

**Beyond the mere word.**  
**Exploring the language of Drama through text- and**  
**performance-based approaches for developing L2 oral**  
**skills**

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*To Florence and the safety key, and my nephews Amina and Rayan*

## **Abstract**

This study explores the effectiveness of drama by using contemporary plays both as self-standing extracts and as a full-scale performance for developing learners' oral skills in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency and their positive attitudes towards foreign language learning within a high school compulsory curriculum in an Italian context. The rationale for undertaking this investigation lies in the heartening results obtained when dramatic approaches were implemented predominantly within a university context or as an extracurricular activity in the language classroom.

A class of final year high school Italian students with a lower-intermediate to upper-intermediate level of language was exposed longitudinally to a text-based approach followed by a performance-based approach conducted over a term each for a total of 20 lessons. A control group was taught through a communicative traditional approach. Quantitative data were collected through an oral pre-test, a mid-test and a post-test by using three tasks, both monologic and dialogic: oral proficiency interview, story-retelling and guided role-play. To elicit learners' attitudes questionnaires and follow-up interviews were used, thus affording me deeper insights into learners' preferences, reasons for enjoyment, their usefulness for developing language skills, problems and difficulties encountered.

The results show that drama-based approaches improved significantly learners' pronunciation accuracy, speed-fluency, breakdown-fluency, repairs-fluency, MLR, phonation time ratio, and syntactic complexity. There was no significant statistical result on accuracy between the two groups. When comparing the two types of approaches, findings revealed that the text-based approach led to a higher syntactic complexity, breakdown fluency and phonation time ratio whilst the performance-based approach led to a higher level of accuracy both on the global scale and pronunciation accuracy, and speed fluency. Neither of the two drama-based approaches led to a significant score on the MLAS, MLR and repairs fluency. The qualitative findings display mixed but fundamentally greatly favourable attitudes towards the employment of drama approaches.



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## List of abbreviations

AS-unit	Analyses of Speech unit
CAF	Complexity, accuracy and fluency
CG	Control group
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
EXP	Experimental group
L2	Second Language
MI	Multiple Intelligences
MLAS	Mean Length of AS-units
MLR	Mean Length of Run
OPI	Oral Proficiency Interview
PBA	Performance-based approach
RP	Received Pronunciation
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TBA	Text-based approach

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an examination of the effectiveness of two types of drama-based approaches implemented in a rigid compulsory curriculum with the aim of developing students' English language skills and their positive attitudes towards language learning. The research took place in a small private high school in the northern part of Italy. The study, which employed a mixed-methods approach, was conducted longitudinally with final year high school Italian students whose level of proficiency ranged from lower-intermediate to upper-intermediate. An experimental group was exposed to two interventions, each conducted over the course of a term: a text-based approach in the first term, followed by a full-scale process-oriented performance-based approach in the second term. Self-standing extracts from contemporary authentic plays combined with a variety of drama games were used in the first approach, whilst the latter focused on the production of a full-scale performance of the single one act short play, *Over the Wall*, by James Saunders (1977). At the same time, a control group was taught through a traditional approach. More specifically, the study focuses on measuring the degree of students' linguistic oral achievement according to various measures across the three main dimensions of language learning: complexity; accuracy; and fluency (hereafter CAF), both when the two approaches were taken together and compared to a control group, and when they were compared one against the other. Finally, this thesis also seeks to give an insight into students' perceptions, preferences and attitudes towards such approaches in terms of interest, usefulness, meaningfulness, enjoyment and problems and difficulties encountered.

### 1.1 Background to the study

Over the last two decades, Drama has gained increasing recognition for its pedagogical contribution to language learning, as highlighted by a number of scholars in the field (e.g., White 1984, Kao & Neill 1998, Winston 2011, Lutzker 2007, Schewe & Shaw 1993, Duff & Maley 2007, to name but a few). Drama is not a new approach in foreign language teaching. Its origins can be traced back to the nineteenth century (Schewe 2007). As Via (1976) asserts, this method has become an integral part of language teaching with the increasing prevalence



of the Communicative approach. More specifically, in recent years, research has shown that drama in language teaching forms a stepping-stone towards L2 oral proficiency (Miccoli 2003, Ryan Scheutz & Colangelo 2004, Marini-Maio 2010). When they start learning a new language, most second language learners hope to achieve advanced speaking abilities. However, generally language teachers tend to assume that students find language classes uninteresting and usually lack motivation, leading to a low level of language proficiency. In order to help learners to reach their goal of high proficiency in speaking a language, a growing number of scholars have focused their work on ways in which play texts and drama activities can support L2 learning. As Rossiter, Derwing, Manimtin & Thomson (2010: 585) contend, “many ESL classes offer little or no explicit, focused instruction on the development of oral fluency skills” leading to limited development in speaking skills.

There are numerous reasons that make drama suitable for language teaching. It is considered an ideal way of encouraging students to use real, everyday language (Maley & Duff 1984) and of helping them to make the linguistic step beyond the limitations of the language classroom (Almond 2005). Marini-Maio (2010: 241) stresses that drama in language learning has an intrinsic value as a creative and liberating impetus because it helps to “lower the students’ affective filter, liberating their potential, increasing their spontaneous communication and fluency” and consequently, learners’ positive attitudes and motivation towards learning a foreign language (Moody 2002, Miccoli 2003). Drama approaches provide an opportunity for students to acquire language in a fully contextualized manner paying special attention to both verbal and non-verbal communication. On the one hand, by using authentic texts grammatical structure and vocabulary are taught in a meaningful context (Carter 1996), whereas the subtext gives rise to endless debates and brings the cultural element into the language learning as well as involving the learners both emotionally and intellectually. Through providing a deeper insight into other cultures, dramatic texts help develop critical thinking. On the other hand, a performance creates a genuine purpose for interaction and communication (Miccoli 2003), promotes cooperation between students, gives space to meaningful repetition through rehearsals, trains the “emotional memory” (Petkovic 1979: 85), but above all brings enjoyment (Almond 2005) and, as a consequence, learners’ motivation and language skills are enhanced.

Yet, despite the evident success of this methodology, as demonstrated by its continuing growth, most research has been primarily concentrated in a university context or has investigated cases in which drama was implemented as an extracurricular activity. Therefore, the heartening results urged the necessity of a more substantial inclusion of drama texts in language teaching (Paran 2006, Carroli 2008). Classroom-based studies with a longitudinal component and data collected from various perspectives and sources have also been acknowledged (Beliveau & Kim 2013). Moreover, only a limited number of studies have attempted to set the stage for a performance within a high school compulsory curriculum (Moody 2002, Lutzker 2007, Jàrfàs 2008). Hence, there is a deficit which I attempt to redress with my work by exploring longitudinally, in an Italian context, the effectiveness of drama approaches within a compulsory high school curriculum which is currently under-researched (Schewe 2013).

In particular, it is notable that no study conducted to date has examined the achievement of students learning languages through authentic contemporary self-standing extracts and drama games versus performing a play specifically in a high school compulsory curriculum. Even though an evidence base exists for the use of a full-scale performance, there is relatively little published academic research into this specific approach to language learning (Schewe & Shaw 1993, Moody 2002). Rigid syllabuses, constraints of time and space, or lack of familiarity with such a method along with the fear of making themselves look foolish seem to be among the reasons language educators tend to avoid approaches involving drama. Thus, an additional feature which makes the current study distinctive is that it tries to bring freshness into the language class atmosphere by introducing innovative methods from the field of drama and theatre within a compulsory education.

Furthermore, a dearth of data has been registered in terms of the gains made by students learning language through drama approaches in their oral skills (Schewe 2013). Galante & Thomson (2016) rightly observe the extent to which research has not been framed in terms of which particular dimension of oral communication might be most affected by drama approaches, but instead has only reported the impact of such instruction on global oral

proficiency. Consequently, “more fine-grained analyses of how drama and theatre techniques promote the development of specific dimensions of oral communication are needed” (Galante & Thomson 2016: 2). Thus, the primary task of this study is to assess for the first time levels of L2 oral skills in terms of various sub-dimensions of CAF: a) syntactic complexity and mean length of AS-units for *complexity*, b) global accuracy and pronunciation for *accuracy*, and c) breakdown-fluency, speed-fluency, repair-fluency, mean length of run and phonation time ratio for *fluency*.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that there is also a growing recognition of drama as a compelling approach for increasing learners’ motivation and promoting more positive attitudes towards learning a foreign language. Yet, when considering perspectives on the use of drama in language teaching research to date, it is important to emphasize that with respect to a performance-based approach, when full-scale projects were carried out as an extracurricular activity or within a university context (Fonio 2012, Dalziel & Pennachi 2012), students were largely voluntarily enrolled in language drama courses and, therefore, they were more likely to be highly motivated from the outset. Consequently, it becomes imperative to research students’ attitudes towards authentic contemporary plays both as texts and as a process-oriented full-scale production, when such approaches are implemented as a standard part of student’ English classes. In the same fashion, Wessel (1987: 17) stresses that the use of drama in the teaching of languages requires future research, and he specifically questions whether the improved performance of those students voluntarily enrolled in extracurricular language drama projects can be truly measured and compared with that of other non-project students. Thus, tapping into students’ attitudes involved in the production of a play in a compulsory rigid curriculum constitutes one of the points upon which this study seeks to shed light, which undeniably could extend our understanding of the level that drama work within a mandatory language classroom and accordingly, its potential pedagogical implications.

## **1.2 Personal motivation for undertaking the study**

My motivation for undertaking this study is way largely related to my own experience of learning foreign languages through literary and authentic drama texts in communist Romania

where I grew up. Regardless of the language taught under the communist system, predominantly Russian or French (English was solely taught in a very few privileged schools in the large cities), foreign language coursebooks usually started with simple contrived literary texts and gradually moved on to authentic ones as the learners' level of language proficiency increased. Thus, grammar and vocabulary were always taught in the context of a literary text. Later on, when I moved to Italy, I despondently realized that language lessons rarely relied on a course book, let alone a syllabus organized entirely around literary texts. I also noticed that, generally, the majority of Italians I met struggled to speak English and I naively thought, at that time, that this might be due to the fact that their language classes did not make use of the wonderful literary texts that I was brought up on during my years of foreign language learning at school. Although helpful to a certain extent, I found the handouts provided in English language classes in Italy dull, dry, and uninteresting, commonly lacking the "emotional element" (Maley & Duff 1994) a literary text can offer. Then, during my university years in Italy, whilst fulfilling the long wished-for desire of becoming an English language teacher, I started hatching the idea that I would like to somehow prove or disprove my point that, teaching through authentic texts may increase learners' language skills and their positive attitudes towards learning a foreign language which it seemed that the majority of learners lacked. However, existing research devoted to teaching via literary authentic texts was rather broad and, I soon came to realize that focusing only on a single literary genre seemed to be a better idea. Thus, based on my research into authentic plays for my master's degree in Spanish literature, more specifically, how characters from a novel, when transposed into a play acquire more markedly dramatic features, and after having a pre-PhD meeting with my supervisor who was of great help in guiding my ideas, I decided to investigate the potential of teaching English through contemporary plays. After having carried out extensive research into the literature on teaching through drama I developed two dramatic approaches: teaching through texts versus teaching through performance. The rationale was that whilst dramatic texts along with drama games and activities can be feasibly developed and implemented within any compulsory curriculum, a performance-based approach might pose some challenges (see section 2.5.3). Thus, I was eager to examine in more depth this performative aspect of language learning

which the literature revealed as fascinating and particularly engaging for students, as well as giving promising results.

### **1.3 Definition of the term *drama***

*Drama* can take many forms and in literature the word *drama* is generally used as an umbrella term to denominate different types of drama-based language teaching approaches. Under the broad term *drama*, researchers, teachers, scholars, linguists and theatre practitioners include acting techniques (Sosulski 2008) *pantomime*, *improvisational theatre* (Mathias 2007), *simulation*, *creative drama* (Dodge 1998) *creative dramatics* (Sam 1990), *strategic interaction* (Di Pietro 1987) *role-plays*, *short sketches*, *drama activities* (Dougill 1994) *drama techniques* (Maley & Duff, 2003) *games and mimics*, *theatre* (Aita 2009, Marini-Maio 2010), *educational drama* (Moody 2002), *theatrical performance* (Bourke 1993, Bancheri 2010), *drama* (Fonio & Genicot 2011, Wessels 1987, Almond 2005) and the list is still not exhaustive. Borge (2007: 3) explains that all these activities, and much more, known generally as drama-based approaches in language teaching form an integral part of the overall teaching concept referred to as Communicative Language Learning as advocated by Morrow (1981) and Brumfit (1984). Overall, drama is “communication between people” (Via, 1987: 10) and an “inextricable part of all social interactions” (DiNapoli 2003: 17).

For the purpose of this thesis, *drama* is “any activity which asked the students to portray a) himself/herself in an imaginary situation or b) another person in an imaginary situation” (Holden 1981: 1). The term drama comes from Greek and means “action” and, thus, warm-up exercises, drama games and theatrical techniques as activities which include gestures, feelings and action are also included here.

#### **1.3.1 Definition of *drama as text***

In the context of this research, *drama as text* is essentially an authentic play written with the purpose of being performed on the stage. For a better understanding, it becomes necessary to clearly demarcate between the drama of the scripted page and the drama in performance.

Although there is a tight relationship between them as most of the performances have a script on a page as a starting point, and unmistakably begin from the interpretation of the words on a page, a performance involves the participants physically and emotionally in a different way compared to simple texts. The dramatic text is “the literary genre which is most like naturally occurring conversation” because it consists largely of character-to-character interaction (Short 1996: 168); “[...] drama is not made of words alone, but of sights and sounds, stillness and motion, noise and silence, relationships and responses” (Styan 1975: vii). Since only one definition would be partial, both definitions provided by Short (1996) and Styan (1975) together are adopted for the present study, as they complement one another when referring to the literary dramatic text while it is still a script and therefore, still literature.

### 1.3.2 Definition of *drama as performance*

Langham (1983: viii) distinguishes between drama as literature or as text and drama as performance by affirming: “There is all the difference in the world between literature and drama. A play’s sound, music, movement, looks, dynamics, and much more are to be discovered deep in the script, yet cannot be detected through strictly literary methods of reading and analysis”. Wessels (1987: 7) defines drama in a very concise, but powerful way: “Drama is doing. Drama is being,” remarkably implying that the essence of a literary dramatic text lies in its performative act. Although drama in performance becomes synonymous with theatre for many, Carkin (2004: I) contrasts the terms *drama* and *theater*. For him, drama is “the opposite of the illusion creating process with which the word *theater* is too often associated” (Introduction, I). Fleming (2006: 3) acknowledges that “traditionally *theater* has been taken to refer to performance whereas *drama* has referred to the work designed for stage representation, the body of written play”. He points out that in the context of drama teaching, however, the terms are used differently: theatre is largely concerned with the communication between actors and spectators, thus, necessarily requiring an audience, whereas *drama* is largely “concerned with the participants’ experience irrespective of any function of communication to an audience” as emphasized by Way (1967) (*idem*: 3). The difference between the terms lies in the presence or the absence of the audience. For *drama in performance* the definition provided by Marini-Maio (2010) is adopted, for whom the

terms drama, theatre and performance overlap, as being the most comprehensive and more appropriate than other definitions for the scope of the present research. She defines a full-scale performance as “a team project focusing primarily on the analysis, [...] and mise-en-scène of a dramatic text converging on a public performance of a fully-fledged play. It includes the discussion of production issues concerning props, costumes, lights, sounds, publicity and all the material details necessary to stage a play” (*ibid*: 241).

A full-scale performance can be process or product-oriented. A *process-oriented form* “tends to focus on the dramatic medium itself, in which the negotiation, rehearsal and preparation for dramatic representation becomes the focus for language learning” (Moody, 2002: 135-136). Instead, a *product-oriented form* involves various processes in the interpretation, rehearsal and public performance of a text and “emphasizes the final staging of the student’s public performance, wherein the concluding dramatic realization in front of an audience is viewed as one of the primary goals of the learning experience” (Moody, 2002: 135-136). Many language educators who employ drama in their language classrooms give importance to the process, while others find the idea of product much more motivating for students since the final performance is the aim for a collective achievement.

To sum up, in the present research, drama as a *text-based approach* involves learning language by using self-standing authentic contemporary play extracts combined with dramatic games and activities, whereas drama as a *performance-based approach* includes a process-oriented full-scale performance of a single authentic play.

## 1.4 Outline of the thesis

The present thesis comprises six chapters. This chapter provides an introduction followed by the rationale for undertaking this research and also includes definitions of the important terms used throughout the text of this research.

Chapter Two reviews the research related to this study discussing relevant theories related to the use of authentic literary dramatic texts and drama-based approaches in language teaching,

with an emphasis on a text-based approach, as well as on a full-scale process-oriented performance-based approach. The remainder of the Literature Review describes significant studies related to the present research followed by a historical overview of complexity, accuracy and fluency (CAF) and the rationale for choosing these three dimensions for the present study, and concludes with the presentation of the research questions addressed.

Chapter Three provides details concerning the research design and the methodology of the study, unfolding the context and the participants in the research, the data collection instruments and the procedures for collecting and analysing the quantitative and qualitative data. This chapter also describes the lesson procedures regarding the implementation of the two approaches: a text-based and a performance-based approach, along with the rationale behind the choice of the play scripts used. The traditional in-class based approach is also described.

The subsequent chapter, Chapter Four, reports on the findings of the study. It begins with the quantitative results regarding measures of subcomponents of oral complexity, accuracy and fluency achieved by the participants in the study, followed, firstly, by a presentation of the quantitative results from the questionnaire and, secondly, by the qualitative results obtained from the open questions in the questionnaires and interviews combined.

Thus, Chapter Five compares and discusses the results of the two approaches to this study, both when taken together and compared to the results from a control group and when compared separately one against the other. Firstly, the quantitative findings which emerged from the oral testing are discussed, then the qualitative findings from the questionnaires and interviews are integrated and discussed in the remainder of this chapter which ends with the discussion of the quantitative part of the questionnaire.

Finally, Chapter Six gives the conclusion which sums up the findings of the study by revisiting each research question separately, then it presents the strengths and limitations of the study and also discusses implications of the present research for language educators. Finally, looking forward, ideas and recommendations for further research are suggested.





## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

*Education is concerned with individuals; drama is concerned with the individuality of individuals, with the uniqueness of each human essence (Way, 1967: 3).*

### 2.1 Drama as text

#### 2.1.1 Benefits of teaching language through authentic dramatic texts

Many researchers have stressed the importance of using literary texts in language teaching because they are considered to be “authentic” material (Widdowson 1975, Collie & Slater 1991, Carter & Long 1992, Short 1996, Brumfit & Carter 1991, Carroli 2008, Paran 2006 to name but a few). But what does “authentic” mean and what are the benefits of using such texts compared to other types of material?

The term “authentic” was used as a reaction against the “artificial” language used in L2 textbooks, which often is closer to an idealized standard language than to the actual language used in natural everyday communication (Kramsch 1993 as expounded in Carroli 2008). In the context of the present research, the authentic texts are those texts which “are not fashioned for the specific purpose of teaching a language” (Collie & Slater 1991: 3), but they are “genuine and undistorted” (*ibid*: 6). An authentic text “was created to fulfill some social purpose in the language community in which it was produced” (Little & Singleton 1988: 21) and hence, it is rich in cultural references. By placing a significant value on cultural context, “authentic” literature becomes “unadulterated” literature which can elicit complex interpretation (Carroli 2008). More specifically, talking about dramatic texts, an authentic play is that piece of work written with the purpose of being performed on the stage and not with the specific purpose of teaching language (Collie & Slater 1987).

The advantages of teaching language through authentic texts have been put forward by many authors. First of all, what an authentic text offers are the structures and vocabulary to be taught in a meaningful context. Researchers in the area of discourse analysis have argued that all languages should be thought of as discourse, enhancing the importance of teaching grammar and vocabulary in a discourse context. Carter (1999) claims that literature is both an example of language in use and a context for language use, and that grammar should be taught not by rote or abstract way, but in relation to the ways in which writers creatively exploit grammatical rules in order to produce particular literary-aesthetic effects. Authentic materials are inherently more interesting than contrived ones because of their intent to communicate a message rather than highlight target language (Little, David & Singleton 1989, as cited in Gilmore 2007) and for this reason an authentic text is fully and genuinely enjoyed (Carroli 2008). As Lazar points out (1993: 3) “the *plays* convey their message by paying considerable attention to language which is rich and multi-layered”. The richness of vocabulary and the plurality of meanings which the words can acquire in the context of a literary text require a sort of personal interpretation on the reader’s part, providing both thematic and aesthetic interpretation which the simple text does not contain. Working with authentic texts can engage students both in verbal response and activity response which are “*genuine* language activities, not one contrived around a fabricated text” (*ibid*: 58). According to Carroli (2008), the literary texts seem to develop discussions naturally, allowing a natural move from the low-level question to high level question, from the “obvious” in a text to a personal response based on the personal interpretation of the reader. By responding individually to the authentic texts and deciphering the message learners become active makers of meaning. Thus, there is a greater volume of spoken language produced through the interactional “language of discourse, transaction, negotiation, explanation and inquiry” (Jones 1982: 7, as cited in Gill 2013: 36), as the participants “suggest, infer, qualify, hypothesize, generalize, or disagree” (*idem*: 36) than through texts contrived for the teaching purposes.

Lin (2006) maintains that authentic literary texts are built on a *double articulation* as it operates through two levels of discourse. The first is the literal or paraphrasable meaning of the text; the second is the discourse which works between the text and the reader that arises

from interpreting the significance of the words within the text. Therefore, teaching grammar and vocabulary through authentic texts invites pupils to pay “close attention to lexical and grammatical patterns in order to read more precisely what really is happening within the world of the text” and to “see further patterns in the linguistic patterns and make sense of them in order to interpret the second-level thematic meanings in the discourse between the text and the reader” (*ibid*: 114). In this way, the learners can see how the meanings are constructed by the language and therefore, open to question, reflection and different responses.

Working on authentic texts in order to unravel the many meanings of a word embodied in complex forms is more likely to give the opportunity to students to expand their language awareness. Learners practise the target language in a meaningful context, but learning is moving beyond the traditional four language skills “to the deployment of the indispensable but often ignored or taken for granted fifth skill which is thinking” (McRae, 1999: 23). Because of discussions and active participation for negotiation of meaning through “thinking” about the text creatively and imaginatively, students would be expected to develop their oral language skills.

Discussion and dramatic activities generated by dramatic literary texts allow for considerable variation in responses and they are conducive to accommodating multiple levels of linguistic ability and learners’ types. Although students may acknowledge that there is no fixed meaning, they also understand that not every response is appropriate and valid and that the meaning of a text given is not entirely subjective. They also realize that they reach a conclusion through experimentation and argumentation with their peers “by accessing their own and one another’s knowledge bases and consciously employing reading strategies” (*ibid*: 247). Reader-response theory suggests that student voice is essential to learning from literature, thus students’ responses to texts become the starting point for further discussion rather than being the end point. Kim (2004) investigated an L2 class consciously operating in a reader-response paradigm and found that learners collaborated actively to clarify meanings both at a literal and more interpretative level. They focused on and discussed particular forms but also inferred and made judgments collaboratively. Also, they took expressions from

the text and appropriated them for their own expressive purposes and the extensive discussions on the culture of the target language were particularly engaging through meaningful interaction. Kim concludes that she found evidence for engagement and that the activities in which students engaged are ultimately likely to promote second language acquisition. Interviews used in the study revealed that students also found authentic dramatic texts enjoyable, motivating and valuable for their learning.

Additionally, an authentic text offers a wide range of styles and registers. When working on texts, learners react not only to the ideas but to the artistic form in which they are presented, thus content and form become equally important. The meaning is not unique and fixed, and leads to different interpretations which greatly depend on the form in which the words are embodied. According to Brumfit's (1991: 185) remark, "the meaning is always subjected to negotiation, for it results from the relationship between reader(s) and writer", and for this reason "there can be no final reading of a literary text" (*ibid*). Birch (1991), as cited in McCarthy (1999: 99), also argues that there are no "right" answers as the dramatic text is an "imperfect template for possible discourses" (*ibid*) in which the personal creative response of the participants acquires the main relevance. By trying to decipher the message conveyed students can be engaged in various activities, which, indisputably, would reinforce their active participation and involve them in practicing skills like predicting, guessing or inferring, and therefore, encourage them to go "beyond what is said to what is implied" (Maley 1989). This becomes invaluable oral language practice which develops language skills by scrutinizing the text through careful analyses of the linguistic choices. By being exposed to a variety of texts, therefore to a variety of styles and registers, learners should increase not only their linguistic *accuracy and fluency*, but also develop their lexis which inevitably should lead to a higher *complexity* of learners' target language.

The cultural aspect is another reason for the use of an authentic play. Literacy is also "at the core of how human beings communicate and situate themselves in relation to one another and over time" (Moody, 2002: 138) and "powerful aesthetic responses can also spring forth" from a literary script (Moody, 2002: 139). In order to interpret play scripts, learners are required to reflect upon them because within those texts are the records not only of the

language, but also the culture of the target language. Similarly, Carroli (2008) focuses the context of a literary text on cultural benefits, linking words and language with L2 culture: “The literary text can become a collective journey of discovery and discernment of language-literature-culture intersections through negotiation of meaning, leading to learning, achievement and change” (*ibid*: 9). This seems to be particularly beneficial because it brings learners to a greater understanding of the social, political or historical events which lie behind the text. By becoming familiar with the culture of the language studied, learners become more familiar with how the characters in a play feel, talk, behave and react under certain circumstances and therefore grasp subtleties of the target language. Del Fattore-Olson (2010: 268) talks about a process of *immersion* in the study of the foreign language through dramatic text as it offers the opportunity for students to bring together grammar, lexicon and cultural background as a “whole” by unifying linguistic area with the literary and socio-cultural one. As a result of bringing together literary and cultural components with linguistic interaction the students’ fluency in the target language would be expected to increase (*ibid*).

Hoecherl-Alden (2006) underlies how learning language by using authentic literary texts helps students identify figurative speech, understand subtle differences in language use, learn how to think critically and creatively and recognize underlying cultural assumptions by enabling learners to provide deeper insights into the inner workings of other cultures. She further holds that the teacher’s role should also be to educate students to become critical consumers of both their own culture and that of the foreign language. Only by encouraging students to become analytical thinkers in an L2 as well as their own language, they will develop unique insights and will be able “to detect overt and covert stereotyping in the narratives of the dominant culture” (*ibid*: 245). Awareness of a given text’s cultural otherness may elicit strong emotional responses which can be “either unsettling or invigorating depending on the reader’s attitude” (Hoecherl-Alden 2006: 250). Through directly experiencing another culture, both the affective and the cognitive dimensions of one’s personality are involved.

For Mattix (2002), as expounded in Hall (2005), a prime reasoning for using unaltered literary texts in language learning is that they arouse feelings. Both literature and language

teaching involve the development of a feeling for language and of *responses* to text. Green (2000: 66), as cited in Hall (2005: 175), highlights a fact generally overlooked by philosophers, cognitive scientists and even linguists that language causes feelings, produces emotions and therefore, moves people:

When one reads a work of literature [...] it is not some mental representations that enable us to feel the way we do, it is the power of the words. We may need some sort of mental representation to orientate ourselves around the world of the text, but something else is going on in terms of more complex cognitive activities. If words are only prompts for the construction of meaning, how is it that they can affect me even if I do not “understand” them?

Carroli (2008) further upholds that the emotional and cultural elements which stem from an authentic text can be more motivating for learners as it will not deprive them of aesthetical pleasure. Although simple exercises help language learners to learn grammar and vocabulary, authentic literature can develop language abilities by focusing on links between language, form, style and culture. For this reason, the pedagogic responsibility of foreign language educators is “to select texts written by writers that would be received by target audiences as authentic within a pedagogy that promotes awareness and change” (*ibid*: 13) for additionally, “literature teaches us to be human” (McMaster 1998).

### **2.1.1 What is distinctive about plays?**

*That's why I write for the theatre, because it's concerned with the spoken rather than the written word. (Willy Russell)*

A play exists in performance but, before being performed it exists as words on a page, or as a text. As Lazar (1993: 137) notices “neither of these views are mutually exclusive, since most of the performances begin from an interpretation of the words on a page; and without those words the gesture and movements of the cast, the sets and costumes, the lighting and music would be meaningless”. But how is the language of drama distinctive compared to other types of discourses such as poems, novels and short stories?

Due to the fact that language is communication and therefore dialogically interactive, many authors propose the teaching of language through dramatic texts because most parts of them are made up of dialogue. Short (1996:168) acknowledges that drama is “the literary genre which is most like naturally occurring conversation” because on the one hand, it consists largely of character-to-character interaction. He asserts that most poems are authorial monologues compared to dramatic texts, while novels contain large sketches of narrative description, although both are interactively understood by the reader. On the other hand, Wessels (1987) opines that the real communication includes hesitations, interruptions, distractions, misunderstandings and sometimes even silences. It also involves emotions, whilst the relationships between the characters in an authentic text will be affected by the status of each individual speaking. Additionally, there is the body language which is given by facial expressions, gestures and the position of the limbs “which are as eloquent as words” (*ibid*: 11). According to Wessels (1987), the artificial dialogues presented in textbooks dispense with these aspects of *genuine communication* and this is one of the reasons the students fail to achieve the ability to communicate effectively outside the classroom. Furthermore, plays allow for studying such communicative strategies as false starts and circumlocution (Almond 2005). Well-written plays by and large consist of short utterances which generally reflect authentic language use, and these prove to be useful for the internalisation and memorisation of vocabulary and functional chunks of language. Almond (2005) reports how on several occasions students have commented that they used “chunks” from the play he used in the language class in their everyday lives.

Accordingly, Moody (2002) stresses the value of teaching not only the syntax and the vocabulary, but even the other aspects of the language like those regarding pragmatics or other culturally imbedded communicative competencies because people use also gestures, movements, intonation, inflection, and less overt ways of establishing their relationships and positions of power, both in oral communication and with their bodies. He emphasizes that “language is made up of utterances, actions and reactions, and then of responding to those communicative acts” (*ibid*: 137). In fact, the dramatic texts examine broader aspects of communication which include “eye contact and eye movement, posture and movement, proxemics and elements of prosody such as pitch, tone, volume, tempo” (Almond 2005: 11).



Authentic dramatic texts are usually completed with stage directions, feelings expressed and gestures. In this sense, the language of drama is distinctive in that it attempts to fill the gap between a careful controlled language and the behaviour we are confronted with in the outside world, so that learners can practise in the classroom that language which they later have to use outside (Almond 2005). “Drama is a spoken language” (McCarthy 1996: 89). It follows that the dramatic dialogues of an authentic play appear to be much closer to the real communication compared to the artificial dialogues or other types of discourse, and therefore, they seem more appropriate to make the step from the language used in the classroom to that of the outside world, leading to the development of the oral skills in a more natural and complete manner.

Regarding the dialogues in a dramatic play or “the conversational genre” (Short, 1996: 168 ), Short (1996) gives detailed reasons for how drama is and how it is not like naturally occurring conversation. He holds that even though dramatic texts are written to be spoken they are designed in such a way that they are overheard by an audience making them not resemble normal conversation. Normal conversation is unprepared and unrehearsed and it has plenty of normal non-fluencies such as voiced fillers, mispronunciations, unnecessary repetitions, grammatical structures which are abandoned and attempts at taking conversational turns which are lost. They do not occur in drama dialogue “precisely because drama dialogue is written, even though it is written to be spoken” (*ibid*: 177). If features associated with normal non-fluency happen to occur, they are perceived by the audience as having a meaningful function precisely because the play writer must have included them on purpose. Furthermore, feedback does not take place in drama conversation in the same way as in real life: no gestures for feedback, such as nodding for approval or pulling a funny face to indicate displeasure, usually occur on stage as regularly as they do in real life. During a play, in most of the cases, when one character is talking, the other character is standing completely still and expressionless; if the silent character were to start moving around the audience would start interpreting. Nonetheless, dramatic text is like natural conversation due to the turn taking patterns, or for instance to how we are polite or impolite in day-to-day speech.

### 2.1.3 Why contemporary?

Researchers in the field have pointed out that authentic dramatic texts written in a modern idiom are more straightforward, and therefore, more appropriate to make the linguistic step from inside the classroom to the outside world (Marckwardt 1978: 45, Wessels 1987, Lazar 1993). Contemporary plays seem to embody the requirement of the communicative approach in language teaching because “the vocabulary used is rich and immediate, full of idiomatic language and samples of speech which reflects more accurately how English is used in the real world” (Almond 2005: 11). They contain “up-to-date idiomatic usage” of language (Almond 2005:18).

Wessel (1987) argues for a contemporary language possibly dating from the 1950s to the present day, which has to incorporate plenty of conversational interaction in the texts, where “the main plot should be simple and the contents of plays relatively concrete” (*ibid*: 115). As a general rule, Almond (2005) suggests avoiding plays written before 1960 and those in a specific dialect. Collie & Slater (1991) consider interest, appeal and relevance of a text much more important than the language used, however, they admit that in order to be effective, the language has to be “quite straightforward and simple”, “where the style remains fairly simple and uncluttered” (*ibid*: 15).

Additionally, contemporary plays offer opportunities for useful language transfer along with insights into contemporary social, political or cultural aspects (Collie & Slater 1991). Undoubtedly, modern texts deal with a universality of themes linked to the experiences of the day-to-day reality of the students and with the most essential questions of human existence like friendship, love, death, life, which concern all cultures regardless of the experiences and perceptions they have (Maley 1989). Aita (2009) emphasizes that contemporary plays include topics which interrogate many aspects of life which offer the potential for endless debates and “a platform to personalize” students’ learning (*ibid*: 53). Almond (2005: 18) recommends that the play chosen should be not too obscure, “the plot should be relatively straightforward and the characters quite easy to relate to”. Being linked to their experience and by being emotionally involved students are more likely to express their personal ideas and feelings on the issues they are directly concerned with. In this way, they are more

motivated to speak, to produce language and to practise their communication skills through interaction both with the text and other people. By contrast, if the text does not reflect the student's life and interest, being alien to their own experience it may increase a sense of "frustration, inferiority and even powerlessness" (Lazar 1993: 3).

Hirvela & Boyle (1988) conducted a survey of an English language course for Chinese students with the aim of investigating students' attitudes towards literature. With respect to dramatic texts, their findings showed that 20% of the students fear drama as a literary genre and this was partly based on their lack of previous experience with authentic texts. Participants involved in the study were "interested in reading something more modern" (*ibid*: 180), since an aspect causing particular trouble was the vocabulary in non-modern texts. Hirvela & Boyle (1988) concluded that the language of texts should be contemporary, as "basically, it was a plea for the modern and comprehensible, as opposed to the revered but obscure" (*ibid*). Dodson (2002) also reports that the students in her class decided to stage a play in a modern idiom as they were afraid of the "difficult" idiom of the non-modern plays. In addition, the response to a questionnaire employed by Butler (2006: 11) in a first year university English programme attempting to integrate the teaching of language through literature, again raises the issue of contemporary language:

I think literature is a bit difficult for me, because when I was at high school we used to do Macbeth and Julius Caesar the English in there is very complicated and it has no bright future. Maybe if I could read a very simple literature I can change the attitude towards literature.<sup>1</sup>

These studies largely suggest that both contemporary language and facts described in the play are felt by the students to be much closer to their day-to-day reality, thus more easily transferable to the real world.

Having reviewed some of the reasons which make contemporary plays suitable for language teaching, the next section will look into the advantages which dramatic games and activities can bring into language classroom in general.

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<sup>1</sup> A student's response to the questionnaire used in the study (University of North West)

## 2.2 Benefits of using dramatic games and activities in L2 learning

*“Action speaks louder than words”<sup>2</sup>*

A larger number of scholars have focused on ways dramatic games and activities (Heathcote & Bolton 1995, Maley & Duff 1975), and drama and literacy (Grady 2000, Fleming 2004) can foster second language learning in the classroom. Using various drama-based approaches, scholars propose to varying degrees that drama is indispensable because it puts language into context, “arouse(s) interest and foster(s) personality development” and ultimately “encourages adaptability, fluency and communicative competences” (Belliveau & Kim 2013: 6). Drama activities are useful in “motivating students, holding their attention and stimulating their creativity” (Ulas 2008: 877). The effectiveness of drama in oral skills development arises from its experiential learning characteristics because drama enhances students’ learning through learning by doing and through “experience and experiencing” (Spolin 1999: 3).

Wessels (1987) suggests that dramatic activities in general have a positive impact on language learners because they promote acquisition of meaningful and fluent interaction in the target language along with the assimilation of a whole range of pronunciation and prosodic-features in a fully contextualized and interactive manner. Undeniably, dramatic activities promote “the contextualized acquisition of new vocabulary and structure” (*ibid*: 13) as “a classroom that uses drama is not only concerned with the words and expressions used but with the situations in which the words should and should not be used” (Via 1976, xiv), and eventually learners will gain an improved sense of confidence to use the target language. Wessels (1987) distinguishes between *structure games* which reinforce a particular area of grammar and *drama games* where the emphasis is put on production rather than reception. In games, pupils are challenged to take part and respond in a meaningful way. The goal is not solely to practise structures of the foreign language, but to take part creatively and spontaneously in interactive processes within the group. Through drama learners are actively

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<sup>2</sup> Dorney, Z. (2007), *Research Methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methodologies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 246.

involved and encouraged to use their imagination and, most of all, to express emotions: drama encourages both learning and acquisition because learners practise more than just the core vocabulary and generate discussion among themselves by fostering a need to speak and “to express themselves with their body and soul” (Ronke 2005). Drama activities “lend meaning to language structures by letting students experience the language in concrete situations” (Giebert 2014: 4).

