additionally, the limited classroom space made monitoring and assisting students more difficult. Finally, T1 expressed a need for further education on drama techniques.

External problems included limited time, crowded classrooms, and insufficient materials. T2 and T6 stressed that the time allocated for English lessons was insufficient due to crowded classrooms. T7 and T14 mentioned an inability to find the necessary materials, hindering the use of diverse resources to motivate students.

The interview analysis revealed that teachers applied motivation-oriented, attention-oriented, material-related, and process-related solutions to overcome the abovementioned difficulties. Motivation-oriented solutions included teacher participation, providing motivation and

support, power poses, personal feedback, clear instructions, prizes, e-twinning projects, and changing the environment. Attention-oriented solutions involved different activities, breaks between the activities, whole class activities, giving turns, repeating what others say, and using L1. Material-related solutions teachers mentioned were using extra materials, adjusting materials, and teachers buying the material. Lastly, teachers stated they planned the process more thoroughly, grouped the students, or set rules to overcome process-related problems.

### **3.2. Findings From the Observation Analysis**

The researcher observed T4, T5, T9, and T16 in their classrooms using an observation checklist, and deductive theme analysis was applied to analyse the data. Four main pre-determined themes were derived from the observation checklist: lesson planning, implementation, student participation, and evaluation.

Considering the lesson planning, all teachers established specific lesson objectives, aligning with the curriculum. It was observed that the lesson objectives were clear to the students. However, only T5 planned drama activities in a clear and meaningful sequence; others planned lessons, including individual activities, without smooth transitions in between. Examining the teachers' lesson plans revealed that the techniques used were consistent with their lesson objectives and addressed the students' needs, interests, age groups, grade levels, and class dynamics. Finally, all teachers, except T4, who intended to teach some vehicles, aimed to develop multiple language skills through drama techniques. T5 focused on developing four skills, whereas T9 and T16 concentrated on listening and speaking skills.

Teachers' implementation was another concern during the observation sessions. Teachers were monitored to see if their plans were consistent with the process. Through the activities T5 used, students could reinforce all language skills, while T16's students reinforced listening and speaking. T4 involved only miming in her lesson, and it was for recalling the names of the vehicles. Although T9's students could practise and reinforce writing, listening, and speaking skills by preparing and demonstrating a dialogue about daily routines, the activity lacked the main components of a role-play activity, such as a scenario, a situation, or characters. Therefore, miming was the only drama activity implemented in the class for recalling vocabulary items' meanings. T4, T9, and T16 students did not use the language productively. Activities conducted by T5, on the other hand, allowed students to use both writing and speaking skills productively. The time allocated for each drama activity was enough in all teachers' classes, and all students had the chance to participate. However, students of T16 and T9 struggled to act out due to insufficient time during the preparation phase. T5 and T16 used different drama techniques to develop different language skills, and T5 and T9 used different materials to enrich the activity. Only T5 made a post activity to summarise the fundamental concepts of the drama activities applied and had smooth transitions between the activities. Lastly, only T9 faced some problems as students lost their attention occasionally when watching and listening to each other's dialogues.

Students' participation in the activities was also observed to see if applied drama techniques could enhance students' active participation in the lesson. During the implementation of teachers, all students showed enthusiasm, but T5 and T9's students occasionally seemed bored during demonstrations. Drama techniques generally fostered peer interaction, except for T16, where activities involved only student-teacher interaction. Limited communication was observed in T4 and T9's miming activities, whereas T5's class exhibited interaction during various stages of activities.

All teachers used praise to encourage students, employing similar encouraging phrases. T5 additionally supported students by moving around the classroom, providing examples, paraphrasing sentences, and asking questions to facilitate participation. The evaluation part of the lessons revealed that T16 employed role-play at the end of the lesson to assess vocabulary and sentence usage related to illnesses. However, only T5 identified it as an assessment tool. T9 and T4 used miming to check students' vocabulary recall. T5 discussed the activity with the students at the end of the lessons and gave them feedback, while no feedback was given in other classes. Teachers provided feedback during activities but did not specifically address the drama techniques, except for T5, who briefly mentioned the enjoyment of the activity. Lastly, teachers claimed to plan future lessons based on student performance, engagement, and acting abilities.