Furthermore, dramatic activities bring into play emotions. Emotions can be positive or negative and the latter are considered as a hindrance to successful learning (Dulay & Burt 1977). According to Giebert (2014: 5), “ideally positive feelings such as enjoying a collaborative and creative atmosphere and pride in achievement will prevail” but even if negative emotions such as shyness, “insecurity or stage-fright are occasionally experienced, the learning will become more memorable than in a neutral, predominantly cognitive setting”, as it is set apart from other events. When there is an emotional response to a perception or a bit of learning, the brain marks it as useful to the organism (Damasio 1994). Hence, drama in language learning should be used “in order to mark elements of language with emotion so that students will remember them” (Giebert 2014: 5).

### *Drama promotes physical and active participation*

Generally, drama involves physical activity which can lead to improved retention of vocabulary, grammar and language structures as examined by O’Gara (2008), Kao & O’Neill (1998) and Sambanis (2013). “The more sensory organs a student uses while learning, the greater the retention of the lessons” (Ulas 2013). Physical learning includes both non-verbal and para-verbal communication. As outlined by Giebert (2014), physical learning becomes relevant on more levels. On the word level, by accompanying words and phrases with gestures can make them more memorable (Sambanis 2003; Shiffler 2012; Giebert 2014), whilst helping learners to acquire the correct rhythm, stress and intonation. New vocabulary and language structures which have been experienced visually, aurally, and kinesthetically provide students with a stronger representation and subsequently, a more durable retention.

On the phoneme level, pronunciation and articulation games can also assist learners to explore the sounds of the target language learned. “Physical poses, gestures, and movements support and reinforce oral production” (Feldhendler 1993: 174 as cited in Ronke 2005: 162) because physical action can also serve to satisfy the body’s need for movement, activate the brain, or relieve stress and so learning will be more successful. Vocabulary and grammar develop through enacted situations (Erdman 1991). Gill (2014) found that students learning through drama exhibited more animated paralanguage and their voices became more expressive. In drama activities shy students take the risk regardless of the danger of mispronunciation, e.g. faulty syllable length that might cause “a loss of face” (*ibid*: 30), which can have a detrimental effect on the learner.

Ronke (2005) comments that a class based on drama starts with the premise that a foreign language is learned not only through passive memorization and understanding like other subjects but undoubtedly through active participation: the material learned needs to be immediately implemented through speech and actions. When students, especially older ones, are asked to produce language they are usually inhibited and highly self-conscious. Instead, dramatic games and warm-up exercises get students on their feet and moving whilst they speak and this helps them to break down their inhibitions regarding speaking and interacting and “makes them laugh which is most likely to reduce the anxiety in the process” as well as “placing the language in a realistic context and warming-up their voices” (Ronke 2005: 146). Physical and active learning increase students’ motivation because the exercises are fun and stimulating. Gardner (1983) and Schmidt (1991) hypothesize in their research that the physical learning is the “motor” for both the “interactively” and the “instrumentally” motivated learner. Since language is a form of social action, and in order for the communication to be effective, body and language need to be effectively integrated. Leontiev (1971) as cited in Ronke (2005: 104) believes that a good grasp of non-verbal behaviour is required to entirely master a foreign language and drama provides language learners with a greater range of non-verbal language whilst assisting them to practice by using it.

*Drama promotes cooperative learning in social contexts*

In general, students are more inclined to participate in discourse once the teacher stops being the dominant figure and takes a non-intrusive stance (Di Pietro, 1987) and dramatic activities undoubtedly, provide that sort of effective learning environment where “the learner rather than the language or indeed the teacher is at the centre of the learning process” (Davies 1990: 97). From this point of view, drama is “inevitably learner-centred because it can only operate through active cooperation” (Fleming 2006: 1).

“Interaction” has been central to theories of second language learning and pedagogy since the 1980s. Talking about the interactive perspective in language education, Rivers (1987: 4) acknowledges that “students achieve facility in using a language when their attention is focused on conveying and receiving authentic messages (that is, messages that contain information of interest to both speaker and listener in a situation of importance to both)”.

Educational theorists such as Bruner (1996) and Vygotsky (1978) contend that dramatic activities facilitate learning because they provide opportunities for co-constructing knowledge by expanding and deepening understanding of the topics being explored. Unquestionably, drama offers multiple chances for social interaction and feedback which is certainly necessary for internalizing new knowledge. Through cooperative learning, drama brings into play the *zone of proximal development (zpd)* as theorized by the Russian psychologist Vygotsky (1978) and offers possibilities for scaffolding, so that, learners can perform linguistic functions at a much higher level than is possible on their own. He defined the *zpd* as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving, and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky 1978: 78) and postulated that within the *zpd* there is an ideal level which instruction should aim to meet. Whilst engaging in dramatic activities, games and theatrical techniques learners are encouraged to present, use and learn language in and through interaction situated in social contexts, which is sensitive to learners’ potential development. Therefore, cooperation between peers can be a powerful tool to promote the co-construction and hopefully, internalization of L2 knowledge. It is often the case that a class comprises

learners of different levels of oral English proficiency. As Gill (2013) reports, it has been found that learners who struggle benefit from the presence of more capable students in their class when working collaboratively. This is because the latter assists as scaffolds, “providing guided support to their peers during collaborative L2 interactions” (Donato 1994: 51). Drama can also be an important means of scaffolding for the emergent reader by providing them with a rich background to draw upon in future readings (McMaster 1998) and in this way, contributing to developing learners’ language complexity.

Gill (2013) upholds that compared to the quantity of English in conventional classes, cooperative work results in more speaking time which, in turn, generates more spoken language. In a similar vein, Kagan (1995) suggests that an interactive session in class results in more language output in two minutes than in a non-interactive one in an hour. “Drama allows learners to participate in wide-ranging oral interaction with a variety of language forms” (Long & Porter 1985 as cited in Gill 2013: 31) and “offers a social context in which to use and learn language” (Bournot-Trites *et al.* 2007: 11). Bournot-Trites *et al.*’s (2007) study of grade six and seven French learners shows that the opportunity to explore a foreign language within a social context through drama-based strategies increased students’ motivation, as well as fluency in the target language. Foster (1998) upholds that collaborative work benefits students through giving them L2 speaking time, and because such an activity does not entail giving public presentations in front of class, they avoid “negative effects” (a term introduced in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the field of psychology) such as anxiety and self-consciousness. In a similar vein, Heitzman (2009), as cited in Gill (2013), advocates that the greater the cooperation between learners, the more conducive the environment for learning. His findings showed that using cooperative learning through drama the class atmosphere went from “relatively quiet, with limited verbal involvement by the participants”, to “an increasingly greater quantity of speech and greater interaction between participants” and concluded that this increased output “appears to point to the influence of drama strategies” (Gill 2103: 34).



*Drama increases motivation and feelings of empathy*

Most language teachers would agree that motivation is the most important affective factor for success or failure in language learning. Krashen (1982) in his “Affective filter theory” holds that if motivation is low the *affective filter* is high and therefore the brain will not be receptive to language input. First of all, drama pedagogy can effectively provide a low affective filter with its enjoyable atmosphere and novelty brought into the language classroom, which in turn increases motivation and thus, promotes learning (Ronke 2005). For instance, as Maley & Duff (1984) contend, something which is unpredictable results in heightened sense of excitement, enjoyment and motivation. The novelty lies both in the newness and its inherent unpredictability (Gill 2013). “There is a sense of expectancy that, in turn, causes us to pay attention to what is coming next” (Gill 2013: 35). As Barkuizen (1998) notices, when topics create a sense of excitement, there is heightened motivation and receptivity and where there is motivation, there is productivity (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Unpredictability also prevents boredom (Small, *et al.* 1996) which increases motivation. When students are focused and motivated, learning becomes not only enjoyable but learners achieve a higher level of cognition, make connections and experience the whole process of learning in a more meaningful way. Gill (2013) found that students who learned through drama displayed more enthusiasm conceivably due to the fun factor. She also discovered that students produced more speech which was due to a combination of the novelty factor and the relaxation-enhanced atmosphere created by dramatic activities.

Dramatic activities help break the impasse created by the fear of rejection, low self-esteem, and absence of spontaneity (Stern 1980 as cited in Gill 2013). “Anxious students will not learn as quickly as relaxed students” (Gill 2013: 34) and drama by creating a relaxed atmosphere can help alleviate this anxiety as it has a learner-centred and immersion-based format which is activity oriented that can help increase speech output. Dramatic activities promote a safe atmosphere where students can take the risk with a sense of excitement. Language teaching drama experts like Klippel (1984: 7) and Almond (2005: 50) agree that a friendly environment is of the utmost importance, where mistakes can be made without fear of being ridiculed, and where students can be uninhibited. Research has also demonstrated

that dramatic activities have turned completely passive and disinterested students into highly enthusiastic ones (cf. Wager *et al.* 2009: 58, Jàrfàs 2008, Moody 2002).

It follows that, as Ronke (2005) holds, if students are successful in getting rid of their inhibition they can become “empathic” which is another important factor in language. Through empathy learners can give up feelings of “ego-boundaries and feel the emotional state of someone or something outside of one’s own ego” (*ibid.*: 138) which in turn reduces the likelihood of stereotypes or misconceptions. The capability of empathy is strengthened by “exploring identities beyond their own through inhabiting fictional characters” (Giebert 214: 12).

### **2.3 Drama as text-based approach**

Hoecherl-Alden (2006) maintains that an authentic text is an invaluable tool for teachers because it is one of the few vehicles of instruction that can support not only the development of oral skills but every aspect of literacy development: it contributes greatly to oral and to written acquisition “since oral language provides the foundation for reading and writing” (*ibid.*: 246). Furthermore, McMaster (1998: 2) asserts that “in order to achieve comprehension, further proficiency, and hone critical thinking skills, students need to be accustomed to working in interpretive communities and resolving linguistic as well as content issues collaboratively throughout”. For high school levels this means moving away from a textbook-based to a drama-based instruction which contextualizes grammar instruction within literary and other content discussions. “Students are rarely allowed to view a text as anything but an abstract, flat piece of printed matter, isolated from and irrelevant to their lives” (Heathcote 1982, as cited in Wessels 1987: 93) and even though text analysis and reading cannot be omitted from language teaching, the teacher “needs to breathe life into the words on the paper” (Ronke 2005: 132). The implementation of dramatic games and techniques and enactment strategies encourages students to become more creative and “to apply their social, physical and intellectual selves to L2 literature analysis” (Hoecherl-Alden 2006: 244). A simple drama script extract and appropriate activities make drama work at the level of repeated reading, decoding knowledge and expanding vocabulary, developing

syntactic knowledge as well as discourse and metacognitive knowledge (McMaster 1998) which ultimately lead not solely to the improvement of learners' oral skills but all other language related skills. Creative interaction with a dramatic text results in communicating personal interpretation. Hence, by meaningfully combining dramatic learner-centred activities with analysis of the authentic texts can help students to deepen their understanding of the target language. Merging activities that attempt to engage the analytical abilities and the creativity of students will more likely lead to a better understanding and learning of the target language. Furthermore, students will undeniably become emotionally involved: on the one hand, there will be emotional personal responses to the text, whilst on the other hand the dramatic games in which students will take part will also engage their feelings and in this way language will become more memorable.

Having reviewed the benefits which the implementation of authentic play texts and dramatic activities can bring into the language classroom, in the next section I will give an insight into drama as performance and, subsequently, into the advantages of a full-scale performance for language learning.

## **2.4 Drama as performance**

*"Learning is experience; everything else is just information"*  
(Albert Einstein)

Once the dramatic play is put on the stage it is not literature anymore but becomes a dramatic performance. There is a tight relationship between the text as script and the performance as the performance cannot exist without a script on a page, since every performance begins from the interpretation of the words on a page. Yet, in language learning, the dramatization of a play involves the students physically and emotionally in a more complex way compared to the sole study of the dramatic extracts or taking part in drama games which might lead to a different level and degree of language acquisition. Langham (1983) demarcates the difference between drama as literature and drama as theatre by affirming: "There is all the difference in the world between literature and drama. A play's sound, music, movement,

looks, dynamics - and much more – are to be discovered deep in the script, yet cannot be detected through strictly literary methods of reading and analysis” (*ibid*: 8). The essence of a dramatic text is in its performance and for this reason the dramatic text needs to be experienced, not just read and analysed. Such texts “only blossom into its full range of meaning when put on a stage by actors in flesh and blood” (Sosulsky, 2008: 7) as merely by performing one has the opportunity *to see the drama from inside*, giving the students the possibility of interpreting the words and giving them meaning, not simply through the words uttered by characters, but by using gestures and body movements which more evocatively reveal the relationship between the characters, their attitudes and intentions. Sosulsky (2008) points out that by producing a play students are given the opportunity to look deep inside the character as actors, to think locally (about character and motives) and as directors to think globally (about constellation and plot), and therefore to engage more with the language which inevitably should lead to an improvement not only of the oral skills but of all language related skills.

Considering the cultural aspect, Fleming (2004) underlies the context of a literary play as form of art. He observes how the dialogues in a play are almost an imitation of real life but what drama brings more is the fact that it creates richer contexts to explore meanings. That is because “teaching language is more than just teaching a linguistic code” (*ibid*: 115). According to Fleming (2004), drama text is a form of art because its main function in teaching a foreign language is to reflect on and illuminate experiences, which, in the context of learning languages helps “to make concrete (because it deals in action) and specific what we were only intuitively aware of” (*ibid*: 111). Drama is not a way of replicating real life but a “way of exploring experiences in ways which are not possible in real life”, it is “understanding through transformative expression” by “exploring subtexts of dialogue, voicing character’s inner thoughts and intentions” (*ibid*: 115). He points out that unlike the simple drama activities and games, using authentic drama texts in a foreign language classroom is more real, as they draw on the distinction between “role”, where the participants are defined by action (like buying bread in a store) and “character” which includes attitudes (e.g., I buy in this shop even if I cannot afford it), so the latter approach has much more potential to explore subtexts and underlie cultural aspects (*ibid*: 115).

### **2.4.1 The advantages of a full-scale performance in language learning**

Developments in recent years have recognized the potential of drama as a full-scale performance, beyond other types of drama activities, for its linguistic benefits alongside the cultural and psychological ones.

Lutzker (2007) acknowledges that the most influential concept introduced in the last year in education is Howard Gardner's concept of multiple intelligences (MI) which progressively shaped educational thinking since its introduction in 1984. According to Gardner's (1993, 1999) theory of MI (verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, musical, naturalist, visual/spatial, bodily kinesthetic, interpersonal/social and intrapersonal/introspective intelligence), every learner uses divergent skills and strategies to acquire the material taught. Although each person has all of these distinct intelligences, some of them are more highly developed than others. As Lutzker (2007) observes this theory has been increasingly viewed as relevant in the field of foreign language learning and thus, there has been a growing interest in incorporating these ideas into classroom language teaching and "instead of just focusing on the traditional verbal/linguistic and logical/mathematical realms" it becomes important for schools to create learning environments that foster the development of all these types of intelligences (Lutzker 2007: 391). Schewe (2002) documents that the general research findings seem to suggest that if effective learning is to take place in a language classroom, a teacher should ideally create learning opportunities that take into account as many of these intelligences as possible. Building on this theory, researchers and educators (c.f. Schewe 2002, Lutzker 2007, Ryan-Schutz and Collangelo 2010) argue that dramatic literature incorporates naturally all of them and for this reason it is "inherently accessible to learners who excel in each of the seven intelligences areas" (Ryan-Schutz and Collangelo 2010: 144). A full-scale performance has the unique ability to engage many different types of intelligences, to enable rapport between students and inspire them.

Lutzker (2007) implemented a full-scale performance with a 10<sup>th</sup> grade class of German students learning English over a five-month period of rehearsals. His qualitative findings, as emerged from learners' interviews, showed that a full-scale performance, in contrast to most classroom learning, emphasized the kinesthetic, intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences.

Instead, for those students involved in set construction visual/spatial intelligence played a central role whilst developing linguistic intelligence. He found a high level of motivation present in the class which was “directly attributed to the unique opportunities which this work offered them to utilize and develop their pronounced talents” (*ibid*: 393). A relevant aspect related to MI theory which emerged from his findings was that a full-scale performance enabled pupils to develop their individual talents and help them to overcome their weaknesses, facilitating connections between students and motivating most learners.

Furthermore, it appears that using one’s natural area of strength to improve upon areas of weakness is precisely why the use of plays in the foreign language classroom works so well. In Carson’s (2012: 56) study, one student mentioned the ability “to play to each student’s strengths” as one of the highlights of the group work: “I prefer working in groups. I think you get more when you put people together because we use what each of us know the best”.

Another important reason brought forward for using a full-scale performance in the classroom is that of placing the students in a realistic, quasi-immersive language situation. Communicative approaches are centrally concerned with learners negotiating meaning for themselves and learning by doing things with language in authentic contexts (Hall 2005: 51). Throughout the numerous phases of production, like textual analysis and discussion, physical and vocal preparation, warm-up techniques, rehearsals, set and costume preparation, performance and post-performance reflection, the students are involved in a variety of communicative approaches, in constant discussions and interactions in the target language for achieving a common goal. As Spolin (1999: 4) notices “The techniques of the theatre are the techniques of communication”. It is widely accepted that language learning involves lots of memorization, but in the context of drama it becomes a meaningful memorization when interacting with others. Taking part in a performance involves lots of memorization of the script (see section 2.5.3), yet, learning a foreign language through performance does not mean only this. In collaborative activities like play rehearsing and preparations for the stage, dealing with language features in context rather than in isolation makes learning more meaningful and effective (Almond 2015, Gill 2013). Bourke (1993) drawing on Van Handle (1988) considers that developing “proficiency in context” is even more significant than acquiring phraseology that the student will be able to utilize outside of the performance

context (*ibid*: 229). Ronke (2005) noticed how learning via rehearsals in particular generates a real need for intensive and longer-lasting interaction, as students lean towards being highly motivated to work together when it comes to learning their parts or when creating the scenery and costumes with a view to performance. As Gill (2013) puts it, group performance allows for extensive learner talk, fosters balanced participation, and being student-centred it instills a sense of motivation in the students, thereby fitting the description of a successful speaking activity as defined by Ur (1996).

A further significant aspect of the full-scale project is the unconscious learning in a natural and uncontrived manner because it allows “the students to acquire language proficiency without being consciously instructed, as if through their own agency” (Bourke 1993). Whilst preparing the performance, the students are involved in genuine communication through constant discussion and interaction in the target language. This is an informal type of natural acquisition as opposed to conscious learning. Krashen (1982) distinguishes between two types of learning: *acquisition* - which requires meaningful interaction in the target language in which the speakers are concerned not with the *form* but with the *message* they convey and understand, – and *conscious learning* – which is concerned with the form that supposed to be error-free and done by presentation of explicit rules. Needless to say, drama satisfies the principle of focusing not on form but on communication and meaning. Via (1972), one of the pioneers of drama in language teaching, writes:

We get involved with putting on a play rather than with the task of learning English, and so we do what everyone who teaches English really hopes to do – that is, to have the students learn by doing. [...] We have fun, and the students will get great joy out of performing. [...] So, through Drama, English becomes a living experience of communication.

Wessels (1987) suggests that most of the language achieved would be not from the actual play but from the discussion surrounding the production and the rehearsals. “The student is learning albeit unintentionally” (*ibid*: 12). Instead of learning functions and notions in the foreign language in isolation or separate units, participants in a play are able to acquire a considerable amount of language “naturally in a fully contextualized and integrated manner” (*ibid*: 111). Language items are more relevant when they become part of a wider message in

human communication than learned as “stand-alone entities” (Gill 2013: 38). What is more, even the preparatory exercises, physical warm-ups and vocal-chanting lend them to be used for work with vocabulary and grammatical structures sharpening in this way the learners’ mastery of the language. There is also spontaneous talk and “the lack of pressure to produce “correct” speech promotes confidence and fluency” (Kao & O’Neil 1998: 24).

Language learning involves more than just linguistic competence and hence, a performance-based approach can be a *transformative* experience not only for language-learning but for *cultural learning and psychological growth* (Moody 2002, Miccoli 2003, Marini-Maio 2010). Bancheri (2010) claims that the performance offers an added *contextualization* of the language because the foreign language is taught in a double contextualization: once in the context of the drama text, and secondly in the context of creating a character. In a course centred on drama, students do not have to get close to the fictional characters presented in the textbooks through dialogues and situations to imagine the meaning and the circumstances of the lives of those fictional characters: “instead, students are asked *to be* the characters, to move, breathe, speak and interact as the characters” thus to experience by doing and by being (Del Fattore-Olson 2010: 268). Literature contains many cultural peculiarities (Ronke 2005) given that it portrays characters from many social backgrounds with different beliefs and values. It is evident that in the process of reading and discussing a play, learners must examine and go deep into the motives of the characters in the play, their behaviour and personality, which will enable learners to reach a more profound understanding and appreciation of the foreign culture and language.

A salient aspect of drama is that on the psychological side, taking on a role in a performance seems to have a “therapeutic effect” (Bourke 1993: 234). There is evidence that drama can solve difficulties which can appear in language lessons like discipline problems, shyness, and inhibition, because it provides a space in which students are allowed to “abandon themselves” (*ibid*: 234). Jãrfãs (2008) conducted a one year experiment in an Art School in Hungary, with a class of intermediate-level high school students (see section 2.9.1) and found that discipline problems had been settled throughout the language classes due precisely to the play project. Drama was found to break down feelings of alienation and sensitivity to



rejection, thus increasing self-esteem and self-confidence (Liu 2002, Dodson 2002, Federovwicz & Wodzinska, 2002, Almond 2005, Aita 2009, Aden 2010). When running various drama projects with university level students, Bourke (1993: 234) found how “shy people blossom through drama as being able to step out of themselves into other roles” in all probability due to the cooperative learning and the emotional bonding within the group. According to him even the most inhibited person likes to be the centre of the attention at least once. In this regard, the author mentions how he witnessed “flowering of hidden selves” when a very shy girl, could hardly utter her two-word line on the stage during the initial performance. Two years later the same student marvelously played the role of a fiery gipsy girl (*ibid*: 230). In a similar way, Wessel (1987: 111) talks about a “tense unhappy girl” whose role allowed her to “express a great deal of the considerable passion and anger suppressed inside her”. He opines that physical contact and touch help break down obstacles and inhibitions in the group leading to more valuable achievements. According to Frederich Schiller’s (1759 - 1805) idealist claim, a play is a realm in which the human being experiences him- or herself in the most authentic and liberated manner. As Matthias (2007) notes, “making this realm of existential freedom productive for the often-intimidating process of expressing oneself in a new idiom may be one of the most promising ways to help our students” (*ibid*: 44).

Drawing on Schimdt (1998), Fleming (2004: 116) holds that putting on a performance in a foreign language “protects” the participants rather than “exposes” them overcoming embarrassment: “acting in the foreign language is a journey into the unknown which precludes self-indulgences as one is deprived of one’s landmarks, and yet it provides one with the freedom of daring to be oneself” (*ibid*: 198). Aden (2010) conducted an extracurricular language drama workshop with a group of foreigners and showed that staging a full-scale performance helps overcome feelings of insecurity and isolation while improving language comprehension and better oral production because in theatre, “speech, thought and movement are synergised through a practice that they can relate to” (*ibid*: 91). In turn, Aita (2009) states that drama helps overcome shyness and introversion by allowing students to explore vocabulary and structures at home, through reading the script for comprehension, independently from the class because there still might be students who prefer learning the

language through grammar drills and sentence analyses. Additionally, Ryan-Scheutz & Colangelo's (2010) research findings of an authentic text full-scale production project in which learners were both actors and non-actors indicate decreased hesitancy and reservation on the students' part to use the language more spontaneously and to engage their bodies in the expression of meaning both when working with texts or during rehearsals. Therefore, another beneficial aspect of the performance is that it gives the opportunity to those students who might be intensely self-conscious about any form of acting to take on roles in the production of the play such as stage managers, designers or directors. The non-acting roles have also been found particularly conducive to language learning (c.f. Ryan-Scheutz & Colangelo 2010).

To sum up, one of the most comprehensive lists regarding the advantages of using a full-scale performance of an authentic text in a language classroom is given by Almond (2005: 10-11):

- Drama is a whole-person approach to language teaching which requires us to look at communication holistically. Creating a character and acting in a play can be a visceral, intellectual and emotional experience which makes the learning process more meaningful and memorable and more transferable to the real world.
- Acting helps build confidence, because apart from the aspect of performance and the rapturous applause that usually accompanies it, it is totally collaborative and mutually supportive. We rely on each other to succeed in producing something of value and quality.
- The group shares the same objective and putting on a play provides a tangible and achievable target to work towards.
- Working within the framework of a play contextualises all the related language work.
- The process of building a character can make us aware of the needs and character traits of people we come into contact with in our daily lives, which is important in real-life communication and interaction. In mixed-nationality classes, cultural differences are spontaneously revealed, which helps us to understand each other better

- Putting on a play together as a group trains students in problem solving as constantly throughout the rehearsal period we are faced with decisions that have to be made or hurdles that have to be overcome. These could be of a technical nature (lighting/sound/props etc.) or related to the acting. It is invaluable language practice for students to do this kind of collaborating and problem-solving in English.
- Producing a play allows us to explore and develop characters whose lives we only see a small part of on stage. This provides enormous scope for improvising scenes not in the play and generates discussion of the characters' thoughts, words and actions.
- Using an authentic script lends itself well to exploring features such as connected speech, expressing attitudes with the voice, intonation patterns and sentence stress. Contemporary plays have a wealth of idiomatic language and sample of speech which reflect how English is used in the real world. Such plays allow us to study communicative strategies such as hesitation devices, false starts and circumlocution.
- The only teaching materials required when producing a play are the scripts.
- Being part of this kind of activity is enormous fun and highly rewarding.

#### **2.4.2 The role of repetition and memorization through rehearsals**

The value of “repetition” in language learning has been acknowledged for many years. Capra (2016: 3) asserts that “repetition is a *vexata quaestio* in language learning” and nevertheless, it is a necessary rote to get learners acquainted with foreign sounds allowing them to memorize language and gain confidence with pronunciation, intonation, stress and rhythm, articulation and prosody. Yet, repeating can be a boring, mechanical and meaningless routine. In audio/lingual methods repetition was aimed at automatic unthinking responses and emotions did not play any role in learning the language whilst making sense of what has been memorized was less crucial than just memorizing it. Instead, Capra (2016: 4) sustains that cognition and emotion should be reintegrated into repetition activities so that “iteration of minimal patterns is substituted by rehearsal of meaningful utterances pronounced with expressive intonation justified by a communicative contextualization”. According to him, this

condition is suitably attained by rehearsing a play and much more a real and effective activity than meaninglessly drilling. There is no doubt that putting a performance on a stage involves a lot of memorization, thus lots of repetition, yet, taking on a dramatic role and rehearsing for it, leads to much more and deeper processing of the language than mere repetition. Indeed, Capra (2016) acknowledges that this is backed up by recent neuroscience research which evidences that verbal language has developed from hand and mouth movements, associated and progressively articulated sounds and the visuomotor response of mirror neurons. Before we could talk we used gestures to communicate. Thus, movement and gestures, even before the vocalization, are at the beginning of the process of communication (Wagner, 2002: 11). Capra (2016) points out how the natural process of language acquisition should widen its scope beyond the limits of phonology and implicit grammar learning, to a holistic language acquisition encompassing postures, body movements, facial expressions and emotions. As opposed to classrooms where pupils generally sit at desks, in a drama rehearsal pupils are expected to be standing and moving in a largely empty space, hence, “it is apparent that both psychologically and physiologically the degree of physical presence and levels of energy which a rehearsal demands will necessarily be much higher than what is generally required in a traditional classroom” (Lutzker 2007: 234).

As far as the emotional element is concerned, in recent years there has been an increased attention to the role of emotions in learning which progressively overcame a traditional view of cognition as a strictly *rational* process. Petkovic (1979), drawing on Stanislavski’s idea of naturalness in drama teaching, opines that learners would be more likely to remember the grammatical structure and vocabulary if feelings and emotions are involved in the process of learning the language. She explains how in pursuit of his idea of naturalness, namely to create a situation in acting as real as possible, Stanislavski (1961) developed the theory of training the emotional memory which posits that by remembering those feelings that have been genuinely experienced in acting, the act of performing becomes more real leading learners to express the language more easily. The more alive the emotional memory is, the more the use of words and expressions connected with those emotions increases and the language will be easily internalized and will become eventually more spontaneous and natural. Likewise, Del Fattore-Olson (2010) maintains that in a dramatic text the learning and

then the use of grammar and vocabulary is linked to the inner motivations of the characters. For example, the new grammatical structures to be learned are more easily understood if presented in an emotional way, linked to the emotions lived by the character that produces the utterances which contains the structures to be learned. In this way, undoubtedly, the grammatical structures and vocabulary become real components in the communicative process. Students no longer view them as abstract concepts unrelated to real-life situations: they are “real” because the play is the real dimension in which students live their experience. A teacher conducting rehearsals can support learners to understand what they are memorising by going *beyond the mere words* in the line to clarifying the message of an authentic text. Such a practice does not allow the rehearsal to become a mechanised production of the memorized discourse, especially when learners deliver their lines with the specific emotion and the right intonation among other things (Gill 2013).

Another way rehearsals can help learners is through contextualisation of all the language related skills. Working in the context of the play offers the opportunity for repeated readings and reinforces comprehension which inevitably leads to more understanding of the language and to a greater chance for memorization and internalization of the language items because it creates a sense of familiarity with the text (Hoecherl-Alden 2006). Studies have provided evidence that rehearsals can help improve to a high extent learner’s accuracy pronunciation, articulation, rhythm and prosody (Ronke 2005, Miccoli 2003, Gill 2013). The language items in a play script can be used to guide students in a more pre-arranged and absorbed manner compared to random errors from spontaneous speech production or drills. Additionally, breathing, pacing and rhythm exercises during repetitions through rehearsals would develop listening and speaking skills (Gill 2013) more effectively. It is widely believed that repeated play reading and rehearsal are an excellent way for improving students’ pronunciation in an unobtrusive manner and cooperative way (Bourke 1993, McMaster 1998, Dodson 2000, Almond 2005). Through memorization and performance of roles students can overcome problems with the language interference, accent, intonation, speaking rhythm which help to grasp subtleties of communication (cf. Bancheri 2010). Additionally, findings from Ronke’s (2005) study confirm that rehearsing for a theatre play is one of the most effective ways to practise synchronized speech, whole body movement and body language because it helps

students avoid producing “stiff looking and unnatural-sounding conversations in which they parrot dialogue from rote memory” (*ibid*: 104).

Playing roles has been claimed not only to lower the “affective filter” (Krashen 1982) and remove any stress from the learning environment to overcome the emotional barriers that limit students’ ability to learn but to help substantially the memorization of new linguistic items. Rehearsal for a play production involves inevitably line by line memorization and by constantly repeating their lines learners internalize the structures and are able to reproduce them automatically when required. As a result, “fluency develops as language knowledge becomes more automatized” (Tognini *et al.* 2010 in Gill 2013: 37). O’Gara (2008) gave evidence how drama impacts positively on the comprehension and use of verb tenses by children, whilst Almond (2005) found that students reported they used chunks of language from the play in their everyday communication. Additionally, rehearsals can assist learners in overcoming short term memory restrictions and helping long-term memory (Ronke 2005). There is wide evidence that learners memorising a script remember more of the text with long-term rehearsals (Gill 2013). Vocabulary and grammar, idioms and entire sentences memorised during rehearsals can be used meaningfully and constructively at later points in time in spontaneous speech. The findings of De Jong and Perfetti (2011) showed how repetition of a task increased a) breakdown fluency, i.e. the pauses and silences that break down the flow of speech, and b) speed fluency, i.e. rapidity with which speech is performed (see section 3.5.1 for full definitions and measurements of the two terms) and these improvements can be transferred to other linguistic points. Dickson (1989) as cited in Gill (2013: 35) asserts that students will “progress from very structured activities to partially structured ones and finally to free-expression”. Smith (1984), as cited in Gill (2013), also suggests that rehearsals are better than free conversation as a way of identifying various learners’ errors like omitted articles. There is no doubt that plenty of scaffolding and the *zpd* happens during this stage.

Apart from the linguistic benefits, many studies show evidence that on the *psychological side*, negative experiences like embarrassment, anxiety and lack of self-confidence, even though likely to occur in the beginning, are eventually overcome through drama rehearsals.

As Gill (2013) puts it, just like actors in a play, learners accept their director-teacher interventions during rehearsal as they tend to feel less self-conscious whenever they are interrupted and corrected, conceivably because they know they are working towards a project which needs to be perfected. Regular practice with a text can help learners to develop a sense of familiarity which puts them in a comfort zone, thereby reducing the anxiety in the process of learning a language (Dodson 2002, Dougill 1987). Drama promotes a class atmosphere that “allows for mistakes – since this is what the rehearsals are for – without the feeling of being pressured” (Ronke 2005: 96). Pronunciation is learned in a safe atmosphere where making mistakes is a natural part of the process, and “students can make fools of themselves without the fear they are ridiculed or laughed at” (*ibid*: 2005). It is likely that such an atmosphere where students and teachers trust each other will help the learners to accept their peers’ criticism which will not shatter their self-esteem.

#### **2.4.3 Full-scale performance as intra-curricular vs. extracurricular activity**

The previous section has outlined the advantages of using a full-scale performance in the language classroom. The current section gives an insight into the reasons why a full-scale performance is set mostly as an extra-curricular activity rather than an intra-curricular one.

Whereas many contributions to the ongoing discussion on drama in a foreign language classroom focus on drama techniques, very few have taken a closer look at a full-scale production of an authentic play in the regular curriculum. Most teachers employ a full-scale performance as an extra-curricular activity (Ryan Schutz & Collangelo 2004, Ariza *et al.* 2007, Sosulsky 2008, Wager *et al.* 2009) whilst only a few have attempted to set the stage in an intra-curricular course at the university level with various degrees of success (Fedorowicz & Wodzińska 2002, Marini-Maio 2010, Ryan-Schutz 2010) and even fewer to incorporate it in a high school level curriculum (Moody 2002, Jàrfàs 2008).

McCarthy (1996) acknowledges that within the compulsory curriculum the typical experience learners have of drama is as *text* per se rather than *performance*. This is because unlike a text-based approach and dramatic games which can be easily integrated into a rigid

compulsory curriculum a performance-based approach might raise some challenges. As outlined by Giebert (2016: 9) “not all teachers feel at ease with employing drama in the classroom – there are constraints of time and space and not every teacher feels confident to use a method they have not been trained in” (c.f. Royoka 2002, Gaudart 1990) as they feel they are not a “theatre” person, but an L2 teacher (c.f. Marini-Maio 2010). Carkin (2004) assumes that the word “drama” is identified with “theatre” and thus, associated with “a lot of glitz and showy entertainment” (Introduction: I). Bancheri (2010) holds that “objections to this kind of dramatic course include concerns that it is too specific, not structured enough and not goal-oriented enough” (*ibid*: 84), and therefore, it should be introduced only after the intermediate level of instruction has been completed. Additional reasons brought forward concern the fact that, on the one hand, a full-scale performance requires considerable and meticulous planning and structure, plus organizational skills on the teacher’s part (Wessel 1987) whilst on the other hand, the use of theatrical texts may not be appropriate or appealing to all learners (Ryan-Scheutz 2010).

Collangelo & Ryan-Schutz (2010) assert that a major challenge appears to be the fact that foreign language classes at high school level generally follow a traditional sequence in which particular grammatical concepts are taught at specific points in a graded way, from what supposes to be easy before gradually moving to more complex linguistic grammatical structures. From a practical point of view, if a full-scale production is the major or the only component of the course, it will be difficult to find a single play for the performance-based approach phase which adheres to this sequence and which incorporates all grammar that needs to be taught: for instance, Act 1 features only present tense and direct objective pronouns, Act 2 past tense, whilst Act 3 would incorporate only future tense and irregular adjectives. Collangelo & Ryan-Schutz (2010: 150) additionally warn that it is more difficult to set a dramatic performance with high school students in their regular classes compared to the university level students as one has to take into consideration a number of factors such as class size, composition, time, resources and varied level of language and commitment. Class sizes may be higher at the high school level whilst time and resources may be limited. Additionally, they maintain that for staging a performance, the full commitment of all participants is imperative to the success of all individuals, and before deciding to base a course entirely around one full-scale production of a text, the teacher should evaluate



whether the majority of students would be sufficiently enthusiastic about putting on a full-scale show. However, they suggest that there where it is not possible to implement a full-scale performance, a solution could be to work only on text extracts of authentic dramatic literature, rather than on an entire play, which will surely prove to be an invaluable experience for learners.

A further challenge raised by Collangelo & Ryan-Schutz (2010) is the issue of assessment on the basis that it is very difficult to assess the students' linguistic achievement in a full-scale performance and for this reason it needs to be separated from intra-curricular activities. Bourke (1993), who conducted a few extra-curricular drama projects with university students, suggests that it is of "paramount importance" (*ibid*: 228) that learners do not associate the drama project with the exam treadmill as drama "constitutes a threshold experience for the student with a more long-term effect than that of a mere exam result" (*ibid*: 229). Matthias (2007: 44) proposes an extracurricular performance-based approach which should be undertaken only with a small number of well-motivated students "who are adventurous and dedicated enough", and who are liberated as fully as possible "from the graded environment of a language class." On the contrary, Ryan-Schutz & Collangelo (2010: 144) argue that drama can be "highly instrumental for creating a challenging variety of production- and performance-based assessments that could reflect the methods and the tasks in the teaching", beyond considering the final show an examination in itself (*ibid*: 144). To this aim, they stress the necessity of identifying clear goals from the beginning to better track the progress of individual learners. The researchers assert that in the 1990s there was a gap in the methods of foreign language teaching and testing, which are still largely focused on discrete points of grammar and vocabulary and mastery of isolated components of knowledge and skills. Nowadays, instead, there are interactive assessments which "elicit authentic second language use in a spontaneous and relatively unpredictable fashion as often occurs in the real world" (*ibid*: 295), both focusing on the process and on the product which would make more feasible the introduction of a performance in the obligatory curriculum. In their intra-curricular theatre workshop, they used a "hybrid format" that includes discrete points for testing vocabulary and grammar as well as spoken and written proficiency exercises that

included cultural and literary topics in order to help the students to perceive the gains they made in several areas and to foster the many objectives of the workshop conducted.