The second research question also intended to reveal whether there were any differences in the applications of state and private school teachers. The results indicate that all teachers had similar perspectives on drama techniques, emphasising their contribution to students' language development. Despite that, the state school teachers cited various challenges and constraints that hindered drama's consistent implementation, such as large class sizes, time constraints, and lack of material. State school teachers often managed overcrowded classrooms, making it challenging to organise and conduct drama-based activities effectively. The problem of insufficient time was associated with overcrowded classrooms. Teachers explained that they could not plan elaborate activities using drama techniques due to crowded classrooms and limited time. Furthermore, the curriculum followed by the state schools was too intensive to integrate additional and complementary activities, considering the time allocated for English lessons. Teachers also criticised their workload, and MoNE did not provide them with any supplementary materials except textbooks. Environmental factors were also regarded as a drawback by the state school teachers. They stated that since the classrooms were small but the number of students was high, and as they could not design a class, especially for the English lessons, the type of activities they could do were limited.

Based on the analysis of data derived from the interview and observations, it was intended to reveal the training topics centred on integrating drama techniques into English teaching, grounded in teachers' identified needs. The judgements revealed that the teachers had the most trouble with classroom management, planning lessons with drama techniques coherently, and implementing them. Teachers had inadequate theoretical knowledge about general drama techniques and integration into English lessons.

#### **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

The key findings of this study include information regarding the English teachers' perspectives on the drama techniques' use in language teaching and their actual in-class implementations. Finally, examining the collected data provides the necessary information to reveal teachers' training needs.

According to teachers, integrating drama techniques into English teaching offered substantial benefits. Drama's authenticity provided a productive and spontaneous context for language use, enhancing students' social skills, motivation, and engagement, leading to more permanent learning outcomes. Hahl and Keinänen (2021) corroborate these findings, noting teachers' preference for drama due to its experiential learning and integration of action with language. Previous studies support drama's essential role in student-centred learning, facilitating practical language application and active participation through authenticity

(Hişmanoğlu & Çolak, 2019; Liu et al., 2021). Güler and Kandemir (2015) emphasise drama's contribution to permanent learning, a view echoed by teachers in the current study.

Drama was stated as instrumental in constructing language knowledge and developing speaking and listening skills, though teachers often undervalued its role in enhancing reading and writing abilities. This suggests teachers valued active student participation and speaking skill development, reflecting broader perspectives on language teaching and learning. Factors such as the communicative approach's popularity in ELT, teacher education, and Türkiye's ELT curriculum emphasis on communication may have shaped teachers' perceptions of language and drama's role in teaching English. In contrast, Macy (2004) and Başaran (2024) posit that drama enhances all language skills, Hişmanoğlu and Çolak (2019) and Dal (2017) highlight its specific impact on speaking skills. Conversely, Tajareh and Oroji (2017) argue that drama is particularly compelling for improving reading skills. These varied perspectives underscore the need for diverse drama techniques in in-service training programmes, enabling teachers to address reading and writing skills alongside other language skills, thereby broadening their instructional approaches.

The teaching and learning-focused purposes declared by the teachers consisted of practising language, providing permanent learning, exemplifying knowledge in real-life contexts, learning through doing and living, and introducing or reviewing new topics. These purposes can be associated with each other; students can actively engage in real-life conversations and activities when provided with examples of daily language usage and opportunities for English practice. As a result, language learning becomes more meaningful and relevant for them (Baldwin & Galazka, 2021). Furthermore, the observation sessions revealed that the teachers utilised drama techniques for the abovementioned purposes. The participants in the study of Bsharat (2015) agreed that the drama techniques extend the student talking time while decreasing the teacher talking, facilitating language practice. Similarly, participants in Hahl and Keinänen's study (2021) described drama processes as learning through doing, wherein the daily language could be exemplified. Dal (2017) also mentions that the nature of drama promotes permanent learning.

Considering the motivational purposes of the teachers, it can be deduced that they actively seek methods and techniques, such as drama, to motivate students. Parallel to the findings of the current study, previous studies also acknowledged the efficacy of drama techniques in decreasing student anxiety and improving their self-confidence (Bessadet, 2022; Bsharat, 2015; Hişmanoğlu & Çolak, 2019; Yılmaz & Keşli Dollar, 2017). As for implications, it can be deduced that drama techniques should be incorporated into ELT, considering their positive impact on students' motivation and language development.

Teachers' reasons for using the specified drama techniques are mentioned in section 3.1.2. show consistency with the previous studies. Dal's study (2017) suggests that certain drama techniques are more common due to their simplicity, which aligns with the notion of the techniques' practicality aroused in the current study. Additionally, Dal (2017) notes that teachers' selection of drama techniques may vary based on the adaptability of the technique to the given topic. Previous studies consistently appreciated the positive impact of drama techniques on the development of language skills (Başaran, 2024; Bsharat, 2015; Dal, 2017; Güler & Kandemir, 2015; Hişmanoğlu & Çolak, 2019). Ting (2013) revealed that some teachers preferred role-play because students enjoyed participating in this activity.

The difficulties that the teachers mentioned as they came across during the implementation of drama activities are similar to the ones stated in previous studies. According to Hahl and

Keinänen's study (2021), some students perceived drama activities as inappropriate for their ages, expressing a preference for traditional course book study. It was also suggested that introverted and shy students might be hesitant to participate in drama activities as it requires students to demonstrate a role or use the language actively in front of their peers (Dal, 2017; Uyumaz, 2020). Yılmaz and Keşli Dollar (2017) disclosed that students were unwilling to participate in certain provided drama activities.

Teachers identified classroom management as their primary challenge, citing students' off-topic discussions, inadequate guidance teachers could provide, difficulties in monitoring student activities, and a lack of training in drama. Yılmaz and Keşli Dollar (2017) highlight the difficulty of simultaneously monitoring students' language and physical actions, noting that classroom management issues hinder the effective use of drama techniques. Conversely, Uyumaz (2020) reports that classroom management did not pose a problem in her study. Regarding implications, it can be inferred that these issues may arise from inappropriate or inadequate activities, materials, or teaching skills. This may also indicate that the drama courses provided by universities in pre-service teacher education and in-service training provided by other institutions should be developed to equip teachers with the necessary skills to overcome the mentioned problems.

Teachers also reported external challenges beyond their control, such as time limitations, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient materials. Time constraints, noted in previous studies (Hahl & Keinänen, 2021; Yılmaz & Keşli Dollar, 2017), complicate the integration of drama techniques into the curriculum. Teachers associated time constraints with crowded classrooms, making allocating equal time to each student challenging and resulting in classroom management problems (Arikan, 2015). Hahl and Keinänen (2021) observe similar difficulties in implementing drama activities with small groups and finding appropriate materials. The current study's teachers also cited the economic burden of materials. The heavy curriculum load and unsuitable physical conditions of schools, as noted by Güler and Kandemir (2015), further limit the use of drama techniques, especially with young learners (Arikan, 2015). Hahl and Keinänen (2021) similarly suggest that classrooms may be physically unsuitable for such activities. As teachers cannot change, they should be equipped with effective drama techniques that can be employed in English teaching despite these constraints.

#### **4.1. The Differences Between the Applications of Private and State School Teachers**

Interviews revealed that state school teachers were concerned about time constraints and class size due to the intense curriculum and lack of materials. These findings correspond with Arikan's study (2015), which mentions classroom management, attention span, materials, and physical structure as the main challenges young learners face in a state school. Despite these challenges, all teachers shared positive views on the efficacy of incorporating drama in English teaching. However, it should be noted that problems such as time limitation, work-and curriculum load, and negative environmental factors affect teachers' beliefs and practices (Korkut & Özmen, 2023).