#### **2.4.4 Process-oriented versus product-oriented performance-based approach**

Among advocates of a full-scale performance in language teaching there are shifts in beliefs towards the value of the process and reflections on the importance of the product, with many of them emphasizing the process and others advocating the product (Bancheri 2010). As already outlined, in a process-oriented approach the focus is placed on the experience lived by the learners in the process of language learning, by emphasizing the dramatic medium itself, whilst a product-oriented approach emphasizes the final staging of the learners' public performance, which becomes the main goal of the language learning experience (see full definition in Introduction section 1.3.2).

On the one hand, it is argued that product-oriented forms tend to be more beneficial for a focus on accuracy and they can be more motivating for learners who prefer working towards a concrete end-product (Fonio & Genicot 2011, Schewe & Scott 2003 as mentioned in Giebert 2014: 3). Bancheri (2010) holds that the final product, i.e. the performance on the stage in itself, represents a very important component in language learning because the students are going to be more motivated to produce language. Likewise, Wager *et al.* (2009: 54) found the idea of focusing on the product more motivating: "I like the idea of the product as I find it is much more motivating for my students and myself [...] to perfect a polished piece". On the other hand, process-oriented approaches are argued to be more creative (Kao & O'Neill 1998) and liberating for certain learners as fluency is valued over accuracy and there is no pressure to perform flawlessly since "the lack of pressure to produce "correct speech" promotes confidence and fluency" (*ibid*: 24). Aden (2010) values the *process* on the grounds that it is "the *journey* that counts for these young people not the *destination* because it is whilst on the journey that relationships are built" (*ibid*: 111) when students learn the language through active cooperation and lesson by lesson engagement. By the same token, Wessel (1987) believes that most of the language acquired during a drama project will stem probably not from the actual play and from the rehearsing, but from the preparation and

discussions of the production. Consequently, the process acquires more significance than the product.

In intra-curricular language drama classes, where the focus is on the language, I would argue it is quite obvious that the value of the process comes to prevail on that of the product. Almond (2005: 12) proposes that in a drama class “the emphasis is much more on the process and how all language skill development can be integrated when using a *script and* using your *self* as your main source of reference.” Acting out parts of dramatic texts in class brings a more in-depth understanding about the rules which govern the language use, and for this reason “it is the process, not the product, which is important” (Short 1981: 200). Dodson (2002) developed a process-oriented integrated-skills drama course at university level with advanced students with the overall goal of eliciting as much spoken and written language as possible. Her findings demonstrated that students assimilated the information from the course, improved their oral skills and especially their pronunciation, whilst taking pleasure in communicating in English. Jàrfàs (2008) who placed motivation at the heart of her intra-curricular drama project did not manage to stage a full-scale performance as initially planned, due to the specific circumstances and constraints of the learning environment and different factors which appeared on the trajectory of her course (see section 2.8.1. this chapter). She concluded that the process in itself had a valuable outcome because “by focusing on the process, motivation did ensue, resulting in increased student participation and more enjoyable learning” (*ibid*: 53). She observed how drama requires students “to put it all together” (knowledge and skills) on a regular basis in a variety of assignments and assessments which emphasises both the process and the product. Moody (2002: 136) rejects a dichotomy between the two terms, process and product as they “are not opposite ends of a spectrum, they are mutually inclusive, nor is one approach superior to the other” because “a product-oriented approach is actually a collaborative *process*, and that many stages, or “*mini processes*” occur when a play is interpreted, rehearsed and performed” (*ibid* ). Thus, in a language learning environment a product-oriented approach overlaps with a process-oriented approach because a *process-approach*, which involves the evolution of students’ ideas into some form of dramatic realization, will not inspire adequately that group of students “unless learning goals are made visible and tangible through small-scale *products*, which show

participants that an actual audience other than the teacher will ultimately value their effort” (*ibid*). Both of them are important as by giving the students the final objective to stage the performance, the process could become even more significant, meaningful and motivating (Marini-Maio 2010). Wager *et al.* (2009), who ran an after-school drama programme in Vancouver with students at elementary level, agree that not only the final product, i.e. the performance on the stage, is important, but “the process should be just as rewarding or even more so” because “the magic that happens during the process is much more meaningful than a final product” (*ibid*: 54).

## **2.5 Studies of background knowledge**

### **2.5.1 Two experimental drama-based approaches: Moody (2002)**

Moody (2002) conducted two studies examining two levels of Spanish as a foreign language in intra-curricular classes and investigated the effectiveness of a product through a process-oriented approach. Two different approaches were adopted with two classes of students: a process-oriented drama method with a high school class of lower level beginner students, and a product-oriented drama approach with upper intermediate to advanced level students at a liberal arts college. At the heart of his research is the belief that foreign language learning can be enhanced through creative activities that utilize drama by focusing both on the process and the production of dramatic activities. The results showed that the intervention was highly successful in the case of college students, but it had only moderate success with high school students.

In the first study, which took place over a period of five months, the participants comprised a class of twenty-two very poorly motivated students, who were only taking the classes because they thought it would look impressive on their academic transcripts. The aim of the investigation was to find out how learning grammar and vocabulary through drama would be perceived by the secondary school students given the lack of qualitative and quantitative data in research conducted at this level. The researcher hoped to use a wide range of drama activities, in order to present students with the *mini-processes* that lead to the performance, but the students were unwilling to accept the risks and responsibilities involved in the

spontaneous production of a foreign language and proved to be resistant to oral language production. In addition, both their proficiency and motivation were low. Moody (2002) explains that the strong sense of social cohesion necessary for this type of approach to succeed, as advocated by Heath (1993) and Courtney (1999), was not established, as the class was still largely focused on taking tests and drill-based activities. As a result, he decided to relinquish the approach grounded in literacy practices and introduce a product-oriented approach for assessment instead. The class was divided in two groups: the first group co-wrote their original scripts in the form of an interview with a famous person, whilst the second group wrote a mini-drama. They went through various stages of revising and editing their scripted dramas, memorizing and performing them as short scripted role-plays. Props and costumes were also prepared. In both cases, their performance was video-taped and transmitted to friends and family members via television. The fluency and accuracy, pronunciation, memorization and presentation of the performance were evaluated. It was found that only half of the students memorised their lines, while the others used note cards to remind themselves of the words.<sup>3</sup> There was no other indication of the students' level of achievement according to established criteria and it appears that no other types of tests were undertaken. Moody (2002) concludes that the findings showed the approach to be moderately successful considering the students' lack of motivation and the fact that they were not accustomed to this type of approach, which they believed to be less important than the traditional written tests. Thus, he proposed the adoption of a more structured and well-defined drama-based approach from the outset.

The second study was conducted over a ten-week term. The group was comprised of nine students who were only informed about the project at the beginning of their language classes, but none of them dropped out. The design of the intervention was text-based and product-oriented, culminating in a public performance. An authentic play from the Golden Age, *La Dama Duende*, by Calderòn de la Barca, was chosen through a process of negotiation with students. Unlike in the aforementioned study, the learners had previously been involved in different kinds of drama-based experiences. The classes were conducted in Spanish and the students took on the challenge of negotiating and interpreting a complex text before starting

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<sup>3</sup> Moody's study does not provide other significant details of evaluation and assessment.

rehearsals for the final performance which took place during the last four weeks of the project. The process of staging the play required collaboration beyond the classroom as well, both with the student-actors and members of the college Spanish department who assisted them with various elements of the theatre production process (publicity, lighting, and sound).<sup>4</sup> Findings revealed that the class became more organized, motivated and energized as a result of the rehearsals and the staging process. Additionally, despite the author stressing that the play was extremely difficult to comprehend as it does not use contemporary language, it did not demotivate the students who learned a lot about the foreign culture and language. In conclusion, Moody (2002) suggests a longer period of time, for instance approximately six weeks for the performance, and the inclusion of more authentic drama texts, facilitating both process- and product-oriented approaches, which should not be regarded as a substitute for drama-based pedagogy, but as an inherent option to motivate learners throughout the language learning process.

The relevance of Moody's (2002) studies to my study is that he worked with authentic literary texts in intra-curricular classes at high school level. He implemented a text-based approach with the high school class to teach syntax and vocabulary, as well as a variety of dramatic activities and scripted role-plays, whilst adopting a theatre-as-performance-based approach with a college class. As is often the case, the high school curriculum was much less flexible than that of the college course, involving adherence to a very rigid syllabus and activities which had to be adapted. Nevertheless, he produced evidence of the value placed on such activities by the learners, and of their high level of motivation and commitment. Moody's (2002) findings provided me with further guidance and encouragement regarding the use of authentic texts and drama pedagogy as well as confirming the positive benefits of a theatre-as-performance-based approach as an intra-curricular activity, albeit at university level.

### **2.5.2 Two empirical studies: Jàrfàs (2008) and Miccoli (2003)**

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<sup>4</sup> Moody (2002) does not specify the number of rehearsals which took place in the second study.

I shall now examine two studies whose main focus was increasing language learners' motivation through drama as performance and developing students' communicative skills: the first was conducted by Jàrfàs (2008) and the second by Miccoli (2003). Jarfàs's (2008) study is relevant for my investigation as she introduced a performance-based approach into a high school curriculum, using it to supplement the coursebook with the aim of motivating students and increasing their level of spoken skills. The context of her study had similarities with the school in which my study was conducted in that all learners, with no exceptions, engaged in time-consuming, demanding, daily extracurricular activities. By the same token, Miccoli (2003) used a performance-based approach with university level students as a motivational tool to encourage critical thinking which leads to the development of language skills. Both studies were carried out with pre-existing classes.

### **2.5.2.1 Jàrfàs (2008)**

#### *Research area and hypothesis*

Jarfàs (2008) researched the effect of learners' exposure to drama used as a textbook supplement on their attitudes, motivation and English language achievement. Her research site was a Performing Arts Academy in Hungary where the students were dancers, musicians and acrobats. The participants were a class of thirteen students in their first year of high school, rated at level two on the school's proficiency scale.<sup>5</sup> Jarfàs's (2008) intervention was based on the rationale that drama would motivate students and teachers alike more effectively than other methods, through negotiation and cooperative learning, and in particular, it would be applicable to all types of learning providing students with opportunities to develop a relationship with the language. Students were taught English over a period of one academic year, for four lessons per week of 45 minutes duration, of which two lessons per week were dedicated to drama. The contemporary drama *Out of this World*, by Andrew McCann was chosen for staging a production through a process of negotiation with students.

#### *Research method*

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<sup>5</sup> There are no indications regarding the type of scale that the school used to describe the students' levels of proficiency. Based on the level of language in the play, I presume that the language level would be intermediate.

The lessons were divided into three main stages: in the first stage, which lasted from October to January, with a view to the performance, Jàrfàs (2008) worked on preparatory group activities including improvisations, physical warm-ups, role-plays, and character building; in the second stage, which lasted from January to February, she introduced the play to the learners and they worked on translating it; finally, in the third stage, which lasted from March until the end of the academic year, the class rehearsed the play. In this latter stage, the focus was on lexis, intonation and pronunciation. The mother tongue was used only when it was unavoidable and “mistakes were treated as a necessary part of the learning process” (2008: 33). Two questionnaires in English were used to collect data: a structured one, presented after 12 lessons, to assess students’ attitudes to drama; and a semi-structured one, used before distributing copies of the script, to discover the learners’ opinions about having to learn their lines of an entire play by heart. The teacher’s notes on observations of the lessons along with informal observations from other teachers who taught the same class were also used as back-up data.

#### *Data analysis and findings*

Responses from the semi-structured questionnaire showed that the drama project did not make English more appealing to the students as they already liked the subject. However, it certainly improved their oral communication skills, so learners became more able to activate their knowledge. The majority of the students found it easier to express themselves in English in such lessons, and all of them stated that drama lessons allowed them to express themselves and say whatever they wanted in the class, besides learning the language in a meaningful way, “which helped them to think in English” (Jàrfàs 2008: 43). She also found that learners responded slowly to the translation of the text to begin with because they were not used to the level of English required, as the play proved to be too demanding and time-consuming for the in-class hours allocated to drama. Jàrfàs (2008) refers to the limitations of her research findings as being specific to that particular group, warning that “no true scientific study could be carried out in such a special school” (*ibid*: 45). External constraints meant that the students had insufficient time to learn their lines by heart and, therefore, the staging of the performance eventually had to be abandoned. The findings showed that drama is an effective way of inspiring weak students because drama is performed in a group and the relaxed



atmosphere established by participation enhances peer correction. Thus, she concludes that peer support and cooperative learning can add to both the quality of learning and learners' motivation. Additionally, Jàrfàs (2008) found a high level of improvement in learners' pronunciation because the meaningful task gave them motivation and input to speak more in the target language. Also, the findings revealed that the use of drama resolved disciplinary problems. A significant indicator of the students' motivation proved to be the fact that they all took part in the drama process, despite tiredness resulting from their involvement in other ballet or music productions which were part of their curriculum. The learners reacted positively to drama, and reported feeling enthusiastic and proud to be doing something different from other groups.

Although the final objective of performing the play was not achieved, the researcher concludes that the process of learning language through drama in itself had valuable outcomes because, by focusing on the process, students' motivation improved, resulting in increased participation and a more enjoyable learning experience. With regard to the implications for further research, she proposes shorter projects as opposed to longer ones, as it seems that "students' interest and motivation can be captured in shorter periods of time and the end product is more palpable to the learners" (*ibid*: 52). Furthermore, she suggests more student engagement in drama activities before attempting to put on a full-scale performance which would serve this purpose better.

#### *Evaluation of the study*

Jarfàs (2008) took considerable care in setting up and planning her lessons before the term started. She chose the text taking her students' interests into consideration. During the project, she paid attention to learners' learning styles and their needs. The content of the questionnaires used and the analyses of her qualitative findings are reported in great detail. The qualitative data obtained from the students' questionnaires together with the teacher's informal comments appear to support her conclusions and implications for teaching. However, if she had used more research instruments, or tested their linguistic progress, this could have provided a broader and clearer picture of the level of language that the students achieved during their drama classes.

### *Conclusion*

Jarfàs's (2008) research is important for my study in that she tried to introduce a full-scale performance of an authentic contemporary text into a high school compulsory curriculum. Above and beyond this, her research site seems to be similar to the one I chose for my study. Her research findings are a useful addition to our knowledge of language learning and, significantly, they indicate that drama is a whole person approach which helps to motivate students and improve their oral skills.

I shall now examine another study which focuses on raising learners' levels of motivation towards foreign language learning through a performance-based approach which is of direct relevance to my research, as the teaching intervention aims to develop L2 oral skills, accuracy and fluency in particular.

#### **2.5.2.2 The motivational force of drama: Miccoli (2003)**

Miccoli (2003) conducted a case study to investigate the effectiveness of using drama to improve L2 oral skills and to raise learners' motivation. Thirty-seven intermediate to advanced level students learning English at a university in Brazil participated in the study. The study took place over a period of 15 weeks for 110 minutes per week. The rationale was to promote reflection and create meaning through portfolios by using drama. She hypothesized that students' oral skills would improve and the class would move from traditional to "transformative and emancipator" learning through drama-based approaches in particular, achieved through a performance-based approach for developing oral fluency and accuracy.

### *Research method*

The thirty-seven learners were divided into six groups and the course was divided into three stages. The first five-week stage was designed to establish cohesion within the group by encouraging the students to get to know each other: drama activities like talk and listen-cards, role-plays and scenarios were used for this purpose. In this phase, the focus was on the use of

English, pronunciation and intonation, as well as on students' body language with the aim of encouraging risk taking. In the second four-week stage the students learned about acting. Reading was the standard procedure for doing so, followed by discussion of the handouts introducing emotions, facial expressions, gestures, basic theatre jargon, and positions on the stage. Finally, in the last six-week phase the students were given the plays to be staged which were adapted for 90 minute sessions.<sup>6</sup> Reading for pronunciation and vocabulary checks, follow-up discussions and rehearsals followed. The play, the groups and the casting were decided through a process of negotiation with students. The independent variable was the play and the dependent variable was the development of oral skills based on students' portfolios which were used as both a tool and as a research instrument.<sup>7</sup>

### *Data analysis and findings*

Responses which served as evidence for the benefits of using drama as performance to promote reflection and language development were reported from the students' portfolios. The findings disclosed that the students had learned vocabulary, pronunciation and other aspects of speaking English. The students' final performance was also evaluated. The researcher found that students delivered lines at the right time, with adequate intonation and appropriate body language. Furthermore, the study proved that "confrontation of fears and taking risks lead to an improvement of the oral skills as a consequence of understanding the aspects that underlie oral communication" (*ibid*: 128), such as body language, characters' culture, gestures, feelings and emotions, which resulted in improved oral target language skills. The students' answers to informal questions after a class evaluation revealed that too much time was spent on the first two phases and the role of the director was underestimated during the rehearsal period. As a limitation of the study, Miccoli (2003) reports that the play should have been presented to the class earlier and that the choice of a play director would have been of crucial importance in organizing the class more effectively.

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<sup>6</sup> The description of the study does not offer any information regarding the plays chosen, the criteria used, themes, or language used.

<sup>7</sup> Portfolios are very similar to journals and are used to record learners' experience; thus, they constitute "a tool to promote reflection" and change, but unlike journals, portfolios include evidence of learning (Miccoli 2003:122).

Miccoli (2003) concludes by suggesting that consideration should be given to the use of dramatic activities in order to integrate the teaching of culture in the foreign language classroom, as “speaking is not only about words and structure and pronunciation, but feelings, motivation and meaning” (*ibid*: 128). As an incentive for further research, she encourages the use of a full-scale performance-based approach for foreign language learning in order to motivate students, to change the class dynamics and, most importantly of all, to improve learners’ oral skills.

#### *Evaluation of the study*

The findings are perhaps of limited value as Miccoli (2003) reported only limited positive results and answers based solely on one research instrument which is the portfolios and informal assessment of the performance. It is likely that had more data been collected, probably using a variety of data-collection instruments in addition to the one used, a more comprehensive picture of the level of the language achieved by the students could have been obtained.

#### *Conclusion*

Miccoli’s (2003) study is nevertheless relevant to my study as it investigates longitudinally, over a period of 15 weeks, the use of a full-scale performance for the development of oral skills with a group of differing proficiency levels. This reflects the reality of most classes in which students do not all have similar levels of language learning. Miccoli (2003) showed that the learners responded favourably to the production of a play, which raised levels of motivation and, consequently, language production, and confirmed that language comes alive through drama activities.

Attention will now be given to a third study which focuses on the use of authentic texts in performance and which seems to most closely resemble the present study in terms of the variety of research instruments used and quantitative data analyses performed, thus making it more systematic compared to the other studies examined so far.

### 2.5.3 Ryan-Scheutz & Colangelo (2004)

Ryan-Scheutz & Colangelo (2004) undertook a case study to examine the feasibility of engaging in an authentic text full-theatre production for Italian learners in foreign language classes at university level. Drawing upon Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligences theory, they contend that dramatic literature is "inherently accessible to learners who excel in each of the seven intelligences areas". Ryan-Scheutz & Colangelo (2004) emphasize that "the idea of using one's natural area of strength to improve upon areas of weakness is precisely why the use of theatre in the foreign language classroom works so well" (*ibid*: 147). The researchers claim that if learners use their own abilities, they will be more motivated not only to participate in the language classroom but also to actively speak the language. Consequently, a full-scale performance can be instrumental in developing what are known as the five Cs: communication; comparisons; connections; cultures; and communities.

#### *Research area and hypothesis*

The researchers conducted an extra-curricular, experimental pilot study aimed at exploring the usefulness of a full-scale, authentic text, theatre production for second language learning in order to lay the groundwork for a future theatre workshop of larger scope and for which the students would receive course credit. Their rationale lay in the lack of empirical data regarding the effectiveness of using theatre with students who take on roles other than actors, such as those of assistant directors, stage managers and costume, set and lighting designers, by participating in the complex process of producing a play in a total immersion environment. Ryan-Scheutz & Colangelo (2004) hypothesized that students' oral and reading proficiency would improve as a result of being involved in the wide range of communicative tasks undertaken on a daily basis during the numerous phases of production such as, "rehearsals, textual analysis and discussion, set and costume preparation, performances and post-performance reflections" (*ibid*: 374), in order to achieve their final goal of putting on a performance. Furthermore, they predicted that the collaborative nature of the project and its meaningful context would reduce students' inhibitions, helping them to gain confidence in the target language, and would also foster their enthusiasm for both language and culture more generally.

### *Research method*

The participants were eleven voluntarily enrolled and carefully selected students learning Italian at the University of Notre Dame. Their level of proficiency ranged from lower-intermediate to mid-advanced in order to allow the researchers to examine whether the experience was particularly effective for any specific level. The approach adopted was that the more proficient students took on the demanding lead roles, whereas the less proficient ones took less challenging roles. They were taught over a period of 10 weeks, for a total of 27 rehearsals of approximately 2 hours each. The independent variable was the performance of an authentic play, and the dependent variables were their test scores on pre - and post-achievement tests in all four skills areas - reading, writing, speaking and listening - and on a student self-perception survey. An authentic contemporary text, chosen by the researchers, was studied over the course of a term in order to provide the opportunity for an in-depth and intricate study of authentic literature. The criteria taken into account for selecting the play were: its linguistic accessibility to non-native speakers; its broad range of language and usefulness for out-of-class communication in a variety of contexts; its richness in cultural and historical information; and the length of the script which had a one-hour running time for the final performance and was therefore manageable in the short period of time allocated for rehearsal. Lastly, a further important criterion was the even balance between male and female roles and the equal importance of the roles in the text, with minimal differences in the number of lines per character and no single dominant character. The students themselves decided on the roles and the capacities in which they wanted to perform, to encourage them to feel comfortable with the language, either on stage in the role of an actor or participating in the immersion environment in a back-stage capacity as stage managers, or designers of sets, lighting, sound, costumes, and make-up. Not all students attended the same number of classes for the study: the actors attended rehearsals; the stage managers attended both rehearsals and design meetings; whilst the designers attended one third of the rehearsals and design meetings. There is no mention of how many design meetings were effectively attended.

The research instruments used were: 1) an unofficial oral proficiency interview to test students' general knowledge of language (e.g. family, daily routines, politics, travel, geography, etc.) and the employment of verbal and non-verbal strategies; 2) a pre- and post-written test of grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension and writing based on two different five-page play extracts similar in style and structure to the one used for the production in class lessons; and, 3) an additional student perceptions survey rated on a scale from 1 (no improvement) to 10 (much improvement) at the end of the intervention. There were no time limits imposed for the testing.

### *Data analyses and findings*

The researchers do not specify the procedures used for data analysis of the achievement test scores. However, findings from the post-test showed general trends of improvement in oral proficiency, reading comprehension, knowledge of language, structures and idiom. Post-production interviews revealed greater fluency of speech, fewer pattern errors in past tense narration, and greater control over the three main time frames in paragraph length discourse. They also reported a notable improvement in the oral proficiency interview for four of the participants, with two of them progressing from intermediate-high to advanced-low level. One particularly interesting finding was that two of the students who showed strong signs of linguistic improvement had not previously been enrolled in any Italian course and so the gain made was purely from the theatrical workshop. Furthermore, non-actors generally scored higher even though they were not engaged in the memorization of language on a daily basis. With regard to the students' self-perception of their improvement in all skills, the highest ratings were given to knowledge of cultural gestures, "probably because the theatre production made the language living, dynamic and physical" (*ibid*: 383) and they reported feeling more at ease with reading and listening.

Ryan-Scheutz & Colangelo (2004) conclude that theatre production is an effective way of teaching a foreign language as it involves students in a variety of communicative tasks on a daily basis throughout the numerous phases of the production and, in particular, students' perceived enthusiasm for the experience underlies its educational value and its potential for inspiring ongoing study of a language and its culture. As implications for foreign language

teaching, they encourage a more comprehensive and cohesive inclusion of theatre within the foreign language curriculum, over a longer period of time, in order to offer greater benefits for the development of the four language skills, but especially for oral fluency and accuracy, and to increase students' confidence.

#### *Evaluation of the study (2004)*

The researchers set up their experiment very carefully. Their quantitative research design gives a detailed description of the approach, research instruments and methods used. They tested the participants on all four skills, i.e. speaking, listening, reading and writing, along with cultural knowledge. However, the fact that students attended unspecified different numbers of rehearsals and meetings could have had some degree of influence on the scores obtained. Additionally, their overall positive results might have been affected by the fact that the study was restricted to voluntarily enrolled students, who were therefore very well motivated from the outset.

#### *Conclusion on Ryan-Scheutz & Colangelo (2004)*

Despite the fact that the research was limited to an extracurricular course with voluntarily enrolled students, the overall positive result was a strong indication of the positive effect of a full immersion environment involving the staging of an authentic play script in foreign language learning. I feel that this research is related to my study because it provided me with further encouragement and guidance for implementing a performance-based approach in foreign language learning to increase learners' language skills alongside fostering their self-confidence and motivation.

#### **2.5.4 Sirisrimangkorn & Suwanthep (2013)**

Sirisrimangkorn & Suwanthep (2013) conducted a study to determine whether the pedagogical use of drama-based role-play and cooperative dramatic activities, with a focus on groups of students with divergent abilities working together to reach a shared learning goal, would have an effect on students' motivation, oral skills and self-esteem in the foreign language classroom. The rationale for undertaking the study was that drama pedagogy uses



more authentic tasks which “lessen the feeling of artificiality” and may make learning more realistic and meaningful, as expounded by Brash *et al.* (2009: 102).

### *Research method*

The research was conducted with 80 non-native speakers, undergraduate students in two separate groups of differing proficiency levels, majoring in a subject other than English, in a basic English class at a University in Thailand. They attended 150 minutes of English classes per week over 16 weeks in an academic semester. Drama role-play is an activity in which students develop a story together and, in doing so, they are required to engage in the preparation of the role-play, going through numerous phases of rehearsals and performance presentation in front of their peers, and reflection on the scenes acted in order to improve the next group’s performance. The control group continued to learn using the course book. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect data. A pre- and post-speaking test, an Attitude and Motivation Battery test, and a self-esteem test, semi-structured interviews and students’ reflective journals were used as research instruments.

### *Research findings*

The findings showed that blended drama role-play and dramatic activities had a significant effect on students’ speaking skills, motivation and self-esteem in the experimental group compared to the control group. Answers to the interview questions confirmed that students responded positively to drama pedagogy and they claimed that they had more opportunities to speak, which led to a greater improvement in their oral skills. Learners remarked that they could use English authentically and the lessons were interesting, enjoyable and motivating because they provided opportunities to utilize what they had learned in a practical way. Their self-esteem increased because they felt that, by taking part in these activities, their contribution was valued. All students agreed that their improvement in speaking was a result of script-writing, group rehearsals and individual speaking practice. Sirisrimangkorn & Suwanthep (2013) conclude with recommendations for the integration of blended drama role-play pedagogy and cooperative learning into the language curriculum in order to promote a plausible and alternative pedagogy to a teacher-centred classroom by improving students’ speaking skills and their affective involvement. Cooperative learning encourages students to

get involved at all stages throughout their drama production because they are helping each other to learn and successfully complete assignments, while building personal relationships through this process.

### *Conclusion on Sirisrimangkorn & Suwanthep (2013)*

Despite the fact that Sirisrimangkorn & Suwanthep (2013) did not use authentic pieces of literature in their intervention, I feel their research is nonetheless relevant to my study for a number of reasons. Firstly, just as in my study, students underwent memorization of a script, rehearsal and reflection aimed at achieving a common goal, as well as being involved in other cooperative dramatic activities. Secondly, it was an experimental study which involved a control group, unlike previous studies described so far, and the results were computed statistically in terms of means, standard deviations and statistical significance. Finally, and most importantly, it addresses research questions similar to those posed in my study, which seeks to find the extent of the development of students' oral skills when they are taught using drama-based approaches, and their level of motivation compared to a control group taught through a traditional approach. Sirisrimangkorn & Suwanthep's (2013) study also proves to be a useful and welcome addition to research on drama-pedagogy implemented in a compulsory curriculum, as evidenced by its positive impact on students' speaking skills, motivation and self-esteem, albeit at university level.

## **2.6 Complexity, accuracy and fluency (CAF)**

Many researchers and language educators believe that the principal dimensions of the multi-componential nature of L2 performance and L2 proficiency are considered "to be adequately, and comprehensively captured by the notions of *complexity, accuracy and fluency* (CAF)" (Housen & Kuiken 2009: 1). As such, CAF have figured as major variables in applied linguistic research and have been used as performance descriptors for language oral assessment, as well as for measuring both proficiency and progress in language learning. Housen & Kuiken (2009) acknowledge that the origins of the CAF triad lie specifically in research in L2 pedagogy when, in the 1980s, Brumfit (1984) made a distinction between *fluent* versus *accurate* L2 usage to investigate the development of oral L2 proficiency in

classroom contexts. The third component, *complexity*, was added in the 1990s by Skehan (1989) who proposed an L2 model which encompassed CAF as the three principal proficiency dimensions. Since then, these three concepts have appeared prominently as dependent variables in Second Language Acquisition (hereafter SLA) research which can be separately measured and may be differentially developed by different learners under different learning conditions. CAF are “distinct and competing competences” (Myles 2012: 72).

Instead of using global or analytical scales to rate overall performance, researchers in the field of SLA have tended to use more exact operationalizations for these three constructs so as “to obtain more precise and objective accounts of L2 learner’s level within each (sub)dimension of proficiency” (Housen & Kuiken 2009: 4). Although research to date has not brought evidence that “overall performance is the sum of these three linguistic measures” (De Jong 2012 :122), there is some evidence that, depending on level of proficiency, students could progress more in one area than in another, but they will not progress linearly in all three areas at the same time. Thus, unlike previous studies on drama in language teaching, in order to analyse in a finer-grained manner the data of the present study and obtain more rigorous and clear-cut descriptions about the levels of L2 performance of learners exposed to drama approaches it has been decided to investigate the following (sub)components of CAF: a) syntactic complexity and mean length of AS-units for *complexity*, b) global accuracy and pronunciation for *accuracy*, and c) breakdown-fluency, speed-fluency, repair-fluency, mean length of run and phonation time ratio for *fluency*. Each of these measures will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

## **2.7 Summary: literature review and research questions**

In this literature review, I firstly discussed the importance of teaching language through authentic literary texts, and, in particular, I have focused on contemporary plays and how the language of dramatic texts is distinctive from other literary genres and oral discourse. Then, I touched upon the benefits which dramatic activities can bring into the language classroom in general. Subsequently, I discussed the added advantages of a full-scale performance as compared to solely dramatic games and activities blended with authentic texts and the value of repetition and language memorization through rehearsals. Next, I introduced the pros and

cons of a performance-based approach implemented in a compulsory curriculum, and additionally discussed the controversies of a process-oriented versus a product-oriented approach.

As a last point, I described a series of empirical studies which dealt with drama-based approaches for improving oral skills and students' motivation in the foreign language classroom both at extracurricular and intra-curricular level. Based on the theoretical framework and encouraging results from these previous studies, I have considered that teaching languages through dramatic approaches can add to the quality of learning, especially for increasing students' motivation and, consequently, leading to a greater language oral skills achievement. Literature to date revealed that no study has discussed the benefits of teaching through authentic contemporary texts and full-scale performance in any sort of quantitative terms, and currently, we have no evidence as to the extent of the achievement made by those students who have learned English through text- and/or performance-based approach in a high school compulsory curriculum. Finally, no study in the literature identified by this research has discussed any linguistic gains achieved through any type of drama-based approaches across all main dimensions of speech production in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency – terms which are also briefly presented at the end of this chapter. In order to address these issues, I implemented a text-based approach and a performance-based approach with a class of ten lower-intermediate to upper-intermediate students over a period of two terms. Sensibly, this investigation also seeks to inquire into learners' attitudes towards such approaches.

Therefore, the main research questions which I address in the present study are:

- RQ1 Does the drama-based approach promote the development of oral skills in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency better than the traditional approach?
- RQ2 Within the drama-based approach, which type of approach leads to improved complexity, accuracy and fluency: the text-based approach or the performance-based approach?
- RQ3 What are the students' attitudes towards the text-based approach and the performance-based approach in terms of interest, usefulness, difficulties, and enjoyment?

In order to answer RQ1 and RQ2, I implemented a series of tests with all participants in the study in both the experimental and the control group. In order to address RQ3, questionnaires were completed and follow-up interviews were held with the students in the experimental group. The methodology chapter which follows will describe in detail the design and population of my study, the text-based approach and performance-based approach implemented, the data collection instruments and procedures along with their structure and preparation, and with the method of analyses of the data obtained.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 The study design

The present study aimed to measure the level of oral complexity, accuracy and fluency achieved by high school Sixth Form Italian learners of English with lower-intermediate to upper-intermediate levels of proficiency within a compulsory curriculum through two types of drama-based instruction: a text-based, and a performance-based approach. CAF are terms used to describe performance proficiency levels attained by learners at different stages of development. These measurements are seen as linked to the growth, interaction and integration of linguistic competence and learned linguistic knowledge (Towell 2012: 66). Additionally, the present study aimed to gauge the students' attitudes towards the two aforementioned types of drama teaching approaches.

In order to answer the research questions, a mixed-method approach was employed in the present study. That is because mixed-methods “compensate for the shortcomings of stand-alone methods” and provide “a more complete picture or enhancing coverage” (Barbour, 2008: 151). As advised for educational research in general, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used with the aim of increasing the reliability and validity of the study (Cohen, *et al.* 2000). In doing so, this study tried to obtain deep, rich, reliable and replicable data as a combination of different types of data and analysis tend to provide a better understanding of a research problem than a single type of data taken in isolation. Data collection comprised three tasks used for oral testing of students (pre-, mid- and post-test) as well as a semi-structured questionnaire and a follow-up interview. In this way, a triangulation effect was thought useful. Triangulation is the process of combining multiple sources of data in order to enhance the credibility of a study (Suter, 2012). In the present study the three tasks, OPI, role-play and story-retelling were the triangulation aspect in terms of quantitative data whilst the questionnaire and the interview were the triangulation aspect for the qualitative data. By implementing data triangulation, a richer and more complex picture may be achieved which helps to reduce the likelihood of errors in findings when similar results are reported from

different sources. These research techniques and the suitability of their implementation are described in detail in later sections of this chapter (see 3.3).

As to the design of the study, a quasi-experimental design was implemented, in which an experimental group and a control group took part. The experimental group was exposed to two types of drama-based approaches: a text-based approach followed by a performance-based approach. The control group was taught through a communicative traditional approach (see section 3.4.2 for a detailed description of the aforementioned three approaches). It is important to acknowledge that both groups were formed out of pre-existing classes. The rationale behind such a choice was as follows: a) practical reasons precluded having three classes with a similar homogenous level of language proficiency in the same school; b) it would have been difficult to make a qualitative comparison between the two approaches of teaching with regard to the students' perceptions and attitudes towards them, if not carried out with the same participants; c) the study could not have been carried out longitudinally because by implementing the two approaches with two experimental groups - each with one group - the span of teaching and learning time would have been shorter and thus, it is likely that the level of language improvement might have been lower and, therefore, less perceptible at a statistical level. Accordingly, the design used in the study allowed greater scope both for the quantitative and for the qualitative data analysis as permitted learners' level of performance to be gauged over a longer period of time. Even though I had been advised about the danger of "practice effect", that is to say where students have prior knowledge of a play script from the text-based instruction phase which could influence the quantitative findings (personal communication, Phil Schofield, December 2012), it was not possible, in any case, to have a second class of students with the same language level in the same school. However, in order to reduce the practice effect on the students' oral improvements no parts of the script chosen for the performance-based approach period were taught in the text-based instruction phase.

For practical reasons different teachers taught the experimental and the control group. As I was not an employee of the school in which the study took place, the lead English language teacher agreed to give me one of the classes he was teaching that academic year for

experimental purposes. The possible drawbacks to this arrangement may be that one teacher's teaching style may appeal more than another's and thus can be more effective with the students. The personal qualities of a teacher, his/her communication skills and the rapport s/he establishes with the students or the enthusiasm which different language teachers can convey for the subject may be also considered factors which can influence the outcome of the learning process, regardless of the teaching method employed or the pedagogical knowledge the teacher possesses and applies in a language class.

### **3.2 The setting of the study**

This study took place in Manzoni private high school in Trento, which is a small town in the northern part of Italy. Manzoni high school is a small school where a friendly, family-like atmosphere prevails, and whose headmaster was very enthusiastic about my project from the outset, when I first proposed it before starting my doctoral research. Fortunately, the English language teachers enthusiastically accepted my initiative and gave their full support by allocating the appropriate classes of students for the project which required learners to have at least a lower-intermediate level of language proficiency. The teachers provided me with the English course syllabus and objectives, and with information about the profiles of the students involved in the study at the beginning of the academic year, that is September 2012. The first term was used for implementing the pilot study, whilst in the second and third terms of the year, the drama-based approach was conducted.

The school runs a variety of courses, including science, humanities, classics, accounting, electronics and telecommunications, information and communication technology, mechanical mechatronics and energy, tourism and agriculture, which last either two or three years. At the end of each year of attendance, the students have to pass a state examination in order either to enrol at a state school or remain in the same school, until they pass their "Maturità", equivalent to British A-level examinations and, consequently they can enrol on a University course. The final year is devoted exclusively to preparation for the final state examinations where English, both written and oral, is a compulsory examination subject.



Students choose to go to Manzoni school for a number of reasons: either they are part-time working students who encounter difficulties in keeping up with the timetable attendance demands of a state school, or they need to make up for a previously lost academic year due to a long period of illness or other major issues which may have prevented them from successfully completing the school year. In addition, Manzoni school is attended by students practicing sport at professional level who, due to intensive long hours of almost daily training, are unable to take courses at normal schools, thus there is no learning continuity which results in students lagging behind and being unable to catch up. Instead, this specific school tailors the courses and lessons to the individual student's needs and demands, sometimes providing them with one-to-one classes if required. An important point to emphasise is that, contrary to the prevailing common view regarding the students who attend private high schools in Italy that they lack motivation for study, most of the students in this school have a high degree of motivation, especially concerning learning English, due to the simple necessity of using the language at work, for their sports career or when travelling abroad. In a globalized world, unsurprisingly, the students who attend this school, whilst most of them were Italians, come from diverse social, cultural and educational backgrounds.

### **3.2.1 Participants in the study**

A class of ten final year high school students for the experimental group and another class with the same number of students for the control group were assigned to take part in the present study. The experimental group was taught by the researcher, whereas the control group was taught by one of the school teachers who had taught previously the experimental group. Concerning the composition of the experimental group, three students attended the linguistics course as opposed to the remaining seven who attended the course for community managers in the public sector. The ten participants were taking their English language classes together. Whilst most were aged 18 and 19, there was one student in the group who was 20 years old. Their level of English ranged between lower-intermediate and upper-intermediate in their oral skills, with most of them having a mid-intermediate level of oral language proficiency. At the end of the academic year, all pupils were expected to reach at least a B2 proficiency level on the CEFR standards which was required for their final state examination. In addition, their foreign language learning experience was similar, with all of the students

having studied English previously at an Italian secondary school. Some of the students in the study had spent some periods abroad in English-speaking countries or in countries where English is largely spoken as a second language, either in England, America or the Netherlands. Most of them were highly motivated to learn English because of their work or future career prospects. The opportunities for employment, depending on the course they were studying, were varied, particularly in the service sector and in specific sectors such as publishing, mass communications, advertising and public relations. However, due to work and training constraints, the majority of the students had little time at home to prepare for their classes. With respect to the control group, the participants had the same characteristics as those in the experimental group in terms of age range, level of language proficiency and background except that they were enrolled on other different courses which the school was offering but they still took their English classes together.

As far as the learners' language syllabus was concerned, the English language school course was based on a grammatical syllabus and partly around functions which included the main objectives of improving grammatical as well as communication skills, enabling students to express opinions and provide accurate descriptions and also targeted some other specific language functions (see Appendix 1 for the syllabus of the experimental group class involved in the experiment as designed by the class English language class teacher before the group was assigned to the project). The content of the lessons was left to the class teacher's discretion. As Nunan (2002: 28) explains a *grammatical* syllabus is a list of items selected and graded according to grammatical notions of simplicity and complexity. It usually introduces one item at a time and requires mastery of that item before moving on to the next. "The transition from lesson to lesson is intended to enable material in one lesson to prepare the ground for the next; and conversely for material in the next to appear to grow out of the previous one" (McDonough 1981 as cited in Nunan 2002: 28). Harmer (2008: 369) contends that such a syllabus restricts the kind of tasks and situations which students can work with, but a functional syllabus has also some problems with working out a grammar sequence because there are many ways of fulfilling the same function. Moreover, it also becomes difficult to sequence language if a syllabus is based on situations. The school made no use of

specific coursebooks and the lessons relied on the handouts given to students by the teacher at the beginning of each English lesson.

With regard to the frequency of lessons, the learners' timetable included two hours of General English and one hour of English for Specific Purposes (hereafter ESP) per week. I taught the General English lessons while the ESP classes were delivered by another English language teacher at the same school. It is crucial to acknowledge that the students participated regularly in the drama lessons and none of them dropped out.

### 3.3 Choosing the instruments

This section will briefly present the rationale behind the data collection instruments, together with a full description of each instrument and the tasks within the instruments. The data collection consisted of:

A: Quantitative data which involved oral tests to elicit samples of speech by implementing three tasks: (1) *Story-retelling from a written stimulus*, (2) *Oral Proficiency Interview* (hereafter OPI) and (3) *Guided Role-play*.

B: Qualitative data, which aimed to capture the students' perceptions and attitudes towards drama-based approaches, and preferences concerning the text-based and the performance-based approaches, and consisted of: (1) *Semi-structured questionnaires* which combined both qualitative and quantitative data (Likert scales and frequency of mentions), and (2) *Follow-up interviews*.

#### 3.3.1 Oral testing: general considerations

In this study, I mainly aimed to measure the degree of *complexity*, *accuracy*, and *fluency* achieved by students working with two types of drama-based approaches: a text-based approach in the first stage, followed by a performance-based approach in the second stage. To fulfil this goal it was decided to implement a *pre-test* at the beginning of the intervention, *an immediate mid-test* at the end of the text-based stage and *an immediate post-test* at the end of the performance-based phase. Each test comprised three tasks: a story-retelling from a

written stimulus, an OPI, and a guided role-play. The tasks featured different content but contained an equal level of difficulty. Construct, content and face validity, along with authenticity of the tasks were carefully considered when preparing the oral tests. Washback effect was another core issue which was taken into consideration.

According to Weir (1990: 22), construct validity is “the superordinate concept embracing all other forms of validity”. Normally, language teachers attempt to equip students with skills that are judged to be relevant to their future needs and tests should be designed to reflect these, thus “the closer the relationship between the test and the teaching that precedes it, the more the test is likely to have construct validity” (*ibid*: 27). Content validity is concerned with “the extent to which the choice of the tasks in a test is representative of the larger universe of tasks of which the test is assumed to be a sample” (*ibid*: 19) and regards the fact that the test “should be constructed as to contain a representative sample of the course” (Heaton, 1979: 154). Content validity considers the degree to which a performance tests what is supposed to be tested in accordance with the objectives of the lessons which had been set at the outset. With this in mind, the format of the three tasks in the test were chosen to best reflect the content and the types of activities mostly performed in class: reading, speaking, asking and responding to questions, and performing roles in the production of the play. Therefore, for the story-retelling from a written stimulus, an authentic play extract was used, given that the students would be engaging with dramatic texts throughout the whole period of English language instruction. The OPI reflected question-and-response activities, which were also practised in class to a high degree by performing various activities, whereby the guided role-play was similar to the acting practised during the rehearsal periods in preparation for the theatrical performance when students took on roles in the production of the play.

The third type of validity concerns face validity. A test is said to have face validity “if it looks as if it measures what it is supposed to measure (Hughes 2003: 33). Face validity regards “the degree to which students feel they are performing a real communicative act” (Bartz 1979 as cited in Fulcher 2003: 185). The tasks candidates are faced with in communicative tests “should be representative of the type of tasks they might encounter in their own life situation and should correspond to normal language use where an integration of

communicative skills is required with little time to reflect on” (Weir, 1990: 9). Therefore, a conscious effort was made to build into the tests as many “real-life” features as possible. The OPI and the guided role-play were judged to be similar in nature to the kind of discourse non-native speakers are likely to produce when interacting with native speakers or other non-native speakers in naturally occurring situations. Students were constrained in terms of topic but relatively unconstrained in terms of the specific information to be conveyed as opposed to the story-retelling in which a specific sequence of events needed to be communicated. However, the story-retelling was also considered an authentic task as people often need to convey information based on what they have read. That is to say, in real life, people are often required to deliver information from written documents. It reflects not only the degree of comprehension but, as an authentic activity, it also necessarily involves advanced processing skills, integrating comprehension with oral language production. Authenticity of tasks was vital to ensure face validity. Authenticity ensures that “performance on language tests corresponds to language use in specific domains other than the language test itself” (Bachman & Palmer, 2002: 23), as performance “replicates some specified non-test performance” (Bachman, 1990: 301). Accordingly, the tasks chosen were designed to place the same requirements on test-takers as language performance does in non-test situations in order to gauge each individual’s language proficiency level. As Bachman & Palmer (2002: 24) maintain, it is central to consider the authenticity of a task because of its potential effect on test-takers’ perception of the test and hence on their performance. In this way, authenticity will help encourage a positive affective response to a test task and could help test-takers perform at their best by ensuring face validity. The issue of face validity leads us to the point of ‘washback’ which is the effect that a language test can have on language teaching and learning. The tasks implemented not only reflected real-life situations and the demands placed on learners during lessons, but they also had to be in line with course assessment and state examination assessment criteria and content. This means tasks should be designed to motivate learners to pay attention and practise the necessary language that will lead to successful coursework and examination results. In light of the issue of washback, examination performance was also carefully considered in the test design used in this study.

In keeping with the requirements of the final state oral examination in which students would be asked to interact with an examiner and orally present a written assignment prepared in advance, I ensured that similar tasks would be used for data collection. The oral tests were also used for course assessment scope, carefully placed at the end of the second and third terms in which the instruction through the two types of drama-based approach took place. Hence, by selecting an OPI and a story-retelling task, I could be assured that I had paid adequate attention to the test conditions and that learners would have a high degree of preparation for their speaking skill assessment. Moreover, the story-retelling from a written stimulus involves reading comprehension as an additional skill which is also tested in the state examination.

In summary, the three tasks chosen for the test aimed to meet the requirements for construct, content and face validity as described above. Authenticity and washback effect were further important reasons for task selection. Next, I will describe the three types of tasks focusing on their characteristics, advantages, procedures and additional reasons for their implementation.

### **3.3.1.1 Story-retelling from a written stimulus**

Three self-standing dramatic extracts from contemporary plays produced by the same writer (i.e. Harold Pinter) were selected for this oral task (see Appendices 2, 3 and 4). The extracts chosen make use of a naturalistic language, with a simple and clear discourse at the level of syntax and lexical demands without abounding in colloquial expressions which might not be understood by the students at their level of proficiency. As well as calculating the readability scores which measure the level of difficulty of a text, the extracts chosen employed grammar tenses, sentence structures and vocabulary which were deemed to be adequate for a B2 level of language (upper-intermediate according to the CEFR standards framework), which learners needed to acquire at the end of their instruction period.

Apart from fulfilling the requirements for face, content and construct validity and those related to the washback effect, the reason for implementing this kind of task in the oral test was that it would be suitable for all levels of language learners. Additionally, it is believed

that story-retelling from a written stimulus reduces inhibition because the students rely on something already prepared which ensures they have something to say. Needless to say that access to a reading passage is much more under the learner's control compared to the OPI, where the questions are only heard and not seen on paper, and to the guided role-play where information can be read but is presented only in a fragmentary way. In the process of reading a text extract, learners can undertake the exercise at their own speed, re-read phrases or sentences and refer back to check references if necessary (Underhill 2004).

The three self-standing extracts used in the pre-, mid- and post-test were about the same length in terms of the number of words contained in each text. Before the implementation of the test, every extract was checked for readability to make sure they had the same level of difficulty. For this purpose, the Flesch readability software in the *Compleat Lexical Tutor* website was run which displays the vocabulary profile of a text (Cobb 2010). Table 3.1 below shows that the tests had approximately the same level of difficulty. Although Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level seems very easy it should be born in mind that the tests did not test the content.

**Table 3.1 Readability statistics for test extracts used in both the pilot and the main study**

<b>Readability Statistics</b>				
	<i>A night Out</i>	<i>Waiting for Godot</i>	<i>The birthday party</i>	<i>The collection</i>
<b>COUNTS</b>				
Words	586	460 (out of 576) <sup>8</sup>	593	559
Characters	2769	1970	2758	2332
Paragraphs	48	55	71	50
Sentences	86	83	123	130
<b>AVERAGES</b>				
Sentences /paragraph	1.9	1.5	1.7	2.6
Words per sentence	7.1	5.4	4.8	4.1

<sup>8</sup> When calculating the range of vocabulary, the characters' names (Vladimir and Estragon) in this particular extract have been deleted as they kept being considered as off-list words (13, 99%), thus, increasing the readability and the difficulty of the text. This issue did not occur in the case of the other three texts. Although the readability was calculated for 460 words, the entire extract contains 576 words, being of the same length as the other texts.

Characters per word	4	3.8	4.1	4.0
READABILITY				
Passive Sentences	0%	0%	0%	0%
Flesch Reading Ease	92.8	94.5	96.00	96.9
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	2.00	1.4	1.9	1.7

#### *Procedure for the story-retelling test*

As far as the test procedure is concerned, learners read the text extract to themselves individually and prepared what they were going to say under no time constraints. Once they were ready, the extract was taken back to the interviewee and recall took place immediately. Whilst performing the story-retelling, the students were recorded by me. No time restrictions were placed on students for any part of this task, on how much or for how long the learners should talk.

#### **3.3.1.2 Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)**

The oral proficiency interview is an assessment in which a speaker has the opportunity to demonstrate what they can do with the language they have learned. As outlined in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2010:1) an interviewer establishes a rapport-like conversation with a speaker enabling the speaker to demonstrate his/her highest level of proficiency and providing information regarding the patterns of strength and weakness in their linguistic ability.

The reason for choosing the interview was that it is indisputably an authentic communicative task, for its rapport-like conversation feature, involving genuine unpredictable interaction which takes place in real time. In the present study, the interview was an informal conversation between each participant and the researcher in the role of the interviewer. The interview reflected the ACTFL Guidelines for OPI. Both topics and the question types were varied: descriptive, narrative, speculative, question tag (see Appendices 8, 9 and 10). Every question had a purpose and prompted the speaker to provide open discourse with as many details as possible. Questions also focused on the speaker's interests. Although I maintained firm control of the interview, the learners still had the freedom to respond to questions as



they liked and to develop their comments and opinions. The fact that the OPI was not a set of pre-arranged questions in the strict sense, but a conversation with open-ended questions, allowed space for adapting and changing topics and functions in order to gauge the level of language of the test-takers and lead them to perform to the best of their linguistic abilities. Becoming acquainted with the learners' oral linguistic abilities was considered essential in view of the preparation for the drama-centred approaches adopted in the lessons to follow.

#### *Procedure for the OPI test*

The OPI interview was implemented over three different time periods. Each of them followed a pre-determined structure (see Appendices 8, 9 and 10) in order not to discriminate between participants allowing them some degree of freedom to say what they genuinely thought. In the first interview, in the pre-test, questions were carefully managed so that all participants could talk about themselves and their families, their hobbies and the content of a book or movie they most liked. In the second interview, implemented in the mid-test, participants talked about their Easter holiday and Easter traditions in their family and their country and about what they had done during this period. Finally, in the post-test, the questions in the OPI were built around participants' future jobs, preparation for the final examinations and around their summer holiday. This precise outline of the interview allowed for a similar format to be maintained across all interviews, which thereby guaranteed a degree of consistency across the oral language production of different speakers and the production of the same speaker over time. Depending on the level of proficiency of the students, the interview lasted for 10 to 15 minutes: the higher the level of proficiency perceived, the longer the interview because the students were eager to give long answers to questions. I also wanted to be consistent and go through the pre-arranged questions so as not to discriminate between participants.

#### **3.3.1.3 Guided role-play**

The last task in the test format was the guided role-play which was chosen for a number of reasons. Most importantly, the primary advantage of this task is that test-takers "genuinely" have to communicate. To successfully complete the task, it is clear that participants had to

ask questions rather than simply provide answers as might happen in an interview. Participants were required to produce the necessary language to engage in a wide range of discourse functions, which mostly entail improvisational skills and skills of managing the interaction. Furthermore, the task fulfilled most of the criteria which makes a test communicative: it was purposeful, contextualised, and interactive, as the students needed to achieve an objective by interacting with their peers within a certain given context. In the role-plays used in the present study, the objective was to buy a book in a bookshop in the first role-play, to buy tickets for a play they would like to see in a theatre site in the second role-play, and thirdly, to choose a suitable hotel for their holiday at a travel agency (see Appendices 5, 6 and 7). Without doubt, the learners had to interact in a specific given context in order to achieve a specific goal. Another advantage is the replicability of this task, which can easily be reproduced by the teacher in a multiplicity of forms by varying the details of items to be discussed (Weir: 2003). This enabled me to prepare different content for the three role-plays, maintaining the same level of difficulty across formats and ensuring the same amount of information was processed by the speakers.

According to Weir (2003: 63), when a student takes a test “there is some evidence that interacting with the teacher or examiner is a more daunting task than interacting with peers” and if the examiner does not take part, candidates should be more at ease and they have more opportunity and inclination to speak (*ibid*). In line with this belief, another important reason for implementing a role-play was that the addressee was another participant and thus the task was performed by two people of equal status. The guided role-play, unlike the simple role-play, placed equal demand on the learners as both had to ask and reply to questions by working out the answers from the information already provided in the handouts. A final important advantage of role play is the economical one, as it is easy to administer since students are working together in pairs, and this reduces the amount of examiner time needed to conduct the test.

#### *Procedure for the Guided role-play test*

Two students at a time were invited to prepare the guided role-play, each having been given handouts with the information needed to be read, processed and used for their role when

performing the role-play. The students had five minutes for preparation. On this occasion, they were allowed to use the information on their handouts and refer to it every time they felt it was necessary when performing the task.

### **3.3.2 Complexity, accuracy, fluency (CAF) and the oral tasks**

As previously mentioned, for the present study, it was decided to use more precise operationalizations of the underlying constructs of CAF in order to gain a more objective, precise and comprehensive picture of the linguistic gains made by learners who learned English through drama-based approaches. Multiple factors were taken into consideration when choosing the tasks in order to account for content, face and construct validity and washback effect on the one hand, as discussed in the preceding sections, and CAF on the other hand, whilst potentially enhancing a means of comparison with other studies. It is crucial to emphasize that the tasks were not chosen randomly, but their choice was additionally grounded in specific findings of previous SLA research concerning CAF constructs.

Skehan & Foster (2012) showed that different task features and different task conditions exert systematic influences on learners' performance. It has been demonstrated that under certain conditions, raised levels in one performance area of CAF may deplete attention from other areas, so that performance in those areas may be lowered. That is to say, higher complexity will be associated with some tasks' characteristics and conditions, higher accuracy with some other task characteristics and higher fluency with still others. Therefore, the three tasks in the oral test, namely the story-retelling, the OPI, and the guided role-play, were chosen in light of how they addressed these challenges and possibly controlled for CAF measures to some extent. It follows that, if the learners' performance would be raised in one task on one of the indicators at the expense of the others, the next task could compensate for this. Based on SLA findings to date, some observations have been made which I will report as follows.

First of all, research has shown that participants may respond differently to what is considered to be an *easy* task versus a *difficult* one. For instance, tasks based on familiar or concrete information have been found to be easier than tasks requiring information

transformation. Difficult tasks have been found to increase accuracy and complexity whilst decreasing fluency. Conversely, easy tasks have been found to increase fluency (Skehan & Foster 2012; De Jong *et al.* 2012: 124) at the expense of complexity. For these reasons, in the present research OPI was used as a task which is based on concrete or familiar information, and which would most likely favour accuracy and fluency.

Secondly, recent studies (for example Ferrari 2012) have shown that CAF scores are sensitive to the interaction dimension, i.e. *monologic* versus *dialogic*, and CAF measures also vary across the types of tasks which incorporate either monologues or dialogues. Research brought evidence that dialogic tasks promote greater fluency than the monologic ones (Witten & Davies 2014, Tavakoli 2016). A task in which there is greater scope for interaction promotes fluency and accuracy but not complexity, whilst narrative monologic tasks increase complexity at the expense of fluency. This is because monologic tasks, like the story-retelling task, contain more complex structures compared to dialogic ones. Production in monologic tasks, like the narrative ones, may also lead to less fluency than production in interactive tasks like role-play. OPI instead falls somewhere in between (*ibid* 2012). It is clear that interaction complexity tends to be intermediate among these tasks, whereas students' levels of fluency are rated very highly on the OPI. As far as monologic tasks are concerned, they have the advantage that they can afford a basis for deriving measures of learners' performance that are not influenced by interactional variables (Fangyuan & Ellis 2003).

Lastly, it has been further demonstrated that participants respond in a different way to *planned tasks* compared to *unplanned* ones. Planned tasks increase fluency, complexity and lexical sophistication but not accuracy (Ortega 1999; Levkina & Gilabert 2012). Planned narrative structured tasks produce greater accuracy (Skehan & Foster 1997). In order to respond to these challenges, it was considered important to ensure that task types which engaged students in different kinds of interaction should be included. It was hoped the tasks would complement each other in terms of CAF indicators and more valid data could be obtained. Based on these findings reported in the relevant literature in this study, the story-retelling task was proposed to possibly promote greater accuracy and complexity, whereby the guided role-play and the OPI were expected to promote greater fluency. In addition, these

multiple formats served to achieve the aim of triangulation in order to increase the internal validity of the study. Moreover, since previous studies on drama have used OPI and story-retelling tasks to elicit samples of speech for analysis, the comparability of these results with those of this study would be enhanced.

Furthermore, different additional skills which were practised by students in the tasks, such as reading, listening or both reading and listening, were combined to allow participants to be exposed to various types of language input. The status balance between participants and their interlocutors, either higher, lower or equal, was also considered important in that there were concerns that if learners had to interact with someone with a higher status, the teacher-tester in this case, they would possibly be more inhibited. Conversely, interacting with a peer during a test can be perceived as less threatening and thus, learners may perform better in a more relaxed way. Table 3.2 below gives a detail of the tasks used in the oral test and summarizes their characteristics. The times given are based on the period spent by the learners speaking during their actual test in the main study. The shorter times largely indicate a lower level of proficiency.

**Table 3.2 Testing formats used for eliciting samples of oral speech in the pre-, mid- and post-test phases**

Instrument/task	Description	Planned/ Unplanned	Additional skills involved	Interaction/ Status	Speaking time (min)
<b>OPI</b>	Pre-structured questions	Unplanned (real time)	Listening	Dialogic; high status: S-I	10 - 15
<b>Story-retelling</b> (written stimulus)	Self-standing extract	Planned (15 min)	Reading	Monologic	2 - 6
<b>Guided role-play</b>	Information guide papers	Semi-planned (5 min)	Listening + Reading	Dialogic; equal status: S-S	3 - 5

*Note.* S = students, I = interviewer

### 3.3.2.1 Overall oral testing procedure

As already mentioned, the test comprised three tasks as follows: story-retelling was a monologic, narrative planned task; guided role-play was an interactive, semi-planned, manipulation information task, whilst the OPI was an interactive, unplanned task based on familiar information. The instructions were written in English but participants also benefited

from a translation in Italian in order to make sure that they were understood by the participants correctly. All the oral production from the three tasks was recorded using a digital recorder.

The tests took place in a quiet room in the school which had been reserved prior to the data collection. The students sat the pre-test two days before starting the drama-teaching intervention at the beginning of the second term. The mid-test was taken two days immediately after the text-based approach was implemented, which coincided with the end of the second term, and the post-test was arranged for two days after the performance-based approach phase ended, at the end of the third term. Crucially, I tried to optimize the amount of time dedicated to taking the tests without having students waiting for too long. Therefore, a suitable time based on their availability was arranged for the OPI task which was organised on an individual basis, with no other students in the class present. For the story-retelling and the guided role-play tasks, the ten learners were organized into three groups: two groups of four and one group of two. One group at a time was invited to take the test at a suitable time chosen by them. In each group of four, two students were asked to individually prepare the story-retelling whilst, simultaneously, the other two remaining prepared the role-play. Given that the time for the preparation of the role-play was shorter compared to the story-retelling, once the learners had finished preparing their role-play, they were invited to take the test first. Then, the learners changed tasks. Immediately after, they took their turn to prepare themselves for the story-retelling test, whilst the other two students in the group were ready to narrate the story and then take their turn for the preparation of the role-play to be performed after the first two students had finished the whole test. The same procedure was followed with the second group of four. The last two students took their role-play first and then the story-retelling in case one of the students finished earlier and did not have to wait for the other. Due to the fact that the testing was done outside of their English class time and largely depended on learners' availability, the groups were not always formed of the same people in the pre-test, mid-test and post-test.

Regarding the preparation time, there was no preparation for the OPI; for the guided role-play, participants were given five minutes to read the instructions and information in order to prepare themselves to interact with their partner; finally, the students were allowed 20

minutes maximum preparation time for the story-retelling task. Each time slot was determined and tested in the pilot study (see section 3.4.1) and was deemed to be sufficient given the participants' proficiency levels. During task execution, the participants were allowed to use the handouts with the information for the guided role-play, but they were not allowed to rely on the handouts containing the play-extract used for the retelling of the story. As far as the actual timing for testing was concerned, there was no restriction on the amount of time the participants needed to perform any of the three tasks nor were there any restrictions placed on the amount and length of speech produced (see range of participant's speaking time in Table 3.2). It was decided to leave participants to talk at their normal pace rather than posing time restrictions during their testing oral performance because it was believed that such constrain could have had an effect on the CAF measurements. There was a concern that if learners speeded up when talking because of time constraints, their fluency would increase, but probably with a damaging effect on accuracy or complexity (De Jong, 2012).

### **3.3.3 Instruments for collecting qualitative data**

A quasi "two phase design" was implemented for gathering the qualitative data comprised of separate quantitative and qualitative data. Doing so enables the main thesis of a qualitative study to be tested using a survey in order to determine the distribution and frequency of the phenomena that have been uncovered. In this type of design, the participants' own responses to the items on the questionnaire serve as prompts for further open-ended reflection. At the same time, it ensured that the coverage of the items was both systematic and comprehensive. The questionnaire implemented was seeking to gather qualitative data, but mainly quantitative ones. As Saldaña (2011: 61) underlines, "sometimes numbers can add insight, texture and context to the repository of a qualitative data report". After completion of the questionnaire, the follow-up interview elicited in-depth answers which explained learners' selection of specific item(s) in the questionnaire. Richards (2009) highlights that interviews offer the unique benefit of probing into the beliefs and experiences that could explain the participants' responses, and observes that, "in a profession like teaching, such understanding can be invaluable" (*ibid*: 187).

### **3.3.3.1 Semi-structured questionnaire**

In order to evaluate the students' attitudes towards the two types of approaches, i.e. text-based instruction and performance-based instruction, along with their degree of preference a semi-structured questionnaire was designed (see Appendix 11) with both closed and open-ended questions. According to Bryman (2007), a questionnaire can tap into attitudes that the respondents may not be fully aware of, as well as reducing the bias caused by interviewer effects, and thus, increase the consistency and reliability of the results, if constructed appropriately (Bryman as cited in Dörnyei 2007: 62).

#### **3.3.3.1.1 Construction of the semi-structured questionnaire**

Multiple choice questions and Likert scale type questions were mainly chosen for the questionnaires in the study because these types of closed questions are quick to complete and straightforward to code and do not discriminate unduly on the basis of how articulate the respondents are (Wilson & McLean 1994: 21). However, the drawback of these questions is that they do not allow respondents to add their own remarks, clarifications and explanations in relation to the questionnaire topic, resulting in a risk that the categories might not be exhaustive and that bias could be present (Oppenheim 1992: 115). Dörnyei (2003) stresses that the disadvantage of a questionnaire is that it inherently involves a superficial and relatively brief engagement with the topic on the part of the respondent. The insights that questionnaires can generate are limited by the restricted time and effort respondents are usually willing to invest. For this reason, regardless of how creatively the items are formulated, questionnaires seem unlikely to “yield the kind of rich and sensitive description of events and participant perspectives that qualitative interpretations are grounded in” (Dörnyei 2003: 14). He advises that, in order to significantly enrich questionnaire data, the most effective strategy is to combine the questionnaire with other data collection procedures. In line with these suggestions, I implemented a follow-up interview which aims to overcome the aforementioned shortcomings of the questionnaire. Also, it was expected that the issues raised in the questionnaire would provide the researcher with insights that could be important when considering the quantitative research findings.



The questionnaire consisted of three parts: Part A; Part B; and Part C, which were spread over three pages in line with Dörnyei's (2009) suggestion that a questionnaire should not exceed 4 pages in length and 30 minutes completion time. Both Part A and Part B were equal in length and each included three questions related to students' attitudes to drama. Part A was dedicated to the use of texts in the classroom, whereas Part B posed the same questions regarding the use of performance. A closed statement format using the Likert scale was chosen for the first question of Part A and Part B. A closed format implies that only the choices given may be selected, and thus it facilitates students' responses (Gas & McCay 2007). The respondents were asked to choose one response from the following scale: *Not at all* – 1; *Little* – 2; *Somewhat* – 3; *A lot* – 4; *Extremely* – 5. The Likert scale was followed by two open-format items for each part, which asked participants for specific clarifications about: (a) what they liked best; and (b) what they liked least, when working with drama, as Dörnyei (2009) suggests that open-format items can provide a greater richness than closed items and the range of possible answers can be very wide. In a similar vein, Fowler (2002) observes that respondents often like to have an opportunity to express their opinions more freely and may find it frustrating to be limited solely to choosing from ready-made options.

Part C of the questionnaire was designed to obtain data regarding the use of English while doing class-based activities and learning English from undertaking the tasks set in the lessons by learning through the text-based approach, compared to learning through the performance-based approach. This part included 7 questions. The Likert scale was used for each of the first four questions in Part C where the respondents were asked to choose from the following: *Not at all* – 1; *Little* – 2; *Not sure* – 3; *Much* – 4; *Very much* – 5. The fifth question aimed to reveal which method of teaching learners would prefer to be used more in their future English classes, while the sixth question sought to discover which of the two methods they felt was most effective in improving their oral English skills. The last question provided a blank space aimed at inviting further comments on any issues regarding the lessons that the respondents wanted to address.

The division of the sections and the items in the questionnaire was determined by the research topic investigated in this study. The equal division of the questions in the

questionnaire between texts and performance was done for comparative purposes. The questions were formulated in a simple and straightforward way in order that they could be understood by all participants. Some terms that were deemed to be ambiguous for the respondents after the pilot study had been carried out, were explained in parenthesis next to the statement for added clarification.

Appraisals of the items' reliability were not carried out as it was considered unnecessary for a number of reasons. Firstly, the questionnaire had already been revised twice by both Phil Scholfield and by my supervisor, Dr Good. They both approved it, after corrections had been made according to their suggestions, and deemed it appropriate for the study. Secondly, many of the items on the questionnaire had been successfully used in past studies. They were derived from questionnaires used in previous research on attitudes towards authentic materials used in the classroom (Peacock 1996) and on teaching through a performance-based approach by using an authentic contemporary play in a high school compulsory curriculum (Jarfàs 2008). The two questionnaires were subsequently only slightly modified and combined in order to make them suitable for the research questions posed in the present study and, in particular, for the design and context of the study. For the questionnaire was inherited from those who designed and had used them previously, it was concluded that it had a high level of reliability. In addition, a pilot study of the questionnaire had been conducted with the aim of uncovering any problems with the instrument and addressing them before the main study was carried out (see pilot study 3.4.1).

Taking into account the students' language level and the straightforwardness of the questions, the questionnaire was written in English because the learners in the pilot study expressed disappointment with the Italian version under the claim they wanted to learn more English. Hence, it has been decided that the items in the Likert scale should be translated into Italian to avoid any confusion, especially for those students in the experimental group who might have preferred the use of Italian rather than English for a clearer understanding.

### **3.3.3.1.2 Administration of the questionnaire**

Importantly, the questionnaires were distributed and completed at the end of the last English lesson, which coincided with the end of the learners' period of instruction in the main study. The responses were reviewed by the researcher before the interview(s) with the participants took place. This ensured that all questionnaires had been completed and that the researcher had been given time to review the answers and prepare the questions for the follow-up interview before students left for their summer holiday. Completion of the questionnaire took the respondents around 15 to 20 minutes (the timing had previously been tested in the pilot study). It was not possible for them to complete the forms anonymously as follow-up interviews were necessary in order to go into more depth about the information given in the questionnaire. All questionnaires were successfully completed and returned to the researcher.

### **3.3.3.3 Follow-up interview**

A follow-up interview is considered an excellent method for complementing the information given in a questionnaire because it probes the participants' responses and allows them to discuss relevant topics in more depth, thereby generating useful additional data. Brown (2001) argues that questionnaire data and interview data are seen as inherently complementary in the sense that interviews are more suitable for exploring the questions more fully and also for exploring the suitability of the questionnaires for answering specific questions. In a similar vein, Gillham (2000) urges survey researchers to conduct semi-structured interviews to accompany questionnaire results in order to gain a better understanding of what the numerical responses mean so as to "bring the research study to life" (Dörnyei 2007: 130).

In a follow up interview, the participants are asked to go through their own responses with an interviewer and provide retrospective comments on the reason why they gave a particular answer to each question. Thus, the participants' own responses serve as a prompt for further open-ended reflection and, at the same time, it ensures that the coverage of all the items is

both systematic and comprehensive. Due to the fact that Likert scale questions were the main type of questions chosen for the questionnaires in the study, that is, questions which do not enable respondents to add any remarks, qualifications and explanations in relation to the categories, there is a risk that the categories might not be exhaustive and that bias could be present (Oppenheim 1992:115). Hence, it was felt that a follow-up interview would be necessary to probe more deeply into findings which otherwise would have remained unexplored or even neglected if questionnaires had been used as the sole method of research.

The rationale behind choosing a follow-up interview was based on the following criteria: (i) it would enable the participants to add remarks qualifications, explanations and clarifications in relation to the categories chosen in the closed items of the questionnaire; and (ii) it would yield richer qualitative data. All of this would provide more in-depth insights into students' motivation for choosing certain categories on the Likert scale. Follow-up interviews would also provide data in terms of: (a) their affective responses, such as interest, usefulness, satisfaction, enjoyment and lack of enjoyment; (b) their perceptions of ease or difficulty in answering the questions or any problems encountered; and (c) their perceptions regarding the improvement of their language skills, through the two types of drama-based approach.

Wallace (1998:130) stresses that one of the greatest advantages of the interview is its flexibility because, if an interviewee has any problems with a question, it can be explained by the interviewer. Furthermore, an intriguing answer can be followed by further prompts and in-depth explanation. In addition, a semi-structured interview provides flexibility and freedom for the interviewer to develop answers which have been given in the questionnaire and to clarify "why" the respondent made the choices they did for the closed-items, particularly those which would be considered unexpected and/or intriguing.

In comparing questionnaires and interviews as investigative techniques, Wallace (1998) explains that if the questionnaires are not anonymous, the respondents can be contacted for follow-up, in depth-interviews, so that their thoughts may be explored more thoroughly. Given that the questionnaires were mostly quantitative in nature, I considered it necessary to gather more information through a follow-up interview which is a suitable instrument for

investigating in greater depth the students' attitudes towards the two types of approaches. Moreover, Bell (2005) claims that the way in which a response is made (the tone of voice, facial expression, hesitations, etc) can provide valuable information that a written response would obscure. Questionnaire responses have to be taken at face value, but a response in an interview can be developed and clarified.

### **3.3.3.3.1. Administration of the interview**

After receiving the successfully completed questionnaires, interviews were arranged for a day and time that would suit the interviewees. All participants took part in the interviews which took place in a quiet room available in school and were conducted in Italian so that the pupils could feel more relaxed and be able to reveal their thoughts and perceptions. The focus of the issues being discussed was linked to the third research question which seeks to discover the students' attitudes towards the text-based approach and the performance-based approach in terms of interest, usefulness, difficulties, and enjoyment. In preparation for the interview session, guided by the answers given in the questionnaire I highlighted any aspects of the students' responses I found intriguing in the questionnaire, so as I could pursue the matter in more detail during the interview. The one-to-one interview sessions lasted between 15 and 30 minutes, depending on how much each student had to say. Depending on their responses to the questionnaire, participants were also asked to provide reasons for their choices and they were prompted whenever I felt it was necessary. In the follow-up interview, great care was taken by the researcher not to influence learners' pre-existing preferences (if any) for either type of approach: text-based instruction or performance-based instruction.

Before conducting the interview, I explained the purpose of the interview to the students and told them that I was interested in learning more about their opinions and attitudes towards the classroom activities which they were exposed to during the two types of instruction. Once seated in the room, I went through the questionnaire again with each participant referring to the questions I had prepared in advance. All the interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed and translated into English by myself for later analysis.

### **3.3.4 Ethical issues**

Prior to data collection an application for ethical approval was submitted to the Department of Language and Linguistics at the University of Essex in July 2012. The application confirmed that the students taking part in the study would be all adults and described the data gathering procedures. The anonymity of the audio recording of the oral tests and interviews was also guaranteed. Nevertheless, careful attention was paid to the following ethical principles in the preparation of the instruments, data collection and data processing stages:

- a) An informed consent (see Appendix 16) for the study from the Principal and the class English Language teacher before starting the actual project.
- b) A consent from the students in the control group (see Appendix 17) informing them about the study and the oral testing (including details of voluntarism, anonymity, confidentiality and benefits). I also gave them the opportunity to arrange individual tutorial sessions and to discuss with the students their oral testing, already transcribed and corrected for accuracy.
- c) Finally, an informed consent form for the students in the experimental group (see Appendix 18). The questionnaires were not anonymous for follow-up interview purposes. However, students were reassured that no information about any individual participant would be passed on to people outside the research project.

### **3.4 Data collection procedure**

Data collection took place over a period of an academic year. The first term was used for the pilot study, while the second and the third terms were used for the main study. The data collection procedure, shown in the table below, will be explained in detail in the following two sub-sections (3.4.1 and 3.4.2).