Private schools, offering seven to eight hours of English per week compared to state schools' two to three hours, were expected to exhibit greater flexibility and strategic planning in drama techniques. However, observations showed no significant differences in the approaches of private and state school teachers, with all employing similar techniques. Notably, only one state school teacher prepared specific materials for drama activities. Previous studies did not compare private and state schools, except for Gültekin (2018), who found minimal



differences in teachers' practices despite more English lessons in private schools. They also noted higher motivation among state school students. This suggests that private school facilities may not significantly influence drama techniques without additional teacher effort, while state school challenges could be alleviated with appropriate measures.

Regarding teacher training, findings indicated a significant need for teachers to engage in further training to deepen their understanding of drama techniques regardless of the school they work in. Teachers need to learn specific drama techniques to meet students' needs and develop teaching skills to correctly use these techniques (Korkut & Özmen, 2023). Uyumaz (2020) supports this need, recommending supplementary training for the effective use of drama techniques. Earlier studies confirm teachers' willingness to participate in in-service training, suggesting that well-organised e-seminars and programmes can enhance their awareness of drama's importance and efficacy (Dal, 2017; Güler & Kandemir, 2015; Hahl & Keinänen; Uştuk & İnan, 2017; Uyumaz, 2020). Additionally, teachers' active engagement in pieces of training is discussed to have a positive effect on their perception and internalisation of drama use (Ding, 2023; Horasan-Doğan & Cephe, 2020; Korkut & Özmen, 2023). These studies recommend providing theoretical knowledge of various drama techniques and their practical implementation. However, no comprehensive examination has been conducted on teachers' problems implementing drama techniques, their in-class implementations, or training topics for further studies.

This study's findings highlighted the need for professional support in comprehensive theoretical knowledge of drama techniques, effective integration into English lessons, classroom management during drama activities, and coherent planning of drama-integrated lessons.

#### **4.2. Limitations and Suggestions**

The study's limitations include the small number of participating teachers and the restricted number of observations. Four English teachers were observed: one each from a state primary school, a private primary school, a state secondary school, and a private secondary school. Each teacher was observed for four 40-minute lessons. A more extensive study with a larger, more diverse sample from various cities in Türkiye, including high school teachers, would provide a more comprehensive overview. Extended observation periods would allow for more accurate inferences about teachers' practices. Additionally, international studies could facilitate comparisons between Türkiye and other countries. Expanding the number of observed teachers and potentially framing the study as longitudinal would allow for a more in-depth examination of teaching practices. Examining detailed lesson plans could also offer supplementary data. A single researcher conducted the study; replicating it with multiple researchers could provide a deeper analysis incorporating diverse perspectives.

Further research is recommended to analyse teachers' needs better and suggest solutions to contribute to teachers' professional development. An experimental study including interventions could identify the syllabus's strengths and weaknesses, contributing to its ongoing development. Despite its limitations, this research fills a gap by exploring English teachers' perspectives on using drama techniques in ELT. It details teachers' perceptions and use of drama techniques, their purposes, difficulties encountered, sources of problems, and applied solutions. The study provides valuable insights into comparing state and private school teachers, an uncommon theme in ELT research. Observation sessions help distinguish between teachers' perceptions and actual practices, revealing their in-service training needs to foster teachers' professional development.

## Note on Ethical Issues

The study was conducted with ethical approval from the School of Graduate Studies at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University and from the MoNE (Approval Date: 28/04/2022, Number: 09/50). This study was derived from the MA thesis authored by the first researcher under the supervision of the second researcher. It was funded by the Scientific Research Coordination Unit of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, project number SYL-2022-4197. Additionally, a part of this study was presented as a paper at the ULEAD Annual Congress, ICRE-ICRAL 2023, held on September 28-30, 2023.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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