Table 3.4 Data collection procedure for both pilot and main study

<b>Pilot study procedure</b>		
<b>Study participants</b>	<b>Data gathering instruments</b>	<b>Time of the study</b>
Pilot group (N=3)	<b>Quantitative Data</b> <b>Pretest:</b> 1. Story-retelling from a written stimulus (play extract 1, 2 and 3* <sup>9</sup> ) 2. OPI 3. Role-play (1, 2, 3)  <b>Post-test:</b> 1. Story-retelling from a written stimulus (play extract 1, 2 and 4) 2. OPI  <b>Qualitative Data</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Semi-structured questionnaire</li> <li>Follow-up interview</li> </ul>	October/November 2012
		November 2012 December 2012
<b>Main Study Procedure</b>		
EXP (N=10) CG (N=10)	<b>Pre-test:</b> 1. Story-retelling from a written stimulus (play extract 1) 2. OPI 1 3. Role-play 1  <b>Mid-test:</b> 1. Story-retelling from a written stimulus (play extract 2) 2. OPI 2 3. Role-play 2  <b>Post-test:</b> 1. Story-retelling from a written stimulus (play extract 4) 2. OPI 3 3. Role-play 3	January 2013
		March 2013
		June 2013
EXP (N=10)	<b>Qualitative Data</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Semi-structured questionnaire</li> <li>Follow-up interview</li> </ul>	June 2013 June 2013

<sup>9</sup> \*The play extract 3 used in the pre-test has been replaced by the text extract 4 in the post-test for the pilot study

### 3.4.1. Pilot study

A pilot study is a smaller scale study undertaken as a trial run in preparation for the main study. One of the major advantages of conducting a pilot study is that it enhances the likelihood of success in the main study. Therefore, conducting a pilot study is an essential aspect of good research design (Teijlingen van *et al.* 2001).

The pilot study took place during autumn term and it proved to be valuable in that several unforeseen problems in the design and utilization of the data-collection instruments were discovered. It was then possible to amend them during and after the pilot study in the winter holiday break before commencing the main study in January 2013. The pilot study was undertaken mainly to try out all the data-collection instruments in the field and to check their reliability. More specifically, the pilot study enabled me to: (a) test the timing and conditions for all instruments used; (b) check the suitability of the dramatic extracts for testing and the time taken to read the texts and to perform the story re-telling; (c) verify the clarity of the instructions given in each test; (d) refine my OPI and follow-up interviewing techniques; (e) ensure the reliability of the questions in the questionnaire; (f) reach a clearer understanding of the lesson planning in terms of the suitability of the content and timing; and, lastly, (g) test the quality of the audio recordings.

Regarding the testing, the purpose of the field trial in the pilot study was to collect information about the usefulness of the test in order to make the necessary revisions to the oral test and to the procedure for administering it, rather than to make inferences about the participants during testing, as suggested by Bachman & Palmer (2002). The aim was to discover how the test-takers would respond to the test tasks, the preparation for the test environment, the suitability of the tasks in the test, the materials and equipment, the timing of the testing, and the physical conditions under which the test would be administered.

The pilot version of the present study was conducted during the autumn term of 2012. The pilot was carried out with a small number of students of the same level of language proficiency as the students in the main study. Although only three students took part in the



pilot study, this was considered sufficient, given that the data obtained did not need to be analysed at this stage. Moreover, the pilot students covered the different levels of oral proficiency of the students in the main study ranging from lower-intermediate to upper-intermediate. The research design adopted in the pilot study was similar to the research design of the main study but on a smaller scale. The pilot study comprised a total of ten lessons: four lessons were dedicated to teaching English through a text-based approach, i.e. self-contained extracts from plays and dramatic games; whilst the succeeding four lessons were dedicated to the staging of a performance based on an extract from the play *Little brother, little sister* by David Campton (1967). For better time management and to help the students become familiar with the script and be ready to take on roles and perform the play had been partially studied in the preceding lessons. The remaining two lessons, one at the beginning of the intervention and one at the end of the intervention, were used for the pre-test and post-test stages and for the completion of the questionnaire. There was no mid-test in the pilot study.

#### **3.4.1.1 Administration of the instruments in the pilot study**

The procedure for data collection in the pilot study differed slightly from that used in the main study. It was considered that a pre-test and a post-test would suffice for accomplishing the purposes of the pilot study, as long as all the instruments and conditions had been tested in the field, in which case there would be no need for a mid-test. Over and above this decision, it was deemed that the short period of time allocated for the English classes would have been better used for delivering drama-based approaches lessons which would provide more accurate and richer responses to the items in the questionnaire and in the interview data, increasing the reliability of the results obtained in the main study.

The administration of the tests adhered to the following procedures: at the commencement of the pilot study the three self-standing play extracts prepared for the pre-, mid- and post-test for the *story-retelling* task were given to the three students simultaneously. Each student was tested on a different extract. This provided an opportunity to obtain immediate feedback on the texts chosen and time to prepare a different one(s) to be tried out in the post-test if any

were found to be unsuitable for any reason. Regarding the *guided role-play*, all three versions were tested only once in the pre-test by rotating them between the three students and changing the roles as follows: students 1 and 2 worked on the guided role-play prepared for the pre-test; students 2 and 3 worked on the guided role-play prepared for the mid-test; and students 1 and 3 worked on the guided role-play constructed for the post-test. The fact that the participants took the test twice, acting out the same role-play but playing different parts, enabled the researcher to obtain two sets of feedback on the same role-play and gain a different perspective on it from the same participant. Additionally, this allowed extra time for constructive feedback on the students' part concerning the instructions for the questions on the questionnaire in the post-test. The OPI was conducted twice - at the beginning and at the end of the pilot study - in order to give me some training and enhance my skills as an interviewer, and to assess the appropriateness of the questions for the interview along with the quality of the recording.

The questionnaire was administered at the end of the last English lesson. Feedback from the students on the clarity of the instructions given and the reliability of the questions was immediate. With respect to the follow-up interview, it was unanimously agreed with the students that it should take place outside of the English classes at a time convenient for them after the questionnaires had been successfully completed. This enabled me to review the responses and prepare the questions for the follow-up interview based on their individual personal responses to the questionnaire items.

#### **3.4.1.2 Modifications and improvements after the pilot study**

This section will report on the great value of carrying out a pilot study which became evident when unexpected glitches arose.

Although careful attention had been paid to choosing the texts for story-retelling, one of the extracts proposed, *Waiting for Godot* (by Samuel Beckett) was found to be quite difficult by the students and considered too abstract and lacking in action. This precluded the possibility of obtaining the length of speech desired and caused frustration on the students' part.

Additionally, the vocabulary used by the playwright prevented the students from understanding the general sense of the story narrated in the text and thus, this extract was replaced with *The Birthday Party* (by Harold Pinter) which was administered and tested in the post-test and found appropriate for the purposes of story-retelling this time. With respect to the instructions given, these seemed to work effectively. However, it was found necessary to include an additional instruction, since the participants kept asking the researcher for the translation from Italian into English of a word which they were not familiar with when retelling the story during the testing phase. For this reason, the instructions also specified: “*Do not ask the interviewer any questions regarding the vocabulary in English or clarifications on the content while you are retelling the story*”. It was also found important to advise the participants that they could narrate the story in their own words and give their own interpretation of the text if they wished to do so, as I was not testing whether they had understood the story perfectly. This addition was necessary because the students showed signs of anxiety when they were either unable to describe precisely the facts recounted in the story or hesitated over the unfamiliar words found in the text and asked for clarifications when being tested.

As for the questionnaire, during the pilot study it was observed that one question was not fully understood by the students and created some confusion as it proved to be similar in terms of responses to another one in the questionnaire, despite being formulated differently. Consequently, it was decided to remove one of them for avoiding the same information to be obtained twice. Also, based on the lessons learnt from the pilot study results, some specific terms were explained for added clarification and some others added subsequently. For instance, for “comfortable” I deemed it more suitable to additionally specify in brackets “(at ease) and for “feelings of control” (speak correctly). Another adjustment regards the fact that when designing the questionnaire, it was believed that students would be familiar with a numerical 1 to 5 scale, but the pilot study revealed that during the completion of the questionnaire the participants were having difficulties in making perfect sense of the spaces left in blank on the Likert scale next to the numbers between *Not at all* - 1 and *Extremely* - 5. Hence, it was decided to fill in the gaps with the words missing on the scale and provide the learners with a complete range of descriptive options: *Not at all* - 1, *Little* - 2, *Somewhat* -

3, *A lot* - 4, *Extremely* - 5. An Italian translation was given alongside the English one. Completing the questionnaire took around 20 - 25 minutes and this timing was kept in mind for the main study.

With regard to the OPI during the pilot study, it was noticed that the students seldom stopped to ask questions about the translation of the words which they intended to use in their story-telling into English. The flow of the discourse was interrupted by speaking Italian and hence, this interruption would have had a clear negative impact on fluency measurements. To adjust for this inadequacy, prior to the interview I had to make clear that students should not ask for the translation of the words, but that they should try to explain themselves in English in the best way they could. The students were also reassured that after the interview they were going to receive written feedback with a corrected version of the interview and constructive comments, so that they could check for any language errors.

### **3.4.2 Main study**

Two pre-existing classes, each comprised of ten students, took part in the main study with one forming the experimental group (EXP) and the second one constituting the control group (CG). In the second term, during the teaching of the texts-based approach, the learners in the experimental group worked on a variety of self-contained play extracts, while in the third term, during which the performance-based approach was implemented, learners worked on one script from a single play with the aim of putting on a full-scale performance at the end of the academic year. The control group was exposed to a traditional teacher-centred approach (see Section 3.4.2.3).

The lessons in the main study were delivered by the researcher for a period of 20 weeks, from January to June, with a frequency of two lessons, of 60 minutes each, per week. The two lessons were taught consecutively, resulting in one lesson of 120 minutes for the drama classes. In addition to these classes, the learners' schedule of English language lessons comprised a supplementary lesson of English for Specific Purposes (hereafter ESP) with another English Language teacher. None of the students dropped out of the study.

**Table 3.5 Table of the English lessons over the two terms for the EXG and CG**

<b>MAIN STUDY</b>	<b>No. of lessons/week</b>	<b>Period (20 weeks)</b>	<b>Time/lesson</b>
<b>Text-based approach</b>	2 lessons/week	January -March	60 min each
ESP	1 lesson/week	January -March	60 min
<b>Performance-based approach</b>	2 lessons/week	April -June	60 min each
ESP	1 lesson/week	April -June	60 min

Learners from two classes with the same level of proficiency as those in the experimental group were selected to form the control group. They voluntarily became involved in the project because they wanted to practice their oral skills while being tested. The control group was exposed to the same number of lessons as the students in the experimental group over the same period of time, and they also had the same teacher throughout.

### **3.4.2.1 The text-based approach**

In the text-based approach, authentic self-standing extracts from various plays were used in order to support the teaching of grammar and vocabulary in context. The texts contained the grammatical structures to be learned as imposed by the course objectives and syllabus. It was also thought that this phase would familiarize students with authentic texts from plays and would prepare them for reading, interpreting and working on the one-act play chosen for the performance phase which would follow. Besides aiming to develop learners' oral language production in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency, one of the core reasons for teaching through literary texts was to provide a language and cultural model which such texts offer, and which inevitably should lead to personal growth (Carter & Long 1992: 2). Furthermore, given that the value of reading in language learning has been widely acknowledged for many years because "where there is little reading there will be little language learning" (Bright & McGregor 1970: 10), reading literary dramatic texts in the first place can have a direct impact on expanding learners' vocabulary and language skills. According to Nuttal (1996:149), reading translates into a "vital skill and the one that provides the most spin-off for general language learning" and the use of authentic texts at an appropriate proficiency level can be an excellent source for Krashen's theory of comprehensible input at  $i+1$  (Krashen 1982). Thus,

the self-standing extracts were used to develop L2 grammar and vocabulary which can be further expanded to oral skills development.

#### ***3.4.2.1.1 Rationale behind the selection of the self-standing extracts***

The corpus of self-standing play extracts used in the class was prepared after I carried out an extensive reading of contemporary texts and resource books on drama. Students' needs guided the selection of material for the text-based approach phase and the following elements were taken into consideration: level of proficiency of students, their age and the objectives of the class syllabus. An important point to emphasise from the outset is that the lessons were prepared progressively and not all of them from the outset. Such a procedure gave me the possibility to get to know the students better with each lesson, together with their interests and motivations and thus, decide on the type of texts, which could be particularly interesting and suitable for them. The pilot study was of great help in this sense as all the texts used in this phase proved to be appealing to the students, and therefore were re-used in the main study. Due to the students' proficiency levels, which ranged from lower-intermediate to upper-intermediate, the choice of the extracts was not limited and I could select from a wide variety of contemporary authentic plays (see Appendix 13 for an example of a self-standing play extract).

I sought to select texts presenting engaging themes linked to life experiences with which the students could identify and in which they could involve their personalities in order to increase their motivation and thus, potentially leading to linguistic and personal growth. Moreover, I aimed to choose texts which were motivating enough "to produce in the students a desire to read, to read more and to read more into that particular text" (Carter & Long 1992) and as a result discussions could flourish. The length of the play texts was estimated to be manageable in the two-hour in-class lesson. A new extract from a different play was taught each lesson in order to present students with an in-breadth reading of dramatic plays and to avoid working on the same extract from lesson to lesson, in case some of the students did not particularly like it, whilst ensuring that the objectives of the syllabus would be fulfilled. As Carter & Long (1992) argue, in order to raise interest and motivation, literary texts should be

enjoyed. Sometimes, a few short extracts from the same play were delivered in a single lesson. In this way, the students engaged more with the same character in the play, encouraging more creative responses.

Conspicuously, the texts selected took into consideration the objectives of the grammatical syllabus. They exemplified the grammatical structures to be learned and those previously learned, and formed the basis for classroom discussion and activities. They dealt with separate aspects of language and progressive level of complexity by illustrating the linguistic point to be learned gradually placing greater demands on students. That is to say, I graded texts according to difficulty: in the beginning, the texts employed what were thought to be more basic grammar structures such as *simple present* and *past tenses* whilst the later extracts contained more complex structures such as *conditionals*, *passive voice* and more idiomatic expressions. The texts also provided the students with repeated instances of lexical and syntactic structures they needed for internalisation. For instance, if I had to teach *Present Perfect Simple* versus *Simple Past* I ensured that a self-standing extract, which illustrated the aforementioned tenses, was prepared and brought to class. Teaching structures and lexis in the context of a literary text necessarily require students to pay more attention to lexical and grammatical patterns in order to read more precisely and in this way, to make sense of what really happens within the world of the text and subsequently, to interpret the second-level thematic meanings in the discourse between the text and the reader (Lin 2006). Hence, the learners can see how the meanings are constructed by the language and therefore an opportunity is created for questions, reflection and different responses to the text, which naturally involves working with ideas. In addition, a close analysis of authentic texts can unravel the many meanings of a word embodied in complex forms, which is more likely to give students the opportunity to expand their language awareness. In this way, learners are invited to practise the target language in a meaningful context, develop the traditional four skills, and engage in debates involving the “fifth skill which is thinking” (McRae 1999: 23) which arise from the subtext and thus, helps to develop their critical thought. This consists of going beyond the mechanics of grammar practice and repetition of reinforcement, into areas of individual response. At the same time, learners are invited to expand their lexical and

structural competence, whilst experimenting with the target language in an affective and practical way (*ibid*).

The next sub-chapter will outline the lesson procedure in the text-based approach, the stages of the lessons, and the classroom interaction mode.

#### ***3.4.2.1.2 Lesson procedure in the text-based approach***

In order to achieve the aforementioned aims, a language-based approach was implemented, which is less concerned with the literary text as a product but is more concerned with the process of reading, expanding vocabulary and learning grammar. Of central importance in this phase is that the literary texts were used as support for teaching language and not literature, in order to cultivate students' love for reading to further develop their oral language skills. The lessons were generally organized around a theme such as *Mystery*, *Relationships*, etc. which were regarded as engaging for the students. In the text-based approach phase, lessons usually comprised several main stages, not always in the same order: (a) a drama game or dramatic activity as a starting point, (b) a set of induction questions with the aim of preparing students to receive their texts, (c) presentation and reading of the new text, (d) explanation of the grammar point(s) and the new vocabulary, (e) various activities and discussion of the text and (f) closure with another dramatic game or activity if time permitted.

Drama games focused on linguistic points of grammar and vocabulary, with the aim of either introducing a new point of grammar or reinforcing the points taught in the previous lesson. These games were carefully chosen and were usually incorporated into the new theme and the topic of the new lesson. By way of example, when learners studied a literary extract from *The Patient* by Agatha Christie which concerned a mystery surrounding a murder and the grammar point revised was *Simple Past Tense* form, then, a suitable drama game to close the lesson would be *Alibi* (see Appendix 14 for an example of games used in the text-based approach). In this game, students have to ask questions and respond using *Simple Past Tense* form which has been taught in that lesson, whereas the topic, in this case the trial of the culprit, was in perfect accordance with the content of the text read and discussed.



Drama games and activities had the aim of giving the students speaking practice by helping them to gain confidence in speaking and to ease any tension, leading to a more relaxed class atmosphere, whilst allowing students a chance to strike a balance between fluency and accuracy. In addition, the games aimed to keep the whole class actively engaged nearly all the time as all students took part in them. The drama games used were found in different resource books for teachers whilst others were either invented or learned in various drama workshop activities.

Generally, after the game, a set of induction questions preceded the presentation of the text with the aim of activating students' schemata by eliciting previous knowledge in order to introduce and present the new text. Information about the authors, films seen or plays read by the author whose work was going to be read that day were very often discussed. The introductory questions attempted to create the right mental attitude for receptivity and were designed to stimulate a willingness to respond (Brumfit & Carter 1986).

Immediately after this phase, the presentation of the text would follow. The presentation of the play extract was varied as it was considered important to hold students' interest: sometimes, before reading, the text was first listened to on audio-tape, at other times the extract was viewed on video, if it was available from on-line resources, or directly read from the text. Similarly, different types of reading were practised in class, either individually or with the whole class, who took on roles, silently or aloud. Next, the new point of grammar was explicated. At this stage, the meaning of any unknown vocabulary was also revealed. It was expected that in line with the Carter & Long's (1992) claim, that once one text had been read accurately and comprehended, then greater fluency would ensue. At times, the point of grammar, if considered somewhat more difficult to understand, would precede the reading of the text as it was felt that this would help students' reading comprehension, avoid feelings of frustration and therefore, result in greater language production. The play extracts formed not only the basis for learning new vocabulary and syntactic structures but provided a means for the lesson to move beyond the literal meaning of the words on the page. The value of an authentic text would be diminished if it were not used to make students think about text content in a deeper way. In other words, I invited learners to make inferences of various

sorts, to evaluate the text and provide examples from their own experiences. I encouraged responses to the texts and creativity, allowing students to make sense of the dialogue in the play by moving gradually from low-order questions, which ensured an involvement with the text, using language as an object, to high-order questions, that is from the characters' words to an interpretation of what is implied by what they say by using language as a tool. This was also done with the purpose of broadening students' understanding of conversational language. Furthermore, I endeavoured to make the discussions on the texts compelling and also challenged students' thoughts and opinions by asking them to give reasons for their answers to the questions. In doing so, I provided them with the opportunity to participate as much as possible in the classroom discussions, thus enhancing their critical thinking and oral skills.

The lesson usually ended with another dramatic student-centred activity. The student-centred activities were varied in order to maintain interest and involvement. Most of them were designed to increase students' spoken language skills and were related to the topic they had studied that day. Different types of activities were designed to target different learning styles whilst encouraging creativity and in-depth analyses of the text with a focus on character, plot, grammar and vocabulary.

With regard to the classroom dynamics, a great deal of classroom interaction was between student and student. Pair work, group work and whole class discussion was the prevailing mode, so as to motivate the students to learn through active cooperation. The practice of students taking the role of the teacher when explaining simple points of grammar, given that some of these structures had been taught in previous years, peers translation, correcting homework or leading and actively engaging in discussions on the extracts read was also a common feature of the class. From my perspective as a teacher, in a process-centred language-based approach, I became an *enabler* working with students and creatively intervening "to ensure a relevant and meaningful experience through a direct contact with the texts" (Carter & Long, 1992: 7). That is to say, I tended to adopt a less "traditional" way of teaching and become more part of the group by most of the time acting only as a moderator

and leader in the discussions giving students space to express their ideas and taking always part in the drama games.

English was the language used predominantly in class. Italian was used when vocabulary was explained explicitly whenever students could not guess the meaning from the context, especially in the stage directions or in the character's stage directions. While all four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing were taught, I constantly sought to maximize the amount of English spoken by the students so the classes would be mainly dedicated to developing students' oral fluency and accuracy whilst the written skill was practised mainly and largely at home through homework assignments. Mistakes were corrected very infrequently, in order not to interrupt the flow of discussion. In the text-based approach phase, students' homework would include pieces of creative writing where students had to use new vocabulary, fill in missing lines in an authentic play dialogue, build a character's profile and present it to the class, or match lines from literary texts. Drills gap-fill exercises, which are more a characteristic of traditional classes, were still assigned from time to time as homework in order to give students the opportunity to practise in writing the grammar structures learned on the day in question.

### **3.4.2.2 The performance-based approach**

The performance-based instruction was implemented in the third term following the text-based instruction phase. The aim of this phase was to prepare students for a performance of an authentic contemporary text at the end of term. For this purpose, a short single one-act play was selected, which was *Over the Wall*, by James Saunders (1977). An important point to be raised at the outset is that the lessons were process-oriented and not product-oriented, in which the emphasis was placed on the process of language learning through a meaningful activity and not necessarily on the quality of acting of the student actors. A perfect, polished performance on the stage was not the goal of such classes.

#### ***3.4.2.2.1 Rationale behind the selection of the play for the performance***

An essential point to make is that the play was chosen after I had become familiar with the class and the students' interests and been able to assess the make-up of the class. The level of language, the theme and its suitability were taken into consideration when choosing the script for performance. After having undertaken a sizeable search and extensive reading of contemporary plays, the text for the performance *Over the Wall*, by James Saunders (1977) was chosen for the performance phase. Even though some of the linguistic features in this play are outdated, the play was selected for a number of reasons, which fulfilled certain criteria. Firstly, the length of the script, which is very short, was thought to lend itself to a manageable rehearsal scheduled in the ten English classes, each of 120 minutes duration, given that the performance of the play on the stage would last only seventeen minutes. Secondly, the theme of the play which dealt with a philosophical quest, was regarded as suitable for engaging the students and stimulating their interest due to their age. Another reason was that any number of students could take part in the play. In this way, the learners had the opportunity to decide if they wanted to be actors or take other roles in the preparation of the play in view of its production. Another key factor was the accessibility of the language in the text, which is broad in range and makes use of various colloquial expressions. Moreover, the grammar, structure and tenses used in the play reflected the grammar which had been taught in the lessons in the first stage and which was required for the students' level of learning. Lastly, a version of the same play performed by a group of foreign students learning English was found on *You Tube*. The students were given the opportunity to watch a video of the play in one of the English classes, a few lessons before finishing their preparation for the final performance in class and to make comments and reflect on other people's work on the same dramatic text, thus providing a point of reflection and discussion in the language classroom. Although, it can be rightly argued that watching the video at this point in time rather than after having staged their own performance may have stunted learners' creativity in preparing the stage, however, it helped them think what they could have done differently. Besides, for the sake of variety, this activity aimed to improve learners' listening skills and the discussion which followed was intended to make the learners

use in an unconscious way the conditional Type 3, by pointing out what they *would have done* or *would have liked* to do differently.

#### ***3.4.2.2.2 Lesson procedures in the performance-based phase***

The performance-based instruction period comprised the same number of lessons as the text-based instruction period: ten lessons over the ten-week period, each lesson lasting 120 minutes, with the final goal of staging a performance at the end of the term which coincided with the end of the academic year. As outlined, an important point to bear in mind is that the lessons were process-oriented and not product-oriented, where the focus was on developing students' language skills, complexity, accuracy and fluency, and not on the quality of acting. The process of learning the target language through a meaningful, enjoyable and goal-oriented experience acquired the main significance here and the theatrical activity was only used as a tool to this end.

The performance-based instruction phase was divided into two main stages: (1) a preliminary stage and (2) a rehearsal stage. Both stages started with warm-up exercises, which are stretching routines and theatrical games with physical, vocal and linguistic objectives carefully selected to accomplish specific acting or communicative goals. These warm-ups are important to set a relaxed mood, to help learners to establish physical contact with each-other and to get them to move freely in the classroom (Shackleton 1989: 55). These types of theatrical activities addressed a linguistic issue most of the time and were mostly physical compared to the drama games and activities which were practised when students were working on play extracts in the text-based approach phase (see Appendix 15 for examples). If a particular problem with the language was identified during the language classes, I sought to address it in a subsequent lesson with a game. Often the games combined linguistic goals, such as learning new vocabulary, with the acting goals. One example of such an activity is where students had to learn lines by heart by experimenting with different emotions and tone of voice (see the *Memorisation Game* in Appendix 15).

In the first stage of performance preparation, lessons were devoted mainly to a close reading of the script for content, translation and explanation of the syntax and lexicon. This phase

was followed by analytical discussion of the script at the end of which, roles were allocated. In this overall phase, grammar and vocabulary were still explained, when necessary. Most of the times, the relevant grammar and vocabulary were revised through various warm-up games or through setting homework which combined the new language items with more reading of the script at home. All students agreed to choose a role in the performance and production of the play, and the more enthusiastic individuals seemed to be those with a lower level of English proficiency compared to the rest of the class. Learners with a higher level of proficiency chose to take on more demanding roles or even more than one role.

In the rehearsals stage, lessons were dedicated to the memorisation of lines, to more script-reading and additional in-depth discussion of the script, but most of all to acting the parts learned either in class or at home for linguistic precision, pronunciation and accuracy. When rehearsing individual scenes, the students who were not acting were playing members of the audience. Then, a discussion would follow on how the actors should improve their acting and linguistic skills in their part of the play just rehearsed, and on how the actors should have behaved on the stage, regarding their position, gesticulation, tone of voice and other aspects of stage-craft. Although emphasis was not placed on the quality of acting, these activities gave learners further language practice and opportunities for meaningful contextualized language production. The discussion would often include cultural elements, for example, how an English person would have behaved in that specific situation which the scene just rehearsed depicted. The rehearsal stage also included working on some production-related activities, such as costumes, props and music. Undoubtedly, the layout of the class was considered important at this stage and the class was transformed into a scene with desks and chairs along the walls. In summary, the aim of this stage was to develop students' spoken skills, their vocabulary, fluency and accuracy, while the theatrical activity was used only as a tool or means to this end.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to accomplish the goal of staging the production of the play at the end of term in front of a real audience consisting of family and members of the school as originally planned. The dates of the state examinations, which are compulsory for students, were not announced until very late. At this point, the students started being very

busy in preparation for their final examinations, and unfortunately there was little time left for the memorization of all their lines for the production of the play. Still, parts of the script which they had managed to memorise, either in class during the rehearsal periods or at home, were staged in the last English lesson, when the classroom was transformed into a stage and students used their imagination in preparing it using rudimentary costumes and props. The audience was simply formed by only a few students from the control group. With regard to the play, those parts and lines, which were not memorised at home or in class, were read by the student actors.

As for myself as a drama teacher-researcher, in order to learn more about what a performance on the stage involves, and in preparation for the study, I attended the first year module of *Introduction to Drama* in the Department of Literature, Art and Theatre Studies at the University of Essex in the first year of my PhD. Additionally, I eagerly participated in various workshops which the Theatre Art Society delivered during the year prior to my data collection, attended conferences and workshops and read extensively on the topic.

### **3.4.2.3 The traditional approach**

The students in the control group were exposed to a traditional teacher-centred way of teaching where there was no specific focus on oral communication skills but all skills were taught. Most instruction consisted of a very common practice of teaching in the Italian context, using handouts brought to class by the teachers on the day. The learners in the control group received no exposure to authentic pieces of literature or any type of dramatic games or activities during their actual lessons except for the pre-test, mid-test and post-test. More specifically, with regard to English classes in particular, the Italian system of education tends to generally focus every academic year on a revision of all grammar tenses taught in the previous years, paying little attention to the introduction of a richer and more varied lexis in general, and to developing oral skills in particular. Drills, gap-fill exercises and the rote memorization of lists of vocabulary are the norm in such language classes in which learners are offered little chances to practise their speaking skills. Emphasis is placed on the accuracy of grammatical structures in mostly written exercises very often out of context, whilst the

oral practice is often disregarded. The cultural dimension plays little role in such classes being, rarely if at all, taken into consideration. Needless to say, instead of progressing to a higher level of language according to Krashen's comprehensible input at  $i+1$ , by introducing more complex tenses, structures and new words at more advanced levels, the syllabus arguably unnecessarily repeats the grammatical points taught recurrently in the previous academic years. It could be claimed that this leads to general boredom, loss of motivation and consequently, a low level of speaking proficiency. What is more, the classes are generally conducted in Italian with explanations of the new idioms and translation of vocabulary also carried out in Italian, which consequently, substantially reduces the opportunities for learners to practise and improve their listening and spoken English language skills.

### 3.5 Data analysis

In this subsection, I shall first provide a concise overview of how each dimension of the CAF triad was taken into consideration in this study, i.e. how syntactic complexity, mean length of AS-units (hereafter MLAS), global accuracy, pronunciation accuracy, breakdown fluency, speed fluency, repair fluency, mean length of run (hereafter MLR) and phonation time ratio were calculated. Subsequently, definitions and detailed explanations for the rationale behind the choice of each sub-component of CAF and how data were coded and analysed within each category will be discussed. More precisely, I will explain the segmentation of speech for complexity, the errors taken into consideration for accuracy, and how the measurements for each sub-dimension of fluency were carried out. Next, the results of the intra-rater reliability test will be presented, which will be followed by an explanation of the statistical method of analyses employed. In addition, this chapter discusses the statistical method used for analysing the questionnaires along with the method used to transcribe and code the interviews and the remaining open-ended questions from the questionnaire. The results of the reliability testing for the coding process will also be reported.



### 3.5.1 Measures of complexity, accuracy and fluency

Researchers dealing with spoken second language analyses who are seeking to quantitatively measure various dimensions of complexity, accuracy and fluency first need to segment the data into units against which frequencies and ratios can be calculated. Likewise, in the present study, all speeches from the three oral performance tasks were audio-recorded and subsequently fully transcribed and individual performances were segmented and coded for complexity, fluency and accuracy as follows:

#### *Complexity*

- Syntactic complexity: ratio of clauses per AS-unit
- Mean length of AS-units: mean number of words per AS-unit

#### *Accuracy*

- Global accuracy: proportion of number of errors per 100-words
- Pronunciation accuracy: proportion of number of errors per 100-words

#### *Fluency*

- Speed: the total number of syllables divided by total length of speech (total time)
- Breakdown: the total length of pauses - filled and unfilled - (longer than 0.25 second) divided by the total length of spoken time
- Repairs: the total number of repetitions, self-corrections and reformulations, divided by the total number of words (word count excluded false starts and repetitions in the present study)
- Mean Length of Run (MLR): spoken time divided by total number of pauses
- Phonation time ratio: spoken (phonation) time divided by total time (including pauses)

### 3.5.1.1 Complexity

Complexity, as the term in itself denotes is the most “complex” of the three constructs because of its “polysemous” nature (Pallotti, 2009: 5). In SLA, the same term is used to refer to properties of tasks and language performance where the term has different meanings. Complexity can be measured on various dimensions which are used to quantify the elaboration of language. In this study, complexity is defined according to Ellis (2003) as the extent to which the language produced in performing a task is elaborated and varied, which translates into the capacity of using more advanced language. Syntactic complexity and mean length of AS-units were chosen to be measured for the present study.

#### 3.5.1.1.1 Syntactic complexity

The production unit used in this study for syntactic complexity is the AS-unit (“Analyses of Speech unit”) which is specific to SLA research and has been used frequently since it was first proposed as an improved option for oral discourse segmentation by Foster *et al.* (2000). The AS-unit is “a single speaker utterance consisting of an independent clause, or sub-clausal unit, together with any subordinate clause(s) associated with either” (Foster *et al.* 2000: 365). “An independent sub-clausal unit” was further defined as “either one or more phrases which can be elaborated to a full clause by means of recovery of ellipped elements from the context of the discourse situation” (Foster *et al.* 2000: 366). Such a unit, specifically designed for spoken production, is mainly syntactic because it is easier to identify than the semantic or intonational ones, although these latter aspects may also be taken into consideration. Based on its definition, an AS-unit can be used to deal not only with utterance fragments but also with chunks of language from which certain usual language constituents are ellipped. Thus, a significant rationale behind choosing the AS-unit is that it is essentially valid and sensitive to genuine differences in performance, especially in the case of highly interactional ones. A further reason is that, unlike the c-unit or T-unit, which is the most popular unit used to analyse both written and spoken data, an AS-unit “allows for the inclusion of independent sub-clausal units, which are common in speech, and specifies the nature of this more clearly than has been previously been the case where the c-unit has been used” (Foster *et al.* 2000: 366). In analysing the oral speech for syntactic complexity, Foster *et al.* (2000) propose three

levels of application of coding: 1) *level one* to be used for the full analyses of all data, 2) *level two* to be used for highly interactional data which can contain a high proportion of minimal units (e.g. one-word minor utterances and echoic responses), and 3) *level three* to be used for special cases where analyses of non-fragmentary AS-units are required such as performances on differing types of sections of OPIs which need to be standardized, primarily for researchers who are interested in what the performer can do with relatively “complete” units of speech (see Foster *et al.* 2000 for a detailed overview and examples for the levels of coding).

In this study, in order to operationalize complexity, coding *level two* was applied (Foster *et al.* 2000) which was considered more suitable than the other two levels of analysis. This is because the guided role-play and OPI implemented for data collection in this study contain highly interactional data which can yield a large proportion of minimal units whose inclusion in the analyses could distort the perception of the nature of the performance (Foster *et al.* 2000). As explained above, this type of coding excluded a) one-word minor utterances such as “Yes; No; Ok. And yeah”, and b) verbatim echo responses as in the following example: A: Participant: “story...”; B. Interviewer: “History?”; A: Participant: “History, sorry. History test.”<sup>10</sup> As a first step towards coding, the samples of speech transcribed manually in MS Word were segmented into independent, subordinate clauses, and sub-clausal units. Next, AS-unit boundaries were generated and numbered. Finally, ratios of clauses per AS-unit were calculated. This level of coding applies for the purposes of achieving a coherent and systematic analysis (see Appendix 23 for an example of coding).

#### **3.5.1.1.2 Mean length of AS-units (MLAS)**

MLAS measures the level of complexification occurring in units smaller than clauses, such as the noun phrase, and constitutes a more global metric indexing of overall syntactic complexity (Norris & Ortega 2009, Mora & Valls-Ferrer 2012). In this study, MLAS was calculated by dividing the total number of words by the total number of AS-units in a speech file, which essentially means that if the results show that the students increased the number of

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<sup>10</sup> The examples provided are taken from learners’ OPI.

words in an AS-unit they possess a larger repertoire of syntactic structures, as well as a richer and more varied lexis. The number of words in a file transcription was shown automatically by Word.

### **3.5.1.2 Accuracy**

In this study, accuracy is dually defined as “the ability to produce error-free speech” (Lennon 1990: 390), and “the extent to which the language produced conforms to target language norms” (Yuan & Ellis 2003: 2). In order to operationalize the accuracy two measures were taken into consideration: (1) global accuracy, and (2) pronunciation accuracy.

#### **3.5.1.2.1 Global Accuracy**

A composite global measure of accuracy was adopted in this study rather than classifying types of linguistic errors or ranking the effects of accuracy. Percentage of error-free clauses has often been used in research as a global measure (Foster & Skehan, 1996), however, this measure leads to possible bias as it ignores cases where there is more than one error in a clause. A further potential disadvantage of using the percentage of error-free clauses as a measure is that if a speaker uses many short correct utterances, the resulting score may be inflated (Skehan & Foster 2012: 203). Instead, a composite measure for accuracy, which combines all errors and then ratios are calculated, has the advantage of being potentially the most comprehensive in that all types of errors are taken into consideration (Ivashita *et al.* 2008: 31). In this study, errors relating to syntax, morphology and lexical choice were contemplated, including verb tenses, the third person singular, articles, prepositions, plural markers (cf. Skehan & Foster 1996, Nitta & Nakatsuhara 2014), to which word-order and omissions were added because they constituted frequent mistakes found in learners’ testing samples. However, features of repairs were excluded from the analyses of global accuracy because learners show evidence of the correct use of the target-like features when this is demonstrated in their repaired utterance (Nitta & Nakatsuhara 2014). In addition, errors related to discourse (e.g. communicative effectiveness) were not considered.

### 3.5.1.2.2 Pronunciation accuracy

The analysis of pronunciation features was conducted at word level. The learners' target was standard British English and not RP. In order to determine what was considered a pronunciation error, when coding a first distinction was made between “meaningful” and “non-meaningful” utterances, whilst the “meaningful” category was subsequently subdivided into “marginally target-like” and “clearly not-target like” utterances (adapted from Ivashita *et al.* 2008). A marginally target-like pronunciation error was identified when the incorrect pronunciation of a word would still clearly convey the message and would not impede its understanding. For instance when the learner would pronounce *talks* /tɔlks/ instead of *talks* /tɔ:ks/ in “The story *talks* about...”<sup>11</sup>. In this case it was obvious that the mispronunciation was due to rules governing English phonology which were unknown to the learners. A clearly non-target-like error was considered one where a word was pronounced inappropriately in one context and it can have another meaning, but in a different context, and thus it was inappropriately used in the intended context. For instance, the word “son” was pronounced as /su:n/ which corresponds to “soon” rather than being pronounced /sɒn/ in the following beginning of a sentence: “The mother and her *son* /su:n/...”<sup>12</sup>. A non-meaningful error constituted one whereby the meaning of the word pronounced incorrectly was not fully understood and it was evident that the word was non-existent. All the “meaningful” pronunciation errors including both “marginally non-target-like” and “clearly non-target-like” and “non-meaningful” ones were combined in the statistical analyses and no subsequent distinction was made between them. The initial distinction served only to elucidate more clearly and precisely what was interpreted and identified as a pronunciation error. All the errors were counted and ratios were calculated per 100-words.

### 3.5.1.3 Fluency

Housen & Kuiken (2009) argue that historically, and in lay usage, in the field of SLA, fluency typically refers to a person's general language proficiency, particularly characterized by perceptions of ease, eloquence and fluidity of speech (Lennon 1990, Fred 2000, Hilton

<sup>11</sup> The examples are taken from learners' story-retelling

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*

2008), and by how smoothly a person delivers a message in terms of flow, continuity and automacity (Koponen & Rigenbach 2000). Fluency can also be defined as the ability to fill time with talk without unnatural hesitations (Fillmore 1979, in De Jong 2013). Definitions of L2 fluency can vary and thus, in the present study, fluency is defined both as “the capacity to use language in real time, to emphasize meaning” (Skehan & Foster 1999: 96), and “the extent to which the language produced in performing a task manifests pausing, hesitation or reformulation” (Elis 2003: 342). Five measure of fluency will be taken into consideration based on recent studies, such as that by De Jong (2013), which have pointed out the multifaceted nature of fluency and drew a distinction between: (a) speed fluency, (b) repair fluency, (c) breakdown fluency, (d) mean length of run and (e) phonation time ratio.

#### ***3.5.1.3.1 Breakdown fluency***

In order to measure breakdown fluency, researchers take into consideration the number of pauses, the length of pauses and the length of run. Pauses “represent that aspect of speech act which has little call on skill and which reflects the non-skill part of the speech process” (De Jong 2013: 26).

In this study, breakdown fluency was measured by dividing the total length of spoken time (pruned speech) by the total length of pauses longer than 250 milliseconds (filled and unfilled). Filled and unfilled pauses were calculated together in the analyses and no distinction was made between them. The software PRAAT (Boersma & Weenink 2007) was used for the analyses of breakdown fluency. A script programmed in PRAAT (Script Syllable Nuclei 2), which is a simplified version incorporated in the button *To TextGrid (silences)*, was of great help at this stage for measuring the number and total duration of pauses automatically, as opposed to manually. Once the speech file was computed, the speaking time was obtained by subtracting the total time of duration of pauses from the total speech time. During the analyses it was noticed that the script would detect filled pauses as sounding leading to a distortion of the total duration of pauses and spoken time. For this reason, I had to correct the filled pauses manually by transforming them in silent pauses. Subsequently, a further operation was necessary: the script calculates the occurrences of the sounding

between pauses (total number of silent and filled pauses together with the sounding) thus, in order to calculate the number of pauses I had to subsequently subtract the occurrences of the sounding from the total number of silent pauses as indicated in PRAAT, and then subtract 2 from the result, which would account for the moments of silence at the beginning of the audio file recorded, that is to say before the participant started speaking, and at the end of it.

The cut-off point was set at 0.25 (250 milliseconds) because De Jong & Bosker (2013) suggested that choosing a higher or lower threshold would lead to a lower correlation between measures of fluency with L2 proficiency whilst a higher threshold may result in more problems with intercollinearity (between number of pauses and duration of pauses). Towell (2002) holds that, regardless of the cut-off point, the most important thing to be aware of when making comparisons is to be sure of comparing like with like. Hence, as there were no previous studies which measured the sub-components of fluency achieved by students learning through drama-based approaches, I considered that 250 milliseconds would be a suitable threshold.

As previously mentioned, filled and unfilled pauses were calculated together. The rationale for doing so was that learners have been shown to vary more in their use of filled pauses than in their use of silent pauses (Cenoz, 1998), so it may be that even if I had decided to measure them separately, I would still not have been able to find any meaningful pattern in the results. Thus, I decided to correct for this deficiency and collapse the filled pauses that precede or follow silent pauses, as Cenoz (1998) described. This meant that, I had two measures for the duration of silent pauses: one for each silent pause on its own and one with the duration of the preceding/following filled pause added to it. That is to say, I added the second measure, as I wanted to measure each silent pause more accurately, by turning a filled pause into a silent one and by adding to it the duration of an adjacent filled pause next to it, since the filled pause seems to fulfil the same function as the silent pause (Sophia Skoufaki, personal communication, 31 March 2014). The automatic script is used to detect silent pauses but not the location of them and therefore, the distribution of pauses has not been taken into account in this study. Whilst native speakers have been shown to pause more at intra-boundaries it is not always clear where non-native speakers pause.

### **3.5.1.3.2 Speed fluency**

Speed fluency or speech rate is one of the most important components of oral fluency that refers to fluidity or “smoothness” of language used in speech (Fred 1995). The speaking rate is seen as an overall measure of fluency because it includes pause time, and “it can be considered to cover both the encoding of ideas and of the speech forms used to communicate them, inclusive of the time needed to retrieve the forms from memory stores” (Towell 2012: 62). The speed fluency in this study was measured as the number of syllables per time unit, which in this case were seconds. The syllables in the speech files were counted manually in MS Word because an automatic script was considered unreliable for the following reasons: a) it would only work if the sound file did not contain too much background noise; b) many unstressed syllables are not picked up; and c) long syllables could be counted as two (De Jong 2013, LANGSNAP workshop). In this way, by counting the syllables manually, I ensured that all the syllables were included in the calculation, resulting in a higher reliability and validity of the findings. As in the case of accuracy, the syllable count excluded false starts and repetitions.

### **3.5.1.3.3 Repairs fluency**

Repairs fluency are dysfluency features which are frequent phenomena in oral discourse. According to Towell (2012: 63), repairs reflect “awareness of form and can be interpreted as attempts at becoming accurate”. The repairs in this study are represented by the total number of false-starts, repetitions, and self-corrections. A false start is “an utterance which is begun and then either abandoned altogether or reformulated in some way” (Foster *et al.* 2000: 368). A repetition occurs when “the speaker repeats previously produced speech” (*ibid.*: 368) as a device which may be used to allow for online planning. Instead, a self-correction includes an element of structural change and it occurs when “the speaker identifies an error either during or immediately following production and stops and reformulates the speech” (*ibid.*: 368). Accordingly, when coding the data, a repetition was identified when the participant repeated the same word or a sequence of words and it was counted as one single repetition regardless of how many times the same word in a single sequence was repeated. A self-correction error was detected when the participants self-corrected their vocabulary, grammar or pronunciation



errors without any intervention from the teacher-tester. A false start was indicated when it was evident that a learner decided to abruptly change the way in which s/he was expressing a certain phrase and there was no trace of grammatical self-correction or repetition of the exact same sequence of words, although some words from a previous sequence of speech may have been repeated (see Appendix 19 for an example of coding). In this study, the repair fluency was calculated by dividing the total number of repairs by the total number of words. Most importantly, it should be borne in mind that in the case of fluency, as with the accuracy results, a reduction in values in the results clearly represents an improvement.

#### ***3.5.1.3.4 Mean Length of Run (MLR)***

Mean Length of Run (MLR) and phonation time ratio are composite measures (Tavakoli 2016) which blend speed and flow of speech. MLR is given by the length of continuous speech between pauses, and is defined as “a measure of the ability of a speaker to encode units of speech” (Towell 2012: 62). MLR is an important global fluency measure because longer runs suggest that more elements of speech are being combined in a shorter space of time and therefore the speed of speech delivery between pauses is increased. In this study, the MLR was calculated by dividing the length of spoken time by the total number of pauses lasting longer than 250 milliseconds. The spoken time is defined as the duration of speaking time excluding silences, which is measured by calculating the total time taken up by pauses in speech lasting longer than 250 milliseconds.

#### ***3.5.1.3.5 Phonation time ratio***

Phonation time ratio is an overall measure of how fast and how well a non-native speaker produces the language per time unit scale compared to a native speaker (De Jong 2012: 124). In this study, the phonation time ratio was calculated by dividing the spoken time (pruned speech) by the total length of speech (including pauses).

### 3.5.2 Intra-coder reliability

The intra-rater reliability is the consistency of a single marker with him/herself (Weir 2005a). Woods *et al.* (1986: 215) remark that a completely reliable test “would be one in which an individual subject would always obtain exactly the same score if it were possible for him to repeat the test several times”. Thus, to ensure reliability of my own measurements on (sub)dimensions of CAF, two months after originally coding the data for the main study, I re-coded 10% of the data (a total of about 5, 000 words) for global and pronunciation accuracy, complexity in terms of AS-units and clauses, and respectively, for repair fluency. Samples to be recoded were chosen randomly from the pre-test, mid-test and post-test and from the three types of tasks (one sample per task). Scholfield (1995: 206) states that a typical view regarding desirable levels of reliability “would suggest aiming for 0.6 in exploratory research, 0.75 for hypothesis testing research, and 0.9 for T purposes”, where T refers to teaching purposes within a pedagogical context where individual cases are often being assessed (Scholfield, personal communication, September 2013). The Pearson correlation results for the intra-coder agreement proved to be very high: .996 (99.6%) for AS-units and clauses, .94 (94%) for global accuracy, .983 (98.3%) for pronunciation accuracy and .9932 (99.32%) for repair fluency. These results assured me that the segmentation and measurement procedures were reliably done to a very high degree. It was decided that there was no need of intra-rater reliability for the remaining measures of fluency because they were calculated automatically by PRAAT as already described (see 3.5.1.3.1 this chapter).

### 3.5.3 Research method for CAF data analyses

A 2x2 mixed ANOVA design was used to check if there were any statistically significant differences of interest between pre-test and post-test in the CG and EXG and if so, whether the difference was greater in the EXG. Box’s test of equality of covariances and Levene’s test of equality of variances were used in order to see if the data met the assumptions for this type of analyses. Mauchly’s test of Sphericity where three or more repeated measures are involved was checked for non-significance. Subsequently, post-hoc follow-up paired sample t-tests were performed in order to check the significances of the differences between pairs of

occasions within the groups. A one-way ANOVA general linear model was carried out separately for each group to calculate the effect size.

In order to determine the extent of the improvement of the text-based approach compared to the performance-based approach, a generalised linear model (One-Way repeated measure ANOVA) was used to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between pre-test, mid-test and post-test within the experimental group (given that the mid-test was administered at the end of the text-based instruction and before the performance-based instruction) on all measures of complexity, accuracy and fluency. Mauchly's test of Sphericity was checked for non-significance. Follow-up post-hoc paired comparison t-tests with Bonferoni correction were performed to ascertain separately the differences between both the pre- and mid-test and between mid- and post-test for the experimental group. The 0.05 level of confidence was used as the criterion level for determining a significant difference.

#### **3.5.4 Quantitative analysis of the questionnaire**

Part of the questionnaire data were analysed with the aid of SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 19 for Windows. Given that all but one of the quantitative items from the questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale, the coding frame was straightforward. In analyzing the results, first, descriptive statistics in terms of mean scores and standard deviations, then inferential statistics were computed. These included Paired Sample t-tests and frequencies (such as the preference for text-based approach and/or performance-based approach or neither of them). The questionnaire data were also used for triangulation purposes. The answers to the open-ended questions were analysed thematically along with the interview data. I developed two different coding schemes: one for the interview, and a second one for the questionnaire. The qualitative data in the questionnaire were also quantified by frequency of mentions. The questionnaire coding scheme (see Appendix 21), unlike the one for the interview, includes number of occurrences of the same code phenomena by counting the number of times each code occurs in the questionnaire responses since qualitative researchers do not need to abandon numbers in the data, "for they can reveal interesting patterns of social action" (Saldaña, 2011: 77). Yet, "counting should not be the

central focus of a qualitative study” but “it should take a supporting role, not a leading one” (*ibid*). In line with this statement, the counting process had a peripheral role and was used for the purposes of strengthening or emphasising certain concepts which appear in the questionnaire responses. Hence, this procedure enabled me to more effectively draw a relevant conclusion regarding which codes were the most frequently mentioned by the participants in the study.

### **3.5.5 Qualitative analysis and coding of the interviews and questionnaires**

Immediately after conducting the interviews, they were transcribed verbatim manually and stored together with the questionnaire responses for each participant separately. The transcription was the first step “process that allows us to get to know our data thoroughly” (Dörney, 2007: 246). Subsequently, I read through the transcripts a few times to get an insight into the data as a whole (Dörney 2007) and to be able to think of a preliminary list of codes. The interviews and questionnaire responses were translated selectively into English for citation purposes and only, three interviews, out of ten, accounting for about 25% of my data, were translated entirely for inter-rater reliability purposes. The translated interviews were cross-checked by a bilingual colleague for accuracy and interpretation. The data analysis was performed with the help of N-Vivo software.

A qualitative data analysis is an iterative (repetitive) process which involves going back and forth between the data in a cyclic process. Such a process consists, first of all, of “a series of readings and re-readings of the data” (Coffey & Atkinson 1996: 35) in order to develop a coding scheme by summarising segments of data descriptively, and then by clustering summaries into a smaller number of sets so that data may be condensed gradually to reveal concepts that may explicate emerging themes (Miles & Huberman 1994; Strauss & Corbin 1998). Thus, the interview and questionnaire data were coded using first- and second-level, or pattern coding. Miles & Huberman (1994: 69) describe pattern coding as a way of grouping the first-level codes into a smaller number of similar clusters of “sets, themes, constructs” or analytic units in which the codes are explanatory or identify common emergent themes, causes or explanations from the data (*ibid*). “These codes function as a way of

patterning, classifying, and later reorganizing each datum into emergent categories for further analysis” (Saldaña 2011).

The method of creating initial preliminary codes as first-level coding was to produce a provisional “start list” which was largely based upon topics raised in the interviews which derived from the conceptual framework, the research questions and reading of the interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 58). At this stage, inductive and deductive approaches were employed in analyzing the interviews. Inductive analysis involves discovering patterns, themes and categories in the data whilst deductive analysis refers to the analyses of the data according to existing frameworks from the literature (Strauss & Corbin 1998). Some examples of codes from the literature included affective positive or negative responses, such as enjoyment or lack of enjoyment, perception of difficulty of the two types of drama-based approaches, perception of their usefulness for improving oral skills (fluency, pronunciation, accuracy and vocabulary), for overcoming the shyness, for improving the self-confidence and for raising levels of learners’ motivation. In this study, the coding process combined bottom up *in vivo* coding and top down holistic coding (Saldaña *et al.* 2014). Next, to this preliminary list I started to add additional codes which were grounded in the data itself. Different codes were allocated to each idea presented, as “the most productive approach is probably to work on a line-by-line basis” (Richards, 2003: 273) and then, they were regrouped into broader overarching themes. A new code was assigned each time the sub-topic shifted and the same code was used more than once if the sub-topics were similar. The codes that shared the same category were then classified into similar clusters. I also created a single code if I felt that it was unique enough, so that the “code can stand on its own” (Saldaña 2011: 98).

General clusters of identical concepts surfaced once the conceptual coding labels were created. Consequently, I started to put them together under broader category labels so that only a few manageable categories were left. In this phase, I made connections between categories, thereby attempting to regroup them into more encompassing codes that included several sub-categories. By forming such categories, I was already beginning to emphasize and regroup these individual codes into patterns. Pattern coding helps the researcher to organize different categories that emerge and to integrate them into core categories (Saldaña

2014). Therefore, similar topics were clustered in order to reduce the total number of categories by searching for recurring consistencies in the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 2002). This process was concluded when the sets of categories reached “saturation”, which denotes “that point at which the researchers consider they have exhausted their data and the potential to develop new categories” (Barbour 2014: 267), so that, new sources became redundant. Hence, the final coding of interview and questionnaire schemes (see Appendices 20 and 21) comprise both predetermined and emerging codes.

### **3.5.6 Inter-rater reliability for the qualitative data**

After developing the interview and the questionnaire coding scheme, a portion of the transcribed and translated interview data was compared with the data analysed independently by my supervisor (Dr Good, University of Essex 2015) to establish inter-coder agreement. Creswell (2009: 191) suggests that “such an agreement might be based on whether two or more coders agree on codes used for the same passages in the text” in order to obtain the same results on different occasions. The differences observed were that what I coded *Affective Responses* was coded *Internal (internal to the text)* by Dr Good, and what I coded *Usefulness and Practicalities* was labelled *External (external to the text)* by Dr Good. However, after discussing together the differences and similarities of the codes assigned, our decision was to keep my initial codes as being more explanatory. As a result of the inter-coder agreement, I arrived at precise definitions of particular categories and ensured the trustworthiness of the study.



## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of the statistical and qualitative analysis of the data collected as described in Methodology (Chapter 3) will be explained systematically. The main aim of this chapter will be to answer the three research questions as presented at the end of the Literature Review (Chapter 2).

*RQ1 Does the drama-based approach promote the development of oral skills in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency better than the traditional approach?*

*RQ2 Within the drama-based approaches, which type of drama approach leads to improved complexity, accuracy and fluency: the text-based approach or the performance-based approach?*

*RQ3 What are the students' attitudes towards the text-based approach and the performance-based approach?*

### 4.1. Results for RQ1 and RQ2

The two main research questions, RQ1 and RQ2, regarding CAF measures, provided answers to sub-components of these three constructs (syntactic complexity and mean length of AS-units, global accuracy and pronunciation accuracy, breakdown fluency, speed fluency, repairs fluency, mean length of run and phonation time ratio), and thus, the results of RQ1 will be presented under the heading (a) whilst those for RQ2 under the heading (b), which precede the tables, for each of the aforementioned sub-components of complexity, accuracy and fluency throughout this chapter.

Prior to performing the statistical analyses of the quantitative data, I checked if the data were suitable for MANOVA and ANOVA. Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 show the mean scores for participants on the measures of speaking along with the total scores, together with results from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality for scores on complexity, accuracy and fluency obtained on the pre-, mid- and post-tests for the experimental group (EXG) and on the pre- and post-tests for the control group (CG). The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov



tests were not significant for any of the variables, showing the data to be normally distributed and thus suitable for parametric analyses.

**Table 4.1 Pre-Test Normality Check for Complexity measures**

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

Participants		RatioAS (Pre-test)	RatioAS (Post-test)	MLAS (Pre-test)	MLAS (Post-test)	RatioAS (Mid-test)	MLAS (Mid-test)
CG	N	10	10	10	10		
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.708	.527	.582	.736		
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.698	.944	.887	.651		
EXG	N	10	10	10	10	10	10
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.708	.449	.717	.606	.770	.636
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.698	.988	.682	.856	.593	.814

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

**Table 4.2 Pre-Test Normality Check for Accuracy measures**

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

Participants		RatioAEr (Pre-test)	RatioAEr (Post-test)	RatioPrEr (Pre-test)	RatioPrEr (Post-test)	RatioAEr (Mid-test)	RatioPrEr (Mid-test)
CG	N	10	10	10	10		
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.377	.660	.557	.580		
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.999	.776	.916	.890		
EXG	N	10	10	10	10	10	10
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.394	.710	.474	.616	.474	.113
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.998	.695	.978	.842	.978	.168

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

**Table 4.3 Pre-test Normality Check for Fluency measures**

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

Participants		MLR (Post-test)	MLR (Mid-test)	MLR (Pre-test)	Breakdown n fluency (Post-test)	Breakdown fluency (Mid-test)	Breakdown fluency (Pre-test)
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EXP	N	10	10	10	10	10	10
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.573	.673	.507	.694	.628	.491
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.898	.755	.959	.722	.825	.969
CG	N	10		10	10		10
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.465		.398	.706		.632
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.982		.997	.702		.820

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

**Table 4.4 Pre-test Normality Check for Fluency measures**

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

Participants		Phonation time ratio (Post-test)	Phonation time ratio (Mid-test)	Phonation time ratio (Pre-test)	Speed fluency (Post-test)	Speed fluency (Mid-test)	Speed fluency (Pre-test)
EXP	N	10	10	10	10	10	10
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.524	.381	.499	.513	.722	1.168
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.947	.999	.965	.955	.675	.131
CG	N	10		10	10		10
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.722		.527	.681		.499
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.675		.944	.742		.965

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

**Table 4.5 Pre-test Normality Check for Fluency measures**

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

Participants		Repairs Fluency (Post-test)	Repairs Fluency (Mid-test)	Repairs Fluency (Pre-test)
EXG	N	10	10	10
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.951	.855	.728
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.326	.459	.665
CG	N	10		10
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.323		.406
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000		.997

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

In order to answer RQ1 (a) regarding the global accuracy, I started with an overall average of scores on global accuracy where all errors have been taken into consideration - grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation - comparing the pre-test with the post-test, for both the control group and experimental group, and crucially looking for any interaction effect between these factors. Next, I will report on the effect sizes along with the reports of statistical significance. It is important to bear in mind that effect sizes do not depend on the statistical significance. Effect size has been singled out as a useful tool for making comparisons between the findings of different studies: it is a measure of the strength of the influence of an independent variable on a dependent variable irrespective of the sample size (Lakens 2013). Effect sizes allow researchers to present the magnitude of the reported effects in a standardized metric. Such effect sizes are important to communicate the practical significance of results, in other words, what are the practical consequences of the findings for daily life. As far as the present study is concerned measures of effect size are important as they show which approach had a higher effectiveness in developing learners' complexity, accuracy and fluency in language classroom teaching when compared to others: text-based approach when compared to the performance-based approach, or both approaches taken together compared to a traditional one.

#### 4.1.1 Syntactic complexity

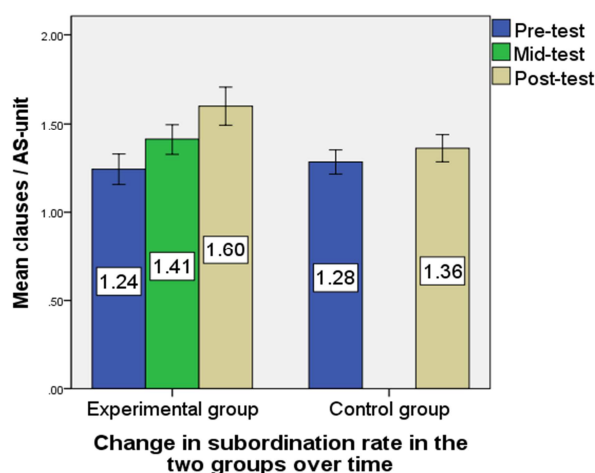


Figure 4.1

a) Did the learners in the experimental group improve in syntactic complexity more than the control group? If so, to what extent?

**Table 4.6 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of syntactic complexity of CG and EXG**

<b>Effect</b>	<b>F (2.18)</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Effect size</b>
Main effect of time	25.783	<b>&lt;.001</b>	.589
Main effect of group	13.820	<b>.002</b>	.434
Interaction effect of time by group	9.629	<b>.006</b>	.349

**Table 4.7 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of syntactic complexity for the CG and EXG separately**

<b>Pre-test vs. Post-test</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Effect size</b>
Experimental group	-31865	-4.798	<b>&lt;.001</b>	.642
Control group	-07691	-1.889	.092	.235

Firstly, looking at the results of syntactic complexity, as displayed in Figure 4.1 it can be seen that both groups, the EXG and the CG, improved the number of subordination clauses into an AS-unit over time as the significance of the main effect of time reveals in Table 4.6 ( $p < .001$ ). The main effect of time shows the learners improved over time regardless of the group. However, it is crucial to also examine the interaction effect since this reflects whether the improvement between pre- and post-test was similar for both CG and EXG or different. In this case, the interaction effect is significant at  $p < .006$  and thus, the groups performed differently. Once again Table 4.7 shows that the EXG did significantly better ( $p < .001$ ) than the CG which did not obtain a significant result over the course of the module ( $p = .092$ ) regarding syntactic complexity. The effect size for the EXG was large (.642) compared to the CG which obtained again a small effect size (.235), therefore the drama-based approach was more effective in developing learners' syntactic complexity compared to the traditional approach.

b) Did the learners in the experimental group improve their syntactic complexity through text-based instruction and through performance-based instruction? If so, to what extent?

**Table 4.8 Results of syntactic complexity across Pre-/Mid-/Post-test in the EXG**

<b>Effect</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Effect size</b>
Main effect of time	52.978	<b>&lt;.001</b>	.855
Linear effect of time	109.046	<b>&lt;.001</b>	.924
Quadratic effect of time	.114	.743	.013

**Table 4.9 Results for post-hoc paired comparisons Pre-/Mid-/Post-test of syntactic complexity**

<b>Comparison</b>	<b>Mean Difference</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Effect size</b>
Pre-test vs. Mid-test	-.169*	<.001	-6.013	.801
Mid-test vs. Post-test	-.190*	.005	-4.632	.778

\*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni

As to syntactic complexity within the experimental group, the results in Table 4.8 disclose that there was a significant effect of time on the proportion of the number of clauses to an AS-unit ( $p < .001$ ). The significant linear trend ( $p < .001$ ) reveals again that the change is consecutively in the same direction. The comparison between the mean of the pre-test with that of the mid-test (Table 4.9) revealed a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ) as did the comparison of the scores of the mid-test with those of the post-test ( $p < .007$ ). In this instance, the learners improved significantly through both types of drama-based instruction although the improvement was slightly higher over the course of the text-based approach. The effect size for both approaches was high (.801 and .778), however, the text-based approach had a slightly greater impact on learners' syntactic complexity. Learners started compounding AS-units using more subordinate than coordinate clauses, which implies the development of a repertoire of syntactic structures.

### 4.1.2 Mean Length of AS-units (MLAS)

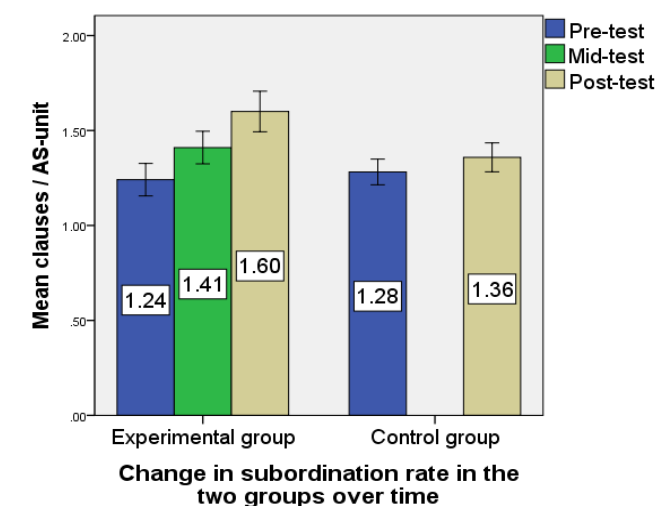


Figure 4.2

- a) Did the learners in the experimental group improve in MLAS more than the control group? If so, to what extent?

Table 4.10 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of MLAS of the CG and the EXG

Effect	F (2,18)	p	Effect size
Main effect of time	7.784	.012	.302
Main effect of group	2.885	.107	.138
Interaction effect of time by group	5.065	.037	.220

Table 4.11 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of MLAS of the CG and the EXG separately

Pre-test vs. Post-test	Mean	t	p	Effect size
Experimental group	-1.64249	-.3490	.007	.567
Control group	-.17575	-.390	.706	.089

Finally, as far as the MLAS is concerned, looking at the Figure 4.2 it can be noticed that there was again improvement over time ( $p < .012$ ). In fact, the means show that the learners in both groups did better on the post-test than on the pre-test. The significant interaction effect in Table 4.10 suggests that the groups improved in a different way again ( $p < .37$ ). As in the pronunciation and syntactic complexity case only the EXG improved significantly  $p < .007$ , whilst for the CG there was a slight but not significant improvement ( $p = .706$ ) as the means in Figure 4.2 and results in Table 4.11 disclose. There was again a large effect size for the

drama-based approach (.567) and a small effect size for the traditional approach (.089). These results suggest that drama-based approaches demonstrated to be highly effective for developing learners' MLAS.

- b) Did the learners in the experimental group improve in mean length of AS-units through texts-based instruction and through performance-based instruction? If so, to what extent?**

**Table 4.12 Results of MLAS across Pre-/Mid-/Post-test in the EXG**

Effect	F	p	Effect size
Main effect of time	5.786	.011	.391
Linear effect of time	12.178	.007	.575
Quadratic effect of time	.261	.622	.028

**Table 4.13 Results for post-hoc paired comparisons Pre-/Mid-/Post-test of MLAS in the EXG**

Comparison	Mean Difference	p	t	Effect size
Pre-test vs. Mid-test	-.597	.771	-1.211	.140
Mid-test vs. Post-test	-1.045*	.201	-2.083	.325

\*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni

Regarding the MLAS within the group the results in Table 4.12 disclose that there was a significant effect of time ( $p < .001$ ). The significant linear trend is smaller compared to that of the syntactic complexity ( $p < .007$ ) showing again that the change is consecutively in the same direction and there is also a smaller effect size for this data (.391) as in the case of syntactic complexity. This time the comparison between the mean of the pre-test with that of the mid-test (Table 4.13) showed a non-significant difference ( $p < .771$ ) as did the comparison of the results on the mid-test with those on the post-test ( $p < .201$ ). There was a growth in the length of an AS-unit based on the number of words as shown by the mean scores, but this growth was not significant through either type of drama-based instruction. The effect size of the text-based approach (.140) was smaller than the effect size of the performance-based approach (.325), hence the performance-based approach had a greater impact on the MLAS.

### 4.1.3 Global accuracy

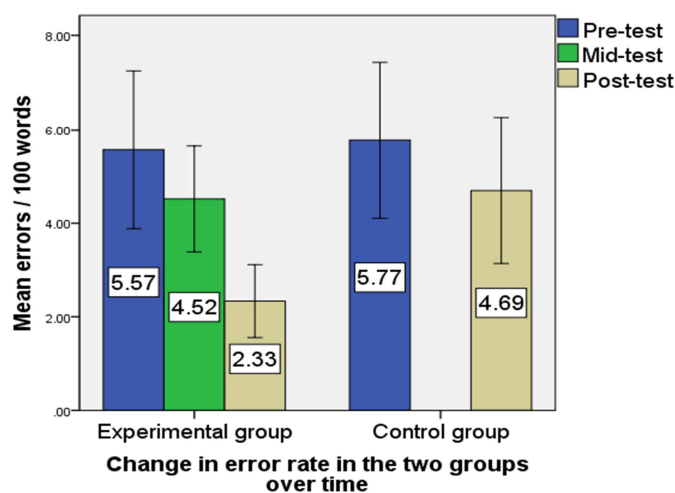


Figure 4.3

- a) Did the learners in the experimental group improve their global accuracy more than in the control group? If so, to what extent?

Table 4.14 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of error rate of CG and EXG

Effect	F (2.18)	p	Effect size
Main effect of time	40.557	<.001	.693
Main effect of group	2.252	.151	.111
Interaction effect of time by group	10.199	.005	.362

Table 4.15 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of global accuracy for the CG and EXG separately

Pre-test vs. Post-test	Mean difference	t	p	Effect size
Control group	.01075	2.725	.023	.452
Experimental group	.03236	5.883	<.001	.794

Looking at Figure 4.3 it is evident that the learners certainly did better in their post-test compared to the pre-test on global accuracy (grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation mistakes taken together) when both groups are looked at together, as it would be expected for any course of instruction. In fact, there was a significant main effect of time ( $p < .001$ ). Regarding global accuracy, the interaction effect was highly significant which means that the CG and EXG did improve differently. Post-hoc paired sample t-tests (Table 4.15) revealed that the EXG did much better compared to the CG as they improved highly significantly ( $p$



<.001), whilst the result for the control group was just significant ( $p = .023$ ), given that in order to reduce type II errors the usual threshold significance value of  $p = 0.05$  was divided by 2 giving  $p = .025$  as the threshold for these post-hoc tests. The effect size registered for the drama-based approaches was large (.794) compared to a moderate effect size (.452) for the traditional approach. Therefore, I can confidently say that the drama-based approach was far superior to the traditional way of instruction regarding global accuracy.

**b) Did the learners in the experimental group improve in oral accuracy through text-based instruction and through performance-based instruction? If so, to what extent?**

**Table 4.16 Results of global accuracy across Pre-/Mid-/Post-test in the EXG**

Effect	F	p	Effect size
Main effect of time	26.314	<.001	.745
Linear effect of time	34.605	<.001	.794
Quadratic effect of time	3.869	.081	.301

**Table 4.17 Results for post-hoc paired comparisons Pre-/Mid-/Post-test of global accuracy in the EXG**

Comparison	Mean Difference	p	t	Effect size
Pre-test vs. Mid-test	.010	.092	2.562	.422
Mid-test vs. Post-test	.022	<.001	5.620	.778

The results show that there was a significant effect of time on accuracy ( $p < .001$ ). For this data there is also a significant linear trend ( $p < .001$ ) showing that the change is successively in the same direction. When comparing the mean of the pre-test with that of the mid-test there was a non-significant difference ( $p = .092$ ), but there was a highly significant difference when comparing the scores of the mid-test with those of the post-test ( $p < .001$ ). The results show that the students did not improve significantly on global accuracy after teaching through texts, but they did improve significantly after the period of teaching through performance. The effect size for the performance-based approach (.778) was larger than for the text-based approach (.422) which reveals that the performance approach had a higher impact on developing learners' accuracy as a whole.

#### 4.1.4 Pronunciation accuracy

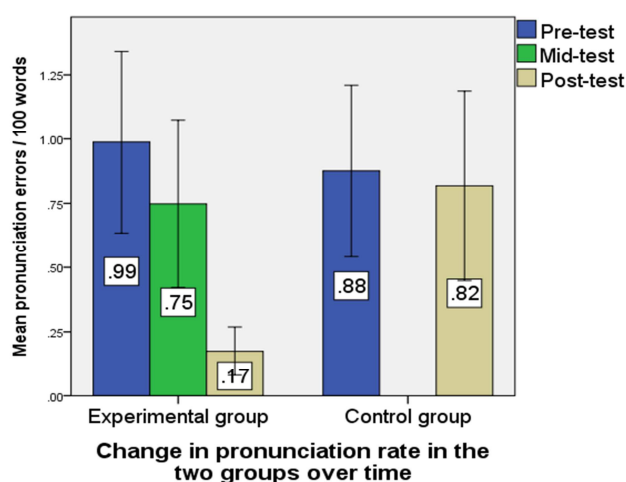


Figure 4.4

- a) Did the learners in the experimental group improve their pronunciation more than in the control group? If so, to what extent?

Looking at Figure 4.4 we can see that the pronunciation errors decreased over time for both groups but the experimental group's errors increased notably compared to the control group. Tables 4.18 and 4.19 below summarize the results.

Table 4.18 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of pronunciation errors rate of the CG and the EXG

Effect	F	p	Effect size
Main effect of time	15.536	<.001	.463
Main effect of group	2.808	.111	.135
Interaction effect of time by group	11.689	.003	.394

Table 4.19 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of pronunciation errors rate for the CG and the EXG separately

Pre-test vs. Post-test	Mean	t	p	Effect size
Control group	.00058	.353	.732	.021
Experimental group	.00813	5.468	<.001	.769

Similarly, regarding pronunciation accuracy, we can notice the same pattern: both groups of learners did better in their post-test compared to the pre-test. In fact, there was a significant effect of time ( $p < .001$ ) which confirms that both groups improved over time. Furthermore, the interaction effect was also significant ( $p < .003$ ) showing that there was a difference in the

improvement made in the two groups. However, the results of the Pre/Post-test comparison reveal that in this instance only the EXG made a highly significant improvement ( $p < .001$ ) whilst the CG did not improve significantly ( $p = .732$ ). The effect size registered for the EXP was large (.769), whereas the effect size for the CG was very small (.021). Hence, the drama-based method was notably superior to the traditional teaching with regard to improving learners' pronunciation accuracy.

**b) Did the learners in the experimental group improve in pronunciation through text-based instruction and through performance-based instruction? If so, to what extent?**

**Table 4.20 Results of pronunciation accuracy across Pre-/Mid-/Post-test in the EXG**

Effect	F	p	Effect size
Main effect of time	15.890	<b>&lt;.001</b>	.638
Linear effect of time	29.897	<b>&lt;.001</b>	.769
Quadratic effect of time	1.710	.223	.160

**Table 4.21 Results for post-hoc paired comparisons Pre-/Mid-/Post-test of pronunciation accuracy**

Comparison	Mean Difference	p <sup>a</sup>	t	Effect size
Pre-test vs. Mid-test	.002	.492	1.515	.203
Mid-test vs. Post-test	.006*	<b>.007</b>	4.176	.660

\*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

<sup>a</sup> Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni

Similar to the case of global accuracy the results in Table 4.20 show that there was a significant effect of time on accuracy ( $p < .001$ ). The significant linear trend ( $p < .001$ ) reveals again that the change is sequentially in the same direction which means the learners improved steadily. When comparing the mean of the pre-test with that of the mid-test (Table 4.21) there was a non-significant difference ( $p = .492$ ), but there was a significant difference when comparing the results on the mid-test with those on the post-test ( $p < .007$ ). This result show that the learners did not improve significantly their pronunciation after the text-based instruction, but only after the period of teaching through performance. The effect size for the EXG was large (.660) compared to the CG which obtained a small effect size of (.203). Hence, the performance-based approach had a notable impact on learners' pronunciation.

### 4.1.5 Breakdown fluency

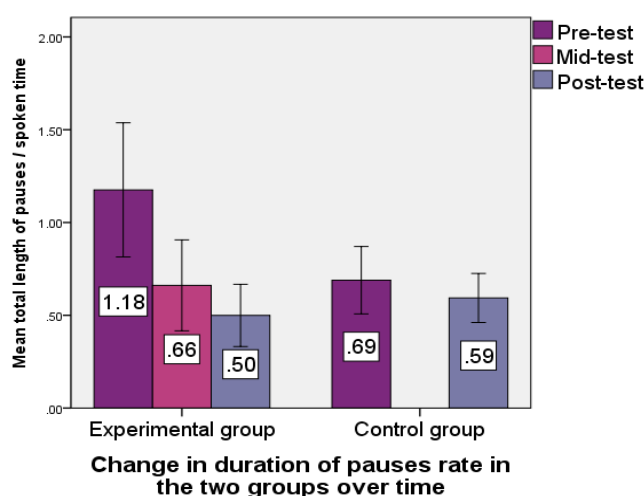


Figure 4.5

- a) Did the learners in the experimental group improve the breakdown fluency more than the control group? If so, to what extent?

Table 4.22 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of Breakdown fluency of the CG and the EXG

Effect	F (2.18)	p	Effect size
Main effect of time	12.160	.003	.403
Main effect of group	4.699	.044	.207
Interaction effect of time by group	6.879	.017	.276

Table 4.23 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of Breakdown fluency for the CG and the EXG separately

Pre-test vs. Post-test	Mean	t	p	Effect size
Experimental group	.67657	3.394	.008	.561
Control group	.09572	.993	.347	.099

Results regarding breakdown fluency in Figure 4.5 reveal again that both the EXG and the CG improved on the breakdown fluency and the learners started pausing less over time. The main effect of time is significant as shown in Table 4.22 ( $p < .001$ ) and also the interaction effect ( $p < .003$ ). Once more, as shown in Table 4.23 the EXG registered a significant result ( $p = .008$ ) whereby the CG did not obtain a significant result over the course of the period of instruction ( $p = .347$ ). The moderate towards large effect size (.561) obtained after the drama-based instruction period clearly indicates that this specific approach was more effective in

increasing the learners' fluency in terms of duration of pauses compared to the traditional approach, which recorded a small effect size (.099).

- b) Did the learners in the experimental group improve in breakdown fluency through text-based instruction and through performance-based instruction? If so, to what extent?**

**Table 4.24 Results of breakdown fluency across Pre-/Mid-/Post-test in the EXG**

<b>Effect</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Effect size</b>
Main effect of time	8.411	<b>.003</b>	.438
Linear effect of time	11.517	<b>.008</b>	.561
Quadratic effect of time	2.117	.180	.190

**Table 4.25 Results for post-hoc paired comparisons Pre-/Mid-/Post-test of breakdown fluency in the EXP**

<b>Comparison</b>	<b>Mean Difference</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Effect size</b>
Pre-test vs. Mid-test	.51475	<b>.029</b>	2.594	.428
Mid-test vs. Post-test	.31502	.139	1.624	.227

\*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni

As for breakdown fluency, results within the experimental group (Table 4.24) indicate that there was a significant effect of time indicated by the decreased length and number of pauses ( $p = .003$ ) and also a significant linear trend ( $p = .008$ ). Table 4.25 shows that in this specific circumstance the learners did improve significantly through text-based instruction ( $p = .029$ ), but this did not happen through performance-based instruction ( $p = .139$ ). As shown by the means, the learners started speaking at a higher rate, employing shorter pauses, thus pausing for less time. The text-based form of instruction had a moderate impact on developing learners' fluency as shown by the magnitude of the effect sizes (.494) while the magnitude of the performance-based approach was slightly smaller (.227).

### 4.1.6 Speed fluency

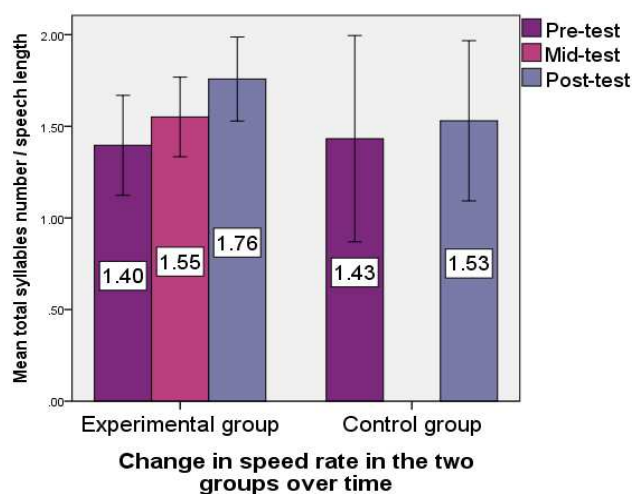


Figure 4.6

- a) Did the learners in the experimental group improve their speed fluency more than in the control group? If so, to what extent?

Table 4.26 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of speed fluency of the CG and the EXG

Effect	F (2,18)	p	Effect size
Main effect of time	3.615	.073	.167
Main effect of group	193	.666	.011
Interaction effect of time by group	1.194	.289	.062

Table 4.27 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of speed fluency for the CG and EXG separately

Pre-test vs. Post-test	Mean	t	p	Effect size
Experimental group	-.36 187	-3.841	.004	.621
Control group	-.09770	-.439	.671	.021

Looking at Figure 4.6 above, it can be observed that both groups of learners did better in their post-test compared to the pre-test on speed fluency as the mean scores show, improving linearly over time on story-retelling. However, post-hoc paired sample t-tests (Table 4.27) revealed that the EXP group increased significantly over time ( $p < .004$ ) compared to the CG which did not improve significantly ( $p = .671$ ). Overall, a small effect size was obtained for the formal instruction (.021) whilst the drama-based approach revealed itself more effective as shown by the large effect size for this data (.621). Thus, I can unequivocally affirm that

the drama-based approach was once again superior to traditional teaching with regard to speed fluency.

**b) Did the learners in the experimental group improve in speed fluency through text-based instruction and through performance-based instruction? If so, to what extent?**

**Table 4.28 Results of speed fluency across Pre-/Mid-/Post-test in the EXG**

<b>Effect</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Effect size</b>
Main effect of time	6.584	<b>.007</b>	422
Linear effect of time	14.750	<b>.004</b>	621
Quadratic effect of time	.082	.743	.009

**Table 4.29 Results for post-hoc paired comparisons Pre-/Mid-/Post-test of speed fluency in the EXG**

<b>Comparison</b>	<b>Mean Difference</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Effect size</b>
Pre-test vs. Mid-test	-.155	.787	-1.196	.137
Mid-test vs. Post-test	-.207*	<b>.037</b>	-3.112	.518

\*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni

The results in Table 4.28 reveal that there was a significant effect of time on speed fluency ( $p = .007$ ) within the experimental group and there was also a significant linear trend ( $p = .004$ ). However, a non-significant result was registered ( $p = .787$ ) when comparing the mean of the pre-test with that of the mid-test (Table 4.29), but there was a significant difference when comparing the results on the mid-test with those of the post-test ( $p = .037$ ). Thus, learners did not improve significantly after the text-based period of instruction, but they did improve significantly after the period of being taught through performance-based instruction on speed fluency. The performance-based approach proved to be notably superior in increasing learners' speed fluency compared to the text-based approach as the effect size for the performance-based approach was larger (.518) than for the text-based approach.

### 4.1.7 Repairs fluency

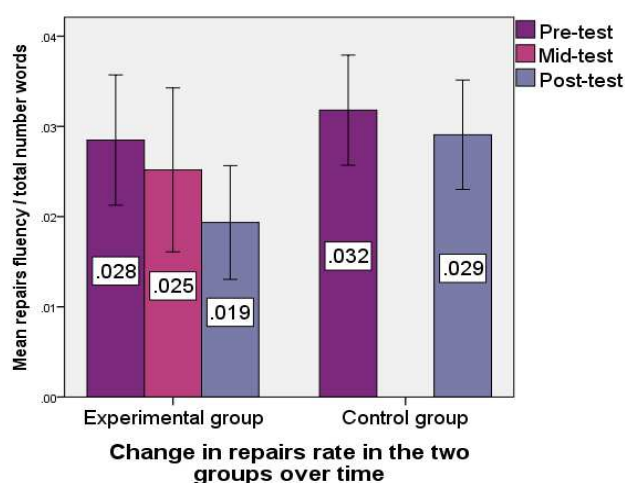


Figure 4.7

- a) Did the learners in the experimental group improve their repairs fluency more than in the control group? If so, to what extent?

Table 4.30 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of repairs fluency of CG and EXG

Effect	F (2.18)	p	Effect size
Main effect of time	14.110	.001	.439
Main effect of group	3.098	.095	.147
Interaction effect of time by group	4.128	.057	.187

Table 4.31 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of repairs fluency for the CG and EXG separately

Pre-test vs. Post-test	Mean	t	p	Effect size
Experimental group	.0091	4.193	.002	.661
Control group	.00272	1.192	.264	.136

Findings for repairs fluency (Figure 4.7) reveal that both the EXG and the CG improved the number of repairs per number of words over time as the significance of the main effect of time shows in Table 4.30 ( $p = .001$ ), whilst the interaction effect is not significant ( $p = .057$ ). Once again, Table 4.31 indicates that the EXG did significantly better ( $p = .002$ ) compared to the CG which failed to reach a significant score over the course of the module ( $p = .264$ ) regarding the repairs fluency. Moreover, a large effect size (.661) was registered after the drama based-approaches had been implemented compared to a small effect size obtained by



the control group (.136), a fact indicating that drama-based approach was evidently better for improving this particular area of fluency compared to the traditional methods of instruction.

**b) Did the learners in the experimental group improve in repairs fluency through text-based instruction and through performance-based instruction? If so, to what extent?**

**Table 4.32 Results of Repairs Fluency across Pre-/Mid-/Post-test in the EXG**

<b>Effect</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Effect size</b>
Main effect of time	7.053	<b>.005</b>	.439
Linear effect of time	17.578	<b>.002</b>	.661
Quadratic effect of time	.287	.605	.031

**Table 4.33 Results for post-hoc paired comparisons Pre-/Mid-/Post-test of Repair Fluency in the EXG**

<b>Comparison</b>	<b>Mean Difference</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Effect size</b>
Pre-test vs. Mid-test	.003	.927	1.078	.114
Mid-test vs. Post-test	.006	.053	2.899	.483

\*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni

As far as repairs fluency within the experimental group is concerned, Table 4.32 revealed that there was a significant effect of time on the proportion of number of repairs per number of words ( $p = .005$ ). The significant linear trend ( $p < .002$ ) shows that for this data the change is consecutively in the same direction. The comparison between the means of the pre-test with that of the mid-test (Table 4.33) disclosed a non-significant difference ( $p = .927$ ) and the same result was shown by the comparison of the mid-test with the post-test ( $p = .053$ ): the learners improved significantly through neither type of drama-based instruction. The effect size for the performance-based approach was large (.483), whereas a small effect size was registered for the text-based approach (.114) which denotes that the former approach was more effective in decreasing learners' repairs fluency than the latter.

### 4.1.8 Mean Length of Run (MLR)

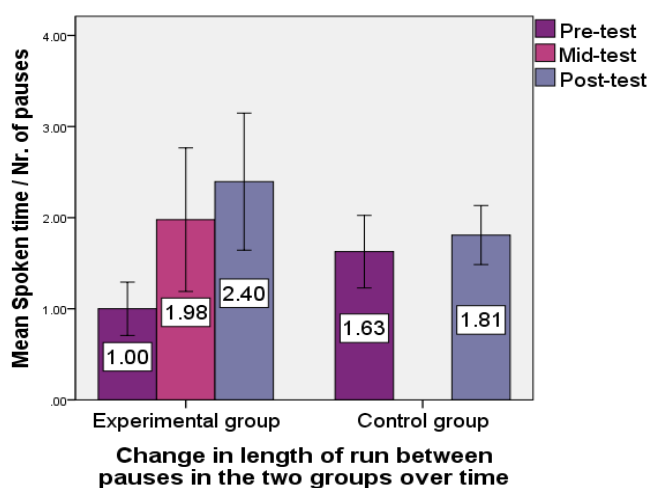


Figure 4.8

- a) Did the learners in the experimental group improve the MLR more than in the control group? If so, to what extent?

Table 4.34 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of MLR of CG and EXG

Effect	F (2.18)	p	Effect size
Main effect of time	12.418	.002	.408
Main effect of group	13.820	.002	.434
Interaction effect of time by group	7.345	.014	.290

Table 4.35 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of MLR for the CG and EXG separately

Pre-test vs. Post-test	Mean	t	p	Effect size
Experimental group	-1.39544	-3.572	.006	.586
Control group	-.18218	-.833	.426	.072

Results concerning MLR as represented in Figure 4.8 indicate again that both the EG and the CG improved the length of run between the pauses, which denotes that learners started pausing less over time as the significance of the main effect of time reveals in Table 4.34 ( $p < .002$ ). The interaction effect is also significant at  $p < .014$  thus, the groups performed differently. Once more, Table 4.35 shows that the EXG did significantly better ( $p < .006$ ) compared to the CG which did not achieve the significance level over the module ( $p = .492$ ). Once again, drama-based instruction revealed itself to have a higher impact on learners'

MLR gains given the large effect size (.586) compared to the traditional approach, which registered a very small effect size (.072).

**b) Did the learners in the experimental group improve in MLR through text-based instruction and through performance-based instruction? If so, to what extent?**

**Table 4.36 Results of MLR across Pre-/Mid-/Post-test in the EXG**

Effect	F	p	Effect size
Main effect of time	7.755	.004	.463
Linear effect of time	12.760	.006	.586
Quadratic effect of time	.931	.360	.094

**Table 4.37 Results for post-hoc paired comparisons Pre-/Mid-/Post-test of MLR in the EXG**

Comparison	Mean Difference	p	t	Effect size
Pre-test vs. Mid-test	-.977	.092	-2.560	.421
Mid-test vs. Post-test	-.418	.647	-1.332	.165

\*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni

Concerning the MLR results within the experimental group, Table 4.36 shows that there was again a significant effect of time on the number of syllables contained in continuous speech between two pauses ( $p < .001$ ) and additionally there was a significant linear trend ( $p < .006$ ). However, none of the comparisons (Table 4.37) produces a statistic which attains a .05 level of significance ( $p = .092$ ,  $p = .647$ ). On this occasion, the learners did not improve significantly through either type of drama-based instruction although the improvement was slightly higher in the course of the text-based approach. This time, the effect size for the performance-based approach (.165) was smaller than for the text-based approach (.421), which indicates that the text-based approach had a higher impact on increasing the runs of speech in between pauses of 250ms, which was applied as a threshold.

### 4.1.9 Phonation time ratio

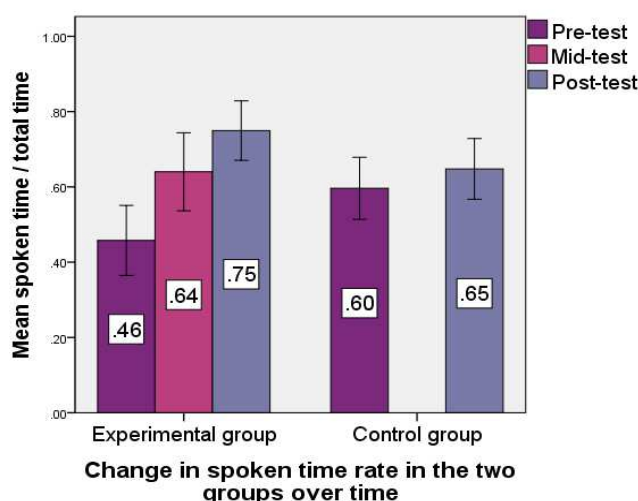


Figure 4.9

- a) Did the learners in the experimental group improve their phonation time ratio more than in the control group? If so, to what extent?

Table 4.38 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of Phonation time ratio of the CG and the EXG

Effect	F (2.18)	p	Effect size
Main effect of time	24.142	<.001	.573
Main effect of group	.222	.643	.012
Interaction effect of time by group	11.817	.003	.396

Table 4.39 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of Phonation time ratio for the CG and EXG separately

Pre-test vs. Post-test	Mean	t	p	Effect size
Experimental group	-.29179	-5.027	<.001	.737
Control group	-.05157	-1.326	.218	.163

Phonation time ratio results show once again that both the EXG and the CG improved their time devoted to speech (pruned speech)<sup>13</sup> over time as the significance of the main effect of time reveals in Table 4.38 ( $p < .001$ ). Likewise, the interaction effect is significant at  $p < .003$ , showing that the two groups performed in a different way. As disclosed in Table 4.39 the EXG performed significantly better ( $p < .001$ ) when compared to the CG which achieved a non-significant result ( $p = .218$ ). The effect size for drama-based approaches was again large

<sup>13</sup>Pruned speech is calculated by subtracting the total durations of pauses from the total length of speech time.

(.737), but small for the traditional approach (.163). Hence, the drama instruction proved itself more effective in developing students' fluency in terms of the amount of time devoted to speaking compared to the formal instruction.

**b) Did the learners in the experimental group improve in phonation time ratio through text-based instruction and through performance-based instruction? If so, to what extent?**

**Table 4.40 Results of Phonation time ratio across Pre-/Mid-/Post-test in the EXG**

<b>Effect</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Effect size</b>
Main effect of time	14.625	<b>&lt;.001</b>	.619
Linear effect of time	25.266	<b>.001</b>	.737
Quadratic effect of time	.690	.428	.071

**Table 4.41 Results for post-hoc paired comparisons Pre-/Mid-/Post-test of Phonation time ratio in the EXG**

<b>Comparison</b>	<b>Mean Difference</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Effect size</b>
Pre-test vs. Mid-test	-.18239	<b>.016</b>	-2.967	<b>.494</b>
Mid-test vs. Post-test	-.10941	<b>.029</b>	-2.603	<b>.430</b>

\*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni

Table 4.40 indicates that there was a significant effect of time regarding phonation time ratio ( $p < .001$ ) within the EXG. The significant linear trend ( $p = .001$ ) shows that the change is consecutively in the same direction. Overall, there was also a moderate to large effect size for this data (.619), which means that the drama-based instruction was effective in increasing the time devoted to speech. This time, both comparisons, that between the mean of the pre-test with that of the mid-test and that between the results of the mid-test with those on the post-test (Table 4.41) show a significant difference of ( $p = .016$ ) and ( $p = .029$ ). In this case, the learners improved significantly through both forms of instruction. Moderate effect sizes were registered on both approaches, which denote that both drama forms of instruction were almost equally effective, although the text-based approach was slightly more effective (.494) than the performance-based approach (.430).

#### 4.1.10 Global accuracy (story-retelling)

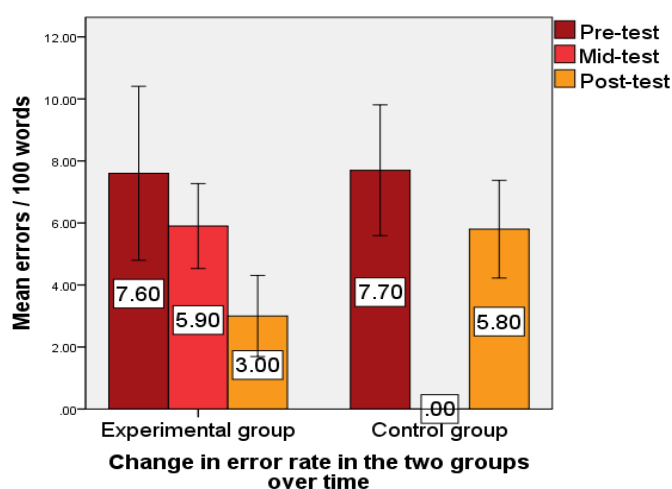


Figure 4.10

- a) Did the learners in the experimental group improve their global accuracy on the story-retelling more than in the control group? If so, to what extent?

Table 4.42 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of Global Accuracy of the CG and the EXP (story-retelling)

Effect	F (2.18)	p	Effect size
Main effect of time	23.004	<.001	.561
Main effect of group	1.824	.194	.092
Interaction effect of time by group	3.969	.062	.181

Table 4.43 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of Global Accuracy for the CG and the EXG separately (story-retelling)

Pre-test vs. Post-test	Mean	t	p	Effect size
Experimental group	4.60000	4.191	.007	.661
Control group	1.90000	2.390	.041	.388

Looking at the results concerning global accuracy in Figure 4.10 and Table 4.42 we note that there is a similar pattern for story-retelling like for all tasks taken together: both the EXG and the CG improved their time devoted to speech (pruned speech)<sup>14</sup> over time at the level of significance as the main effect of time reveals ( $p < .001$ ). Also, the interaction effect is significant at  $p < .003$ . Moreover, Table 4.43 shows that both groups obtained significant

<sup>14</sup>Pruned speech is calculated by subtracting the total durations of pauses from the total length of speech time.

results ( $p = .007$ ) and ( $p = .041$ ). However, the EXG registered a larger effect size (.661) whereas the effect size for the CG was smaller again (.338). This reinforces the theory that drama instruction is more effective in developing students' fluency in terms of amount of time devoted to speaking compared to the traditional approach.

**b) Did the learners in the experimental group improve in global accuracy through text-based instruction and through performance-based instruction on story-retelling? If so, to what extent?**

**Table 4.44 Results of Global accuracy on story-retelling across Pre-/Mid-/Post-test in the EXG**

Effect	F	p	Effect size
Main effect of time	14.223	<b>&lt;.001</b>	.612
Linear effect of time	17.568	<b>.002</b>	.661
Quadratic effect of time	1.514	.250	.144

**Table 4.45 Results of for post-hoc paired comparisons Pre-/Mid-/Post-test of Global accuracy on story-retelling**

Comparison	Mean Difference	p	t	Effect size
Pre-test vs. Mid-test	1.700	.304	-1.086	.270
Mid-test vs. Post-test	2.900	<b>&lt;.001</b>	-4.877	.817

\*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level  
Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni

Analogous to the case of global accuracy, the results in Table 4.44 show that there was a significant effect of time on accuracy ( $p < .001$ ). The significant linear trend ( $p < .002$ ) reveals again that the change is sequentially in the same direction which means the learners improved steadily. Table 4.45 displays a non-significant difference ( $p = .304$ ) when comparing the mean of the pre-test with that of the mid-test, but a significant difference is revealed when comparing the results on the mid-test with those on the post-test ( $p < .001$ ). These findings show that the learners did not improve significantly on global accuracy after text-based instruction, but they did improve significantly after the period of teaching through performance on the story-retelling task. Thus, the performance-based approach stands out again for being more effective in developing learners' accuracy as shown by the large effect size (.817) compared to the text-based approach for which the small effect size was small (.270).

#### 4.1.11 Syntactic complexity (story-retelling)

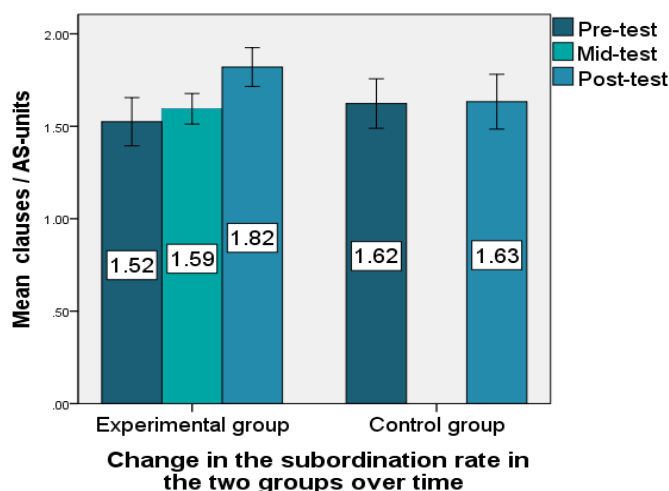


Figure 4.11

- a) Did the learners in the experimental group improve their syntactic complexity on the story-retelling more than in the control group? If so, to what extent?

Table 4.46 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of Syntactic Complexity on story-retelling of the CG and the EXG

Effect	F (2.18)	p	Effect size
Main effect of time	10.130	.005	.360
Main effect of group	.461	.506	.025
Interaction effect by time and group	8.870	.008	.330

Table 4.47 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of Syntactic Complexity for the CG and EXG separately

Pre-test vs. Post-test	Mean	t	p	Effect size
Experimental group	-.29563	-5.185	.001	.749
Control group	-.00982	-.127	.902	.002

In relation to the results of syntactic complexity the picture is somewhat analogous to that of global accuracy. Both groups improved the number of subordination clauses into an AS-unit over time as the significance of the main effect of time reveals in Table 4.46 ( $p < .005$ ). The interaction effect is also significant at  $p < .008$ , showing that the groups performed in a different way. Once more Table 4.47 shows that the EXG attained the significance level ( $p < .001$ ) with a large effect size (.749), whilst the CG registered a non-significant result over



the course of the module ( $p = .902$ ) and a very small effect size (.002) as far as syntactic complexity is concerned. Drama-based approaches were far more effective in developing learners' syntactic complexity compared to a traditional approach.

**b) Did the learners in the experimental group improve in syntactic complexity through text-based instruction and through performance-based instruction on story-retelling? If so, to what extent?**

**Table 4.48 Results of Syntactic Complexity across Pre-/Mid-/Post-test in the EXG on story-retelling**

Effect	F	p	Effect size
Main effect of time	15.030	<b>&lt;.001</b>	.625
Linear effect of time	26.883	<b>.001</b>	.749
Quadratic effect of time	2.612	.141	.225

**Table 4.49 Results for post-hoc paired comparisons Pre-/Mid-/Post-test of syntactic complexity on story-retelling**

Comparison	Mean Difference	p	t	Effect size
Pre-test vs. Mid-test	-.070	.917	1.825	.116
Mid-test vs. Post-test	-.226*	<b>.003</b>	6.328	.725

\*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni

With regard to syntactic complexity within the experimental group, Table 4.48 discloses that there was a significant effect of time on the proportion of number of clauses to an AS-unit ( $p < .001$ ). The significant linear trend ( $p < .001$ ) reveals again that the change is consecutively in the same direction. Overall, there was also a moderate to large effect size for this data .625, which means that the drama-based approach was highly effective in developing learners' syntactic complexity. The two comparisons (Table 4.49) revealed a non-significant difference between the pre- and mid-test for the text-based approach ( $p = .917$ ), but a significant one for the performance-based approach ( $p < .003$ ). This time, there was a remarkable increase in syntactic complexity through the performance-based approach which had a notable effect on students' language development as shown by the large effect size (.725), whilst a very small effect size was registered for the text-based form of instruction (.116).

#### 4.1.12 Mean Length of AS-units (story-retelling)

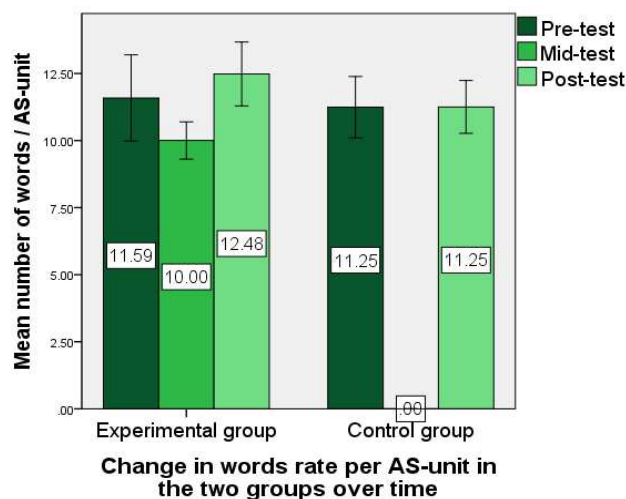


Figure 4.12

- a) Did the learners in the experimental group improve in MLAS more than the control group on story-retelling? If so, to what extent?

Table 4.50 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of MLAS of the CG and the EXG

Effect	F (2,18)	p	Effect size
Main effect of time	.589	.453	.032
Main effect of group	2.294	.147	.113
Interaction effect of time by group	.570	.460	.031

Table 4.51 Results of Pre/Post-test comparison of MLAS of the CG and the EXG separately

Pre-test vs. Post-test	Mean	t	p	Effect size
Experimental group	-.89459	-.936	.374	.089
Control group	-.00765	-.011	.991	.000

Lastly, as far as MLAS is concerned, Table 4.50 shows an improvement over time, which, however, was not significant ( $p < .453$ ). There was no significant interaction effect ( $p < .460$ ) and, as shown in Table 4.51 ( $p = .374$ ,  $p = .991$ ), neither of the two groups reached a significant level. However, the means indicate that the learners in the experimental group did better on the post-test than on the pre-test, whilst there was no evident improvement in the control group. Also, the effect size was small for the experimental group (.089) and non-existent for the control group (.000), which indicates that the performance-based approach showed some effectiveness in developing learners' MLAS unlike the traditional approach.

- b) Did the learners in the experimental group improve in MLAS through text-based instruction and though performance-based instruction on story-retelling? If so, to what extent?

**Table 4.52 Results of MLAS across Pre-/Mid-/Post-test in the EXG (story-retelling)**

Effect	F	p	Effect size
Main effect of time	5.295	.016	.370
Linear effect of time	.876	.374	.089
Quadratic effect of time	19.823	<b>.002</b>	.688

**Table 4.53 Results for post-hoc paired comparisons Pre-/Mid-/Post-test of MLAS in the EXP (story-retelling)**

Comparison	Mean Difference	p	t	Effect size
Pre-test vs. Mid-test	1.585	.210	2.056	.320
Mid-test vs. Post-test	-2.479	<b>.001</b>	-4.694	.710

\*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni

Regarding the MLAS within the experimental group, it can be noted in Table 4.52 that there was a significant effect of time ( $p < .016$ ), hence there was an improvement on the post-test compared to the pre-test. However, there is no significant linear trend for this data ( $p = .374$ ) whilst the quadratic effect of time is significant ( $p < .002$ ). As for the comparison between the mean of the pre-test with that of the mid-test, Table 4.53 indicates a non-significant difference ( $p = .210$ ); conversely, there was a highly significant score when comparing the results of the mid-test with those of the post-test ( $p < .001$ ). Interestingly, there was a growth in the length of AS-units, but this growth was significant solely through performance-based instruction, whilst there was a decrease through the text-based form of instruction on the story-retelling. Also, a high effect size was registered for the performance-based approach (.710) compared to the text-based approach (.320) which clearly denotes that the former was more effective than the latter in increasing MLAS.

## 4.2 Results for RQ3

The third research question regarded the students' attitudes towards the two types of approaches in terms of affective responses, usefulness for improving their oral skills and their perceptions of difficulties and problems encountered. In order to answer this question, a

questionnaire that combined both quantitative and qualitative data and a follow-up interview were implemented. The questionnaire was answered on a mainly 5-point Likert scales, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for the quantitative part. For the qualitative data which sought learners' opinion about the two types of approaches, they were asked two open questions: what they mostly liked and what they mostly disliked about the text- and performance-based approach. Both were followed by open-ended, reason-why questions for further clarification. These questions were coded along with the interviews, and the results are reported in the qualitative part of this section (see section 4.2.2).

#### 4.2.1 Quantitative results (Questionnaires)

The quantitative data from the questionnaire were analysed with the help of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 19.0 for Windows. Given that mainly Likert scales were used, the coding frame was straightforward. Then, descriptive statistics was used to present and describe data in terms of summary frequencies, means and standard deviations. The results for each quantitative question are represented below by means of graphs (Figures 4.13 to 4.19) and tables, which are subsequently accompanied by explanatory comments.

Q1.A./1.B *How did you find working with authentic dramatic texts/ How did you find working on the performance in terms of enjoyment, interest, usefulness, meaningfulness, difficulties and satisfaction?*

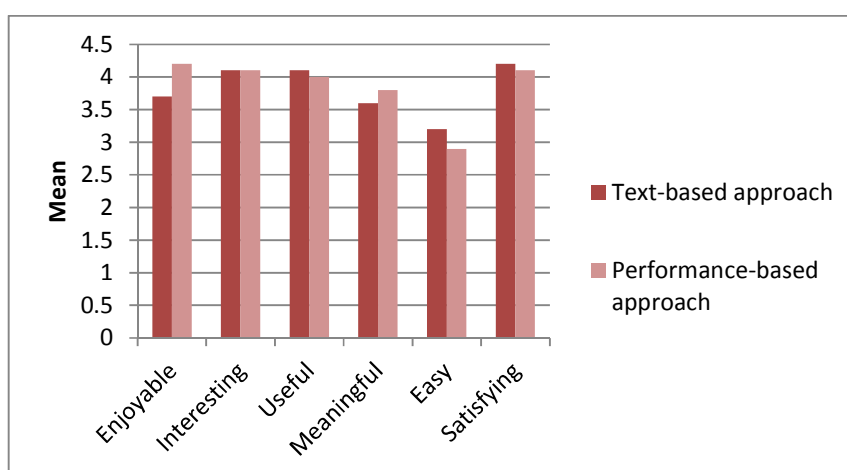


Figure 4.13

**Table 4.54 Descriptive statistics for students' attitudes towards TBA and PBA (N=10)**

Questionnaire Items	Text-based approach		Performance-based approach		p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Enjoyable	3.7	.63246	4.2	1.05935	.177
Interesting	4.10	.56765	4.10	.56765	1.00
Useful	4.10	.31623	4.00	.94281	.726
Meaningful	3.8	.78881	3.8	.69921	.343
Easy	3.2	.78881	2.9	.56765	.343
Satisfying	4.2	.24944	4.1	1.7471	.679

The students' attitudes towards the two types of instruction (see Figure 4.13 above) showed highly positive attitudes in terms of interest, enjoyment, usefulness and satisfaction towards both approaches, given that the mean rates were both above 4, which was the second highest point on the scale. Furthermore, positive moderate attitudes for meaningfulness towards learning through both types of drama and towards learning through a text-based approach, with means above 3 which was the mid-point on the scale, were expressed. Conversely, moderate negative attitudes with regard to the easiness of learning through a performance-based approach with the mean below 3, were reported. However, the difference between attitudes towards the text-based approach and the performance-based approach revealed by Paired T-tests was never significant on any of the specified criteria: enjoyable ( $p = .177$ ), interesting ( $p = 1.000$ ), useful ( $p = .726$ ), meaningful ( $p = .343$ ), easy ( $p = .343$ ), satisfying ( $p = .678$ ). As shown by the means, the learners enjoyed the performance-based form of instruction (Mean = 4.2, SD=1.05935) more than the text-based approach (Mean = 3.7, SD =.63246). Concerning learners' level of interest, both approaches were found equally interesting as the same mean score discloses (Mean = 4.10, SD = .56765), suggesting highly positive attitudes of interest given that the mean rating was close to 5, which is the highest point of the scale. As to the degree of usefulness, the text-based approach (Mean = 4.10, SD =.31623) was found slightly more useful than the performance-based approach (Mean = 4.00, SD =.94281). However, in connection with meaningfulness, means disclose that learners perceived the performance as being slightly more meaningful (Mean = 3.8, SD =.69921) compared to the text-based approach (Mean = 3.8, SD =.78881). Conversely, the students reported negative feelings of easiness on the performance-based approach (Mean = 2.9, SD =.56765) compared to the text-based instruction (Mean = 3.2, SD =.78881). With respect to

the level of satisfaction it was somewhat surprising to find that it was slightly higher for the text-based instruction (Mean = 4.2, SD = .24944) compared to the performance-based instruction (Mean = 4.1, SD = .17471).

Q1.C. *How comfortable (at ease) did you feel when working on the TBA and PBA?*

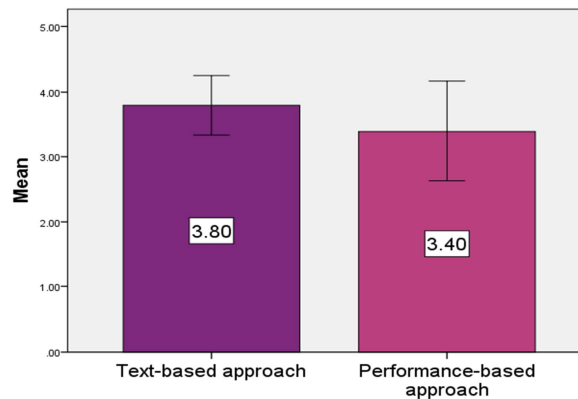


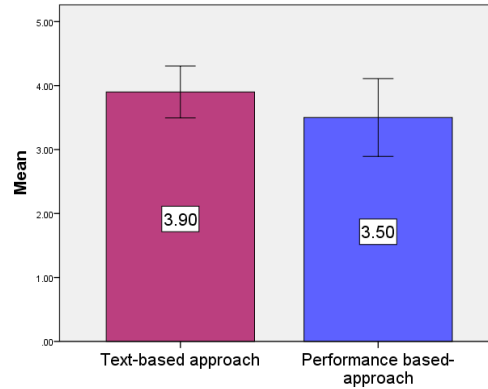
Figure 4.14

Table 4.55 Descriptive statistics for students' feelings of comfort when working on TBA and PBA (N=10)

Questionnaire Items	Text-based approach		Performance-based approach		p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Level of comfort	3.8000	.63246	3.4000	1.07497	.399

Looking now at the Figure 4.14 which indicates the level of comfort of the learners, we can notice that they reported moderately positive levels of comfort when taking part in both types of drama-based instruction with both mean ratings slightly above 3, which was the mid-point of the rating scale. No significant difference ( $p = .399$ ) between the mean for the text-based instruction (Mean = 3.8000, SD = .63246) and that for the performance-based instruction (Mean = 3.4000, SD = 1.07497) was found.

Q2. C. *How much did you feel in control of your English (speaking correctly) by working with texts or on performance?*



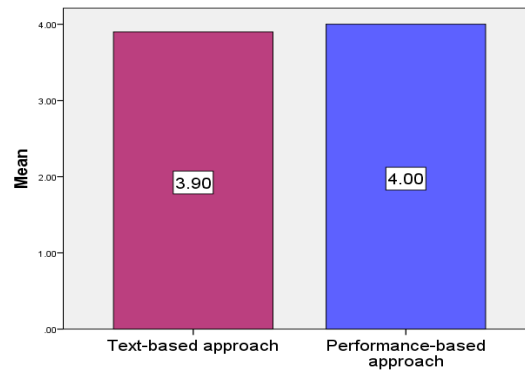
**Figure 4.15**

**Table 4.56** Descriptive statistics for students' feelings of language control by working with TBA and PBA (N=10)

Questionnaire Item	Text-based approach		Performance-based approach		p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Speaking correctly	3.9000	.56765	3.5000	.84984	.223

When asked how much they felt in control of their language, again learners showed (Figure 4.15) moderately positive attitudes towards both approaches, as shown by the means ratings which were both above 3, which represent the mid-point of the scale. However, the mean for the text-based approach (Mean = 3.900 SD = .56765) was slightly higher compared to the mean for the performance-based approach (Mean = 3.500, SD = .84984), but Paired Sample T-tests showed no significant difference of feelings in control over the language ( $p = .223$ ).

Q3. C. *How much were you able to communicate (did you have enough language knowledge to communicate) when speaking by working with texts or with performance?*



**Figure 4.16**

**Table 4.57** Descriptive statistics for how much students were able to communicate during the TBA and PBA (N=10)

Questionnaire Item	Text-based approach		Performance-based approach		p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Ability to communicate	3.9000	.47140	4.00	.73786	.758

The students reported again moderately high positive attitudes towards both forms of instruction, since the mean rating was above 3 (Figure 4.16). However, the mean difference was slightly higher on the performance-based approach this time (Mean = 4.00, SD = .73786) compared to the text-based approach (Mean = 3.90, SD = .47140). Again, Paired Sample T-tests disclosed no significant difference between approaches in how much learners were able to express themselves when learning English in drama classes ( $p = .758$ ). Both approaches offered numerous opportunities for learners to use the target language in oral communication, and it appears that regardless of the type of activity, they did not have any problems in expressing their thoughts orally.



Q4. C. *How freely and spontaneously could you express yourself when working with texts or with performance?*

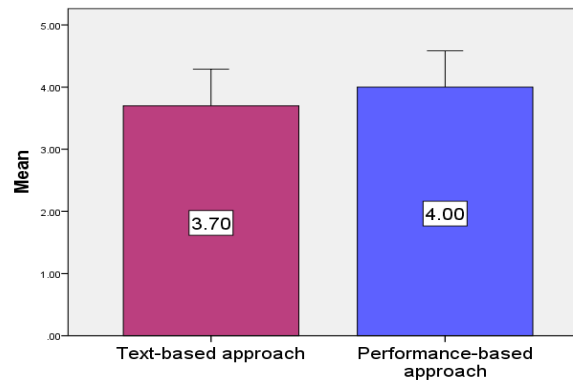


Figure 4.17

Table 4.58 Descriptive statistics for students' feelings of language spontaneity during the TBA and PBA (N=10)

Questionnaire Item	Text-based approach		Performance-based approach		p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Feelings of spontaneity	3.700	.82327	4.00	.81650	.193

As shown in Figure 4.17 above, the learners reported moderate to high positive attitudes towards the feeling of spontaneity and freedom, with which they could express themselves in both drama-based approaches classes since the mean rating was again above 3, the mid-point of the scale. However, the mean regarding the performance-based approach (Mean = 4.00, SD = .81650) was higher compared to the text-based approach (Mean = 3.70, SD = .82327). Yet again, Paired Sample t-tests showed no significant difference between the means ( $p = .193$ ).

Q5.C. *In your English classes, would you prefer to work more on: Texts, Performance, Both or Neither of them?*

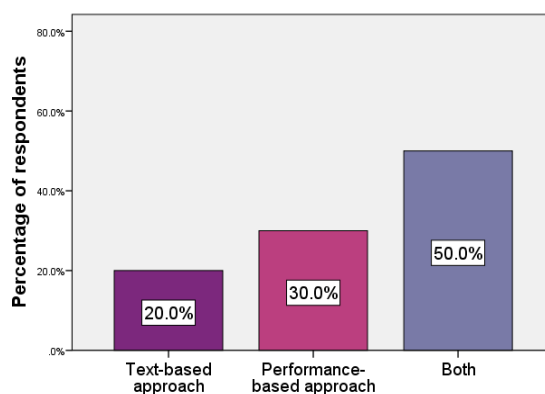


Figure 4.18

Table 4.59 Descriptive statistics for students' preference for TBA, PBA, Both or Neither of them (N=10)

Questionnaire item	Text-based approach	Performance-based approach	Both	Neither of them
	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage
Preference	20%	30%	50%	0%

Figure 4.18 above shows that when asked about with which type of drama approach the learners would like to engage more in the future, the text-based approach was favoured by two of the respondents (20%), three of them (30%) gave precedence to the performance-based approach whilst the remaining five, half of the learners (50%), said they would like to learn a foreign language through both types of drama. Thus, students' preference for performance-based approach rose only slightly compared to the text-based approach, and it was outstripped by their preference for text- and performance-based approaches taken together. None of the learners said they would not prefer such approaches.

Q6: *How much do you think you improved your oral skills when using the textbook, through text-based approach or through performance-based approach?*

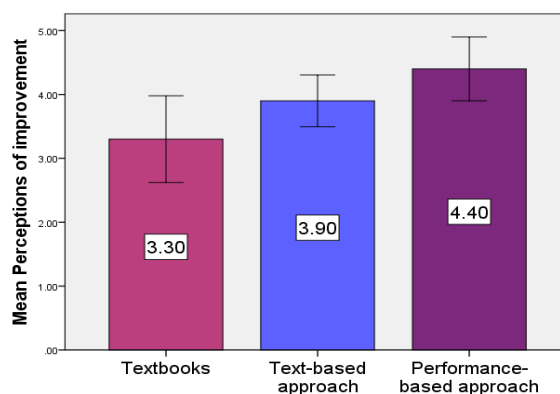


Figure 4.19

**Table 4.60 Descriptive statistics for students' perception of improvement when using Textbook, through TBA and PBA (N=10)**

Questionnaire Item	Textbook		Text-based approach (TBA)		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	p
Perceptions of improvement	3.30	.94868	3.90	.567665	.261

	Text-based approach (TBA)		Performance-based approach (PBA)		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	p
	3.90	.567665	4.00	.81650	.451

	Textbook		Performance-based approach (PBA)		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	p
	3.30	.94868	4.00	.81650	.009

Figure 4.60 shows that students felt that their English oral skills improved mostly through performance-based approach (Mean = 4.40, SD = .94868), followed by the text-based approach (Mean = 3.90, SD = .56765) and placing last the textbooks used in the formal instruction (Mean = 3.30, SD = .69921). In this instance, learners reported very strong attitudes towards their perception of improvement by learning English through performance given that mean rating was almost 5, which was the highest point on the scale, moderate attitudes towards the text-based approach, and low positive attitudes towards the formal

instruction. One-way ANOVA results showed an overall main effect of type of material used ( $F = 5.318$ ,  $p < 0.11$ ). The post-hoc test with Bonferoni corrections indicated a significant difference between performance-based approach and textbooks (formal instruction) ( $p < .009$ ), but not between the textbooks and text-based approach ( $p = .261$ ) and, text-based approach and performance-based instruction ( $p = .451$ ).

The next section, reporting on the qualitative data as retrieved from students' follow-up interviews and open-ended questions of the questionnaire, will shed light on the statistical results by providing deeper insights into the reasons for the students' choices on the Likert scale, that otherwise would have been impossible to obtain solely through the questionnaire method.

## **4.2.2 Qualitative Results (Questionnaires and interviews)**

This section is devoted to the presentation of the qualitative results that emerged from both follow-up interviews and open-ended questions of the questionnaire together. The open-ended questions of the questionnaire aimed to find out what learners liked or disliked most about the two approaches, and also the reasons why they did so. The main categories which emerged from the analyses of the data were: a) affective positive and negative responses in terms of enjoyment, b) usefulness and practicality of the two approaches, and c) problems and difficulties. For each key category, each reason was sub-coded. Additionally, the questionnaire sub-categories were counted for frequencies of occurrences in order to achieve a more comprehensive picture of the results obtained (see Appendix 20 and Appendix 21 for categories and sub-categories of coding regarding the interviews and the questionnaires).

### **4.2.2.1 Affective positive responses on the text-based approach**

#### **4.2.2.1.1 Enjoyment**

The majority of students generally enjoyed both types of drama-based approaches for different reasons. The text-based approach reasons for enjoyment were mostly connected to the “novelty effect”, “active way of learning”, “playfulness” and “cooperative learning”. Yet,

more often than not, these explanations were linked to their perceptions of usefulness of the language and generally, they mainly enjoyed what they thought was constructive and valuable from a linguistic point of view.

First and foremost, the authentic texts along with the activities carried out during the lessons and the dramatic games brought an element of freshness into the class atmosphere, as revealed in the students' statements below:

*The period we were learning English with these types of texts [text-based approach] was very nice because I could learn new things, vocabulary and grammar in a new way: livelier, more engaging and motivating for us, the students, by having a lot of fun through drama games and different activities at the same time (St3).*

*I very much enjoyed learning language with play scripts because it is totally different from the way we have dealt with English literature so far (St2).*

From the questionnaire, similar responses were elicited:

*I loved the way we had to learn and deal with grammar. I felt this method was so fresh. (St10).*

*The thing I liked most was the fact that I learned so many new things and so much language in a new way, and had so much fun at the same time (St9).*

The students also reported the “active way of learning” as a more enjoyable way of learning, undoubtedly due to their involvement in the drama-based activities and, thus, the linguistic benefits they derived from them:

*There were more things I liked but most of all the involvement in lessons when reading texts and the fact that we learned not only grammar but also new words, idiomatic expressions and also slang (St8).*

Dramatic games and activities were a source of enjoyment directly linked to the novelty effect these brought with them and, above all, the component of fun and learners' perception of “playfulness”. Again, as well as enlivening the atmosphere in class, students deemed the drama games to be a helpful way to improve the level of language acquired, as reflected in the following interview extract:

*I feel the games we did helped me a lot to improve my language skills. Through the games we learned so much. It seems trivial but because we are not native speakers, I think you should do as you do with children. The games are so much fun and one does not get bored; but above all they motivated me so much. In my view, they were really important in the language classroom and if I had to learn a language again I will continue with the games until I am 40 years old (St9).*

Again, more often than not, learners' reasons for enjoying an activity were connected to their perceptions of the linguistic benefits they could gain from taking part in it:

*I really liked the game of envelopes, letters and stickers. For the first time, I was able to learn the conditional type clauses. I really needed this kind of activity (St3).*

Such responses prove the point that many learners are prepared to participate wholeheartedly in games and activities which they may consider slightly "juvenile or rather boring in their mother tongue", as advocated by Wright *et al.*, (1984: 3). Unquestionably, the spirit of games cast a spell on the learners. In the questionnaires, similar feelings were shared:

*I loved the fact that we were playing in the class; we were doing games, which were so much fun, but at the same time we were learning so much (St4).*

"Cooperative learning" was given as another motive why students enjoyed the activities and the dramatic games in the text-based approach, which were undertaken either in pairs, in groups or with the whole class:

*It was very funny only seeing what others were doing. I enjoyed it so much (St8).*

Nonetheless, the text-based approach phase was not only a source of enjoyment, but also a powerful tool for increasing and building students' motivation.

#### **4.2.2.1.2 Motivation (text-based and performance-based approaches)**

Building motivation was one of the most prominent features of the two approaches given that it was mostly related to the authentic scripts which were used in both phases. The authentic texts proved to be very interesting and, as a result, motivating for students for an assortment of reasons of which the following are examples: "engagement with the story and the subtext", "cultural element", "building knowledge", "learning in context" and "playfulness".

First of all, students mentioned that the story in itself recounted in a play script along with the subtext, boosted their motivation. Authentic extracts gave learners plenty of opportunity to practice “the often ignored or taken for granted skill which is thinking” (McRae 1999: 23), and, as a consequence of discussions and active participation for negotiation of meaning, students perceived they had developed their oral skills to a high extent. Hence, the texts were revealed to be a stimulus for fresh thoughts, which created endless opportunities for speaking. The subtext gave rise to continuous debates, spurred students’ imagination and the desire to learn more and, thus, they felt inspired to learn language through such scripts as mentioned in their interviews:

*The texts were very interesting and it was motivating to discover and imagine the different facts which they recounted, given that we were presented with various play extracts during our classes (St 6).*

*I was more motivated to work with dramatic texts and learn the grammar and vocabulary in this way, simply because they were so interesting. There was always something fascinating to discover behind the story, thus, they engage my imagination more than the simple grammar exercises (St5).*

*I felt these play scripts engaged my mind because the facts and the characters aroused my curiosity. We had plenty of debates and discussions, and in this way I learned the language better (St3).*

From the questionnaires, similar answers were retrieved. Learners found enjoyable the fact that the story narrated in the play scripts offered opportunities for the use of the foreign language through the discussions conducted:

*I really enjoyed reading the texts and, afterwards, discussing them in my own words (St1).*

*I was motivated to talk more because of the discussions arising from what was happening in the texts we were studying and which pushed us to participate in these debates. In the normal lessons, there were only grammar exercises and we did not talk a lot in English (St7).*

The cultural element, which is naturally embodied in an authentic script, was also a source of motivation and interest for students who recognized that learning a language also means to learn about a culture:

*I think these texts were much more motivating and interesting because of the cultural element contained. Getting to know a culture is as important as mastering the foreign language and, that is why I think these texts are more useful when we have to speak with and understand English people (St10).*

*The texts were very interesting as I feel I have learnt a lot about the culture of the target language (St 6).*

Analogous responses were gleaned from the students' questionnaires:

*I very much liked working on the authentic scripts because I could improve my knowledge of English culture, and I totally believe this is such a good way of doing it (St 9).*

Authentic texts were also a source for discovering examples from English fiction, finding out new things and building knowledge through the language at the same time. Relevant answers came mostly from the students' questionnaires:

*I liked the texts a lot because they were very instructive (St2).*

*I liked the texts most of all because I got to know English literature and examples of English fiction better and in this way I could build on my knowledge (St5).*

*I loved to discover new texts and new literature examples (St1).*

The students also emphasized that "learning grammar in context" rather than doing simple grammar exercises was more meaningful, engaging, and motivating for them. This may be because, as highlighted in the Literature Review, learning in context requires learners to pay close attention to lexical and grammatical patterns in order to read more precisely what is really happening within the world of the text:

*And also, learning grammar in context was not boring anymore, but extremely motivating (St7).*

*I found acquiring vocabulary and grammar in context very pleasant and engaging compared to the lessons we had done previously (St8).*

*I found it [learning grammar] very interesting, as well as meaningful. Learning grammar only through exercises, which was my experience before, is not really helpful if we do not practise them in context. They became only the same boring*



*things repeated ad infinitum and one loses motivation. In order to learn a language, one needs real practise and this was what we did when learning language through the texts (St10).*

Whilst acknowledging the importance of grammar exercises and drills for learning a language, several students were motivated and encouraged by the way the activities were conducted in class and by their perception of them as being “playful”, attributing their language improvement to this factor as shown in the following extracts:

*It is more interesting and motivating to learn a language in this way, by playing, and not always by doing the same boring things and grammar exercises that we had done in the previous years. Of course, grammar is important in order to learn a language but, if in each lesson we repeat the same patterns and we only and exclusively do fill in exercises, we get tired. Here [during the text-based approach phase], we learned as if everything was a game (St9).*

*I liked the texts because we learned so many new words rather than the commonly used vocabulary (St5).*

#### **4.2.2.2 Affective positive responses on the performance based-approach**

##### **4.2.2.2.1 Enjoyment**

The majority of students enjoyed the performance-based approach in general, expressing the following as major reasons for their enjoyment: “active way of learning”, “taking on roles”, “cooperative learning”, “feelings of identity”, and “disguising”. Even in this case, like in the text-based approach phase, their reasons for enjoyment were closely linked and could not be entirely separated from the linguistic benefits the learners mostly perceived. The “active way of learning” seemed to be the most appreciated part of the whole process of language learning in the performance-based approach. It was felt to be both an easier and quicker way of learning because it engaged not only the mind, but also the body and emotions. Thus, learners felt they acquired language better through living the lesson actively rather than being merely passive receivers. This fact is expressively summarized in the statements below:

*In this case, I do think that by using authentic play scripts for learning English, the process of learning is quicker because the mind, the brain, becomes more engaged*

*and is able to assimilate language much more actively rather than just sitting still. If you try to represent something or to impersonate someone, what is the body doing? The soul immediately takes a certain viewpoint and it is obvious that the process of learning is improved because it is not boring like a traditional English lesson where you have to learn a long list of words by heart. Here, you will learn because you need to put it into practice, as you actively live the lesson. You are not a passive receiver but you live very actively the whole process of learning (St 10).*

*It was not easy. Maybe easy is not really the right word [to describe the lessons] but that is what motivates students to learn English more... Yes, one gets more enthusiastic when dealing with a subject, especially when it comes to learning a language in this way. It is not the same thing to sit in the classroom with a book and read and repeat what was written, in a very passive way, or to tackle the subject in an active way, to go more into depth, to interpret, but most of all to put into practice; here, the learning of the language became more fun and more interesting. It took forms and shapes according to the tasks we had to do (St2).*

“Taking on roles” and interacting with peers when rehearsing was deemed particularly enjoyable by some of the learners for various reasons. Students could experience being in someone else’s shoes and also make mistakes in a safe environment without the fear of being ridiculed:

*The funniest thing was to take on roles and to interact between us, but not as ourselves, but in someone else’s shoes. Maybe we did not do it very well because of the situation: we were not real actors, but we did have plenty of fun (St7 interview).*

*I love acting and it was great fun. I do not have any problem in acting or making language mistakes in front of others. I am an extroverted person. I believe the important thing is to take a risk and only by making mistakes can one improve. I really loved doing these little scenes in class (St5).*

One of the main advantages cited in the literature regarding the benefits of a performance-based approach is cooperative learning. In fact, students felt positive about working with other students as a group, as it seemed that the process of interaction for negotiation of meaning made the practice of acquiring the language more meaningful, as well as being full of amusement:

*I really enjoyed working with my classmates on the performance. It was very funny (St8).*

*As an experience in the classroom this was very entertaining and I have learnt at the same time because we did a lot of silly and amusing things while reciting lines and working as a group (St4).*

“Feelings of identity” with the character in the play was another reason listed for students’ enjoyment:

*I liked acting because I identified myself with the protagonist (St5).*

Students also mentioned that disguising and exploring identities beyond their own through inhabiting fictional characters, constituted an element of joy in itself:

*For example, when I had to play the role of a girl I realized I did not have a great deal of experience in personifying this girl, but it was fun as I tried to get the perspective of this character (St10).*

*I liked so much to act and to be someone else because I can be who I want (St1).*

#### **4.2.2.3 Affective negative responses on the text-based approach**

Only a couple of affective negative points were raised regarding the text-based approach. One student did not particularly enjoy learning grammar using such texts, whilst another commented that not all the play extracts proved to be interesting:

*In the beginning, I did not much like the fact that we still worked on grammar (St10).*

*I did not enjoy the class much when some of the texts were not very interesting for me (St6).*

Another student additionally mentioned that she felt that engaging only with scripts during an entire term was somehow repetitive:

*I only found it a little bit repetitive working solely and exclusively with scripts for the entire term, but nevertheless, I enjoyed it (St6).*

#### 4.2.2.4 Affective negative responses on the performance-based approach

As for the negative side of the performance-based approach, only a minority of learners found some of the activities less enjoyable than those presented in the text-based approach and thus, only a very few elements of criticism were adduced, such as “less interesting”, “repetitive”, “feeling of discomfort when acting”, “frustration with partner” and “dissatisfaction with memorization”.

Firstly, after the period of teaching through a variety of self-standing extracts in the text-based phase, the learners engaged with a single play script during the second phase of teaching, namely the performance-based phase. This was found to be less interesting than working on a variety of play scripts:

*The first period [the text-based approach] was so interesting because we had to work on more texts and the various stories presented in the scripts were so engaging. But here [in the performance-based approach] we only had a single text, so, I felt it was a bit unexciting (St3).*

Secondly, in the performance-based approach students participated in numerous rehearsals. The element of repetitiveness was found slightly boring by one student, although she took care to mention that it was not excessive:

*I found it somewhat repetitive because we had to do rehearsals, but not excessively (St7).*

Additionally, it appeared that initially learners experienced feelings of discomfort when acting. However, they admitted that they were very much aware that they improved their speaking skills considerably, precisely through this type of activity:

*I felt uncomfortable when working on the performance, because when we learned the language using only the play texts, it was only me and the text in front of me. When I had to present something in front of others instead, it became more difficult (St3).*

*Even the simple act of moving was always more challenging than doing something in writing. I am sure I improved my speaking skills a lot in this way, but I felt slightly uncomfortable when acting (St2).*

“Frustration with classmates” was listed as a slightly negative feature of the rehearsals. One of the learners felt she wasted her time when rehearsing if some classmates did not manage to learn their lines accurately by heart and thus, did not equally contribute to a successful production of the play. This certainly hampered and delayed the achievement of the final product, namely the staging of the performance, and thus, generated feelings of dissatisfaction:

*I had the impression that sometimes we were wasting our time when doing rehearsals because of those students who did not care too much about learning their lines by heart properly (St3).*

Besides being an activity which takes a considerable amount of time in order to be carried out successfully, the memorization of the lines in itself was one of the activities most frequently cited as being not very pleasurable. However, it was deemed to be useful for applying language to real life:

*No, it was not hard. I have a good memory. It was not hard but it was the least enjoyable part. I think it was useful though, because now I can use the words and the expressions learned outside the classroom, in the real world.*

From students’ questionnaires, it further emerged that the “memorization” was the least enjoyable part of the whole process of learning through a performance-based approach, simply because it required a lot of concentration and patience:

*I did not like learning my lines by heart very much. It was not easy (St4).*

*In all fairness, there was nothing I did not like. The only thing perhaps, that did not spur me so much was memorising certain phrases which I could not pronounce correctly, such as. ..phy...phy ...psychologist (St9).*

#### **4.2.2.5 Usefulness and practicalities of the text-based approach**

Most learners were positive about the benefits and practicalities of learning language through the text-based approach. Their answers include references to this form of instruction as follows: “easier way for language learning”, “applying to real life”, “building confidence” and “language improvement”.

The majority of the learners found that it was easier to learn a language through authentic texts. By their nature, dramatic texts contain a more realistic language which is closer to naturally occurring conversation as discussed in the Literature Review (see 2.1.1). By using such texts, the process of learning was perceived as being a more effortless way of learning as well as a more useful one, a finding aptly summarized by one student:

*It was much easier and more useful to learn English using these play scripts. The language was more alive, more real and it seemed like having a normal conversation (St7).*

Learners also offered a noteworthy glimpse into the way the play scripts were deemed to be useful for helping them to learn in an unconscious way. By constant interaction with the texts and through dynamic discussions in the target language, a kind of natural acquisition takes place as opposed to conscious learning (Wessels 1987). It appears that by reading repeatedly in order to understand the plot and by analyzing the motivation of the characters, learners are more concerned with the message conveyed rather than with the form of the utterances:

*We have learned language very easily, somehow in an unconscious way, without a lot of effort I would say, because we did it with personal enjoyment compared to learning long lists of words which we usually had to memorise in other English lessons (St3).*

*The simple fact that we analysed the characters and discussed their motivations was an opportunity for learning the language in an unconscious way, because we were more concerned with presenting our ideas than with the language itself (St1).*

*We were more focused on what happens inside the text and we learned new words and grammar somehow unconsciously (St7).*

Some students also claimed that the play extracts were much more useful for applying the language outside the classroom due to the more realistic language, the abundance of colloquial expressions and the helpful vocabulary contained by such texts:

*Yes, of course, it was useful because I have learned colloquial expressions and slang, which we did not normally study in our English classes, which I feel will help me understand and communicate better with people when I travel abroad (St5).*

Above and beyond, learners found extremely useful and interesting that such texts embedded different styles and registers, depending on the characters' status and on the various situations recounted:

*Without doubt, it is useful to know a certain type of language, because I can adjust it according to whom I am speaking: a friend or someone important. And these texts have highlighted several differences (St10).*

*Learning English with authentic texts was an extremely positive thing for me because I really like to learn English, but not in a purely grammatical way and out of any kind of context as we had done. In these English classes, we had to learn using certain texts which place the grammar in a specific situation, let us say, which makes us aware of a hypothetical situation in which s/he can find him/herself in the future (St2).*

*I found the scripts more interesting and motivating because they use different linguistic registers which helps a lot in everyday conversation because it does not use trivial language and the usual grammar, but also a different kind of English (St6).*

Both the authentic script and the dramatic games in which the students took part wholeheartedly were considered valuable for improving their vocabulary:

*We have learned so many words with these texts (St4).*

*Sometimes the scripts were a bit difficult to understand but still, I have learned so much vocabulary, so many new words (St8).*

*With regard to the play scripts, certainly I have learned a lot of new words and expressions (St5).*

*I feel the games we did helped me a lot to improve my language skills. We learned so much language through games (St9).*

Classes conducted mainly in English in which learners could express themselves with a purpose were also deemed very helpful for improving their accuracy:

*Talking mostly in English was very useful, especially because we talked a lot about meaningful things and if we made mistakes we were corrected sometimes (St7).*

Classes conducted in English were deemed useful for “improving students’ listening” and productive skills too:

*I was not used to hearing only English and to talking in English. That is why I found it very useful. But the most important thing was to try to speak as much as possible and this was very useful in order to improve my fluency (St5).*

#### 4.2.2.6 Usefulness and practicalities of the performance-based approach (positive aspects)

The reasons supporting the usefulness and practicality of the performance-based approach are listed as follows: “helpful practice for language learning”, “easier way of learning” by repetition and learning by doing, “trains emotional memory”, “transferable to real life”, “building confidence”, “improving pronunciation”, and “accuracy, fluency, rhythm and tone of voice improvement”.

Several students found that the performance-based approach offered more “opportunities for speaking” compared to the activities set during the text-based approach. Hence, it constituted a very helpful practice for developing their oral skills, particularly through rehearsals and discussions drawn from technical elements. The students’ answers, as reported below, illustrate once more that through drama English becomes a living experience of communication (Via 1972):

*However, the performance engaged me more simply because more conversations were taking place. I practised my conversational skills more, because I had more opportunities for speaking (St5).*

*It was much more interesting and it helped me more with the language. Even though I was shy because of my English, I felt that I benefited more linguistically from performance compared to the texts because I had to perform in front of others and to practise more when doing the rehearsals (St8).*

Some learners also pointed out how numerous repetitions done in the rehearsal helped them to retain better, and then, use the language when needed:

*And the repetitions done through the rehearsals were also useful because now I can use the ready-made sentences outside of the classroom, in the real world, like, “Get out! You are wasting my time!” or other lines. They are stuck in my mind now because I kept repeating them (St9).*

As illustrated above, students’ answers revealed that being interesting and motivating coincided most of the time with being useful or practical.



The performance-based approach offered abundant opportunities for “learning by doing” which was also considered more useful simply because students found it easier to memorise expressions once they had put them into practice. New vocabulary and expressions were often guessed and, consequently, straightforwardly learned from other people’s behaviour and reactions whilst rehearsing, as the following statements illustrate:

*Yes, definitely it was easier. Even in those cases in which I did not understand a sentence or a word, I could guess it from other peoples’ actions when we were acting and eventually I also understood the script better (St3).*

*I could learn words from other people’s behaviour, and it was good listening practice too. I could understand the meaning of the words from other people’s attitude. I have learnt so many words as well as expressions (St8).*

*The language is better retained if we learn by doing. And we learn quicker. I still remember the game of emotional states, which we did in class in order to help us with memorising the lines in a funny and easier way. We retained them better because we had to understand the words expressing emotions in the first place, then we acted and thus, put them into practice (St1).*

Taking on roles in the production of the play and the mere process of acting “train the emotional memory”, a fact which makes it less problematic for students to retrieve the new vocabulary and use it when necessary (Almond 2005), because it is linked to the emotions experienced previously when impersonating a character in the play. Although students did not immensely enjoy the memorization of their lines, they perceived it as being useful practice for language learning. The students learned plenty of vocabulary from the stage directions because they had to pay attention to how to act them, and to gestures, movements and feelings involved when delivering their lines, as referred to in their interviews:

*It was so interesting, much better and easier compared to how we have learned English so far. I remembered the language more easily because I could think back to the situations and the emotions I lived (St10).*

*Lots of words, which I did not know before, and the stage directions, such as “nod”, “grip” or “smile”, are now in my mind because I had to pay attention to the way of acting them when I was saying my lines. The first approach with a new word was the script, but after that we put it into practice, and in this way, we memorised it more rapidly (St2).*

The rehearsal provided a useful stage for learning both the spoken language and the body language within a specific culture, which could be easily transferable and used in the real world:

*I have learned how to approach others (St5).*

The students also benefited psychologically from their involvement in the drama project. Rehearsing and performing a play improved the students' sense of confidence and self-esteem as learners, and this in turn increased their motivation with respect to acquiring the target language as Wessels (1987) advocates. This point is demonstrated in the extracts below:

*Even though I was shy I wanted to take part in the performance. I feel I have improved so much this year but I was also motivated: I tried to listen and to speak more since I was given the opportunity. I feel I am not afraid of speaking anymore. I am more confident now (St6).*

The pupils with a lower level of language mentioned that having something to say, because of their memorised lines, pushed them to participate actively, which in turn raised their level of self-confidence:

*I found myself feeling more relaxed when acting instead of only reading and discussing the play scripts, because I could participate in activities and I always had something to say (St8).*

*I feel much more relaxed when I speak English now, much more confident (St1).*

As for gains in language skills, pronunciation improvement was among the most frequently mentioned benefits the students were gaining from the performance-based approach. Learners' extracts below reveal that the numerous phases of rehearsal provided them with the unique opportunity to greatly improve their pronunciation compared to the activities done in the text-based approach, a fact which was very much appreciated:

*I found the performance much more useful for improving the pronunciation because we needed to talk a lot and, most of all, we needed to speak correctly and "get it right". Therefore, we were corrected more compared to the period when we were working on the texts because we repeated the same things more times (St9).*

*It helped me a lot with the pronunciation because I kept repeating in order to get the lines right and use the phrases memorised in a correct way (St4).*

*I loved the fact that finally, I could improve my pronunciation so much because I could never have done it by myself (St9).*

Students were increasingly aware that they had to pronounce their lines correctly in order to make themselves understood by their peers and, as a consequence, their pronunciation improved:

*However, I think I improved my pronunciation a lot through performance. I needed to make myself understood and I had to pronounce correctly; and I have to admit it was lot of fun anyway (St1).*

In addition, some learners felt that they were different people when taking on roles and they managed to speak English somewhat differently, and thus, they benefited not only at the pronunciation level, but also in terms of tone of the voice as well as the emphasis through which they expressed the meaning of their utterances:

*I improved the pronunciation, the emphasis, the way of expressing myself and the tonality of the voice. With the previous teacher, we were speaking English as if we were Italians. But here we managed to speak in a different way because we were different people when taking on roles (St5).*

The participants cited fluency improvement as an important addition to their oral skills. They felt that they developed their fluency from working on the technical elements in the preparation for the stage, because they were much more engaged in various problem-solving activities, whilst being much more inclined to take risks as shown in their answers below:

*[...] as far as performance is concerned, I think I achieved more fluency in speaking (St6).*

*I think I improved my fluency a lot. Besides, I have learnt that I do not have to be afraid of mistakes when speaking, even though what I said was incorrect from the grammatical point of view. Trial and error is the only way one can improve (St5).*

Meaningful interaction also increased students' level of fluency because it involved them in a more natural way of acquiring the language:

*I feel I improved my fluency because the performance was more like a dialogue and more of a conversation, like in the real world, and for this reason I felt more motivated (St2).*

The performance-based phase was beneficial for learning foreign language intonation in a contextualized manner. In this vein, along with fluency improvement, students reported an increased sense of rhythm when engaging in the performance activities:

*I think I achieved more fluency in speaking given the fact that we had to immerse ourselves in matters of daily life and based on that it gives you ...how should I say?... rhythm (St10).*

Moreover, as shown in the next statement, the learners not only perceived they improved their level of fluency, built confidence and had fun simultaneously, but they considered it imperative to stage a performance in order to get linguistic benefits.

*I think it is extremely important to work towards the staging of a performance in order to improve the level of language, learn more and in a more relaxed manner, but most of all, to improve fluency through having a lot of fun at the same time.*

The following statement reveals that learners acknowledged the general effectiveness of the two types of approaches for their learning:

*I feel much more relaxed when I speak English now, much more confident. Although my level of language is quite ok I do not have the fear of making mistakes anymore when I speak and I believe I have improved my linguistic ability considerably (St1).*

The entire experience brought new freshness and enjoyment into the class atmosphere: it was both interesting and enjoyable because the students improved through having a lot of fun. As a general conclusion on the two approaches conducted in class, the statement below, which comes from a student questionnaire, is emblematic:

*I found this experience so interesting because I could learn and have fun too, and this is very important for a student because school is often boring and nobody ever tried to change it. Thus, I can say thank you to the teacher because she tried to change the lessons and she did it so well. What a pity that the time was so short! (St10).*

#### 4.2.2.7 Usefulness and practicalities of the performance-based approach (negative aspects)

With respect to the negative side of the usefulness and practicality of the performance-based approach, there were only a few comments: learning lines by rote memorization, for example, was considered neither helpful for linguistic improvement nor transferable to real life situations.

It was striking that the learners with the highest level of language in the group did not find the memorization of their parts from the script a useful exercise for linguistic improvement and for transferring the language to real world situations:

*I do not think I could use chunks of readymade sentences in the real world if I did not find myself in the exact context and situation to use them (St1).*

*I do not think if you memorize readymade sentences, you can improve your level of language. I believe it is exactly the opposite. If you learn by heart entire long chunks, you are more prone to forget things and get them incorrect in the end (St2).*

One participant did not consider the memorization useful for improving his language skills compared to other types of activities, which required more creativity or imagination:

*Nevertheless, in my case I think I improved a lot by creating my own sentences when taking part in the activities proposed (St1).*

#### 4.2.2.8 Problems and difficulties of the text-based approach

The next sections discuss the problems faced in the text-based and the performance-based approach, whether students found the activities easy or difficult and additionally discuss the reasons linked to hurdles encountered when dealing with the two approaches. A number of learners' problems were referred to as "insufficient or lack of vocabulary", "classes conducted exclusively or mainly in English" and "a new grammar teaching style" in general.

Those learners who considered themselves as having a low level of language proficiency mentioned that they had difficulties in comprehending the authentic texts due to the unknown words and idiomatic expressions:

*I felt that sometimes the words were too difficult for me and I was getting lost, so it was somehow frustrating. This is true for me, because I have a lower level of language than some of my classmates, but perhaps not for my classmates with a higher level of language (St4)*

*Sometimes the play text extracts were difficult because it was difficult to understand the idiomatic expressions (St8).*

*Sometimes the scripts were a bit difficult to understand but still, I enjoyed them greatly (St5).*

Additionally, the following statement reveals that some students were not used to classes conducted only in L2, and initially, they struggled to fully comprehend the discussions taking place during the lesson. However, this fact turned out to be beneficial for improving their English skills as time went by, because they gradually started to comprehend more as the lessons progressed in this way:

*I felt it was interesting, but it was not easy. I did not understand much in the beginning especially when you [the teacher] and my classmates were talking because probably my level of English was not very high or probably not sufficient to understand in depth. Nevertheless, little by little I started understanding more and more (St4).*

A couple of learners expressed their frustration at not being accustomed to a new way of learning grammar. They felt it was difficult to learn the grammar in an inductive way and again they blamed their level of language for this:

*However, I do not like learning grammar in this way. I do not think you can use this type of texts with very low-level language students (St5).*

*But I think I cannot learn English grammar in this way. I am used to having the grammar rule explained and then applying the rule to exercises. The grammar I know was not enough to help me to perfectly understand the texts and it was frustrating. I became better in the end but I still think I prefer drills for learning grammar (St4).*

#### 4.2.2.9 Problems and difficulties of the performance-based approach

Among the very few problems and difficulties related to the performance-based approach, the students mentioned: “difficulties in interpreting the character”, “anxiety” at the thought of acting in public and “lack of time for memorization” of the lines.

Acting in the play in the performance-based approach was perceived as a less comfortable experience for some of the introverted students who preferred the text-based approach, because they did not have to deal so much with performing in front of others as shown in the extracts below:

*I do not like to perform in front of other people, thus I feel more relaxed when working on the texts. Reading and discussing come more naturally to me (St6).*

*Yes, because I am embarrassed when I have to act in front of other people. I prefer to read rather than act and for this reason I felt more at ease when engaging with the texts because I do not really like acting too much (St3).*

However, one student reported that if more lessons were to be conducted in this way, they might feel less threatened about the kind of open environment offered, which constituted such a novelty for them. Another student expressed the view that if he had had similar experiences in language classes and with a bit of preparation he could even overcome his shyness, given that acting was perceived useful for both psychological and language improvement:

*Maybe I would have liked to act if I had been better prepared but all this was such a novelty for me. Essentially, I did not expect to work in class in this way and I found myself slightly unprepared (St2).*

Other learners also found their role hard to interpret because of their shyness:

*I found it difficult to interpret the characters, to put myself in their skin, to become an actor from this point of view. Because I am a little bit shy it was hard for me to work on the performance and then with a classmate such as Vale... who made me laugh, it was even more difficult and I had a bit of trouble (St9).*

On another level, the idea of acting in front of a real audience did not appeal too much to some of the students. Several learners, despite feeling comfortable or having fun when

rehearsing with their peers and enjoying it as a wonderful experience, experienced anxiety at the thought of acting in public in the performance. At the same time, they recognized that this approach was helpful for their language improvement, especially the pronunciation side, as shown in the following statements:

*It was very funny only seeing what others were doing, but as long as we are amongst classmates I can still act without being shy during the lesson but if I had to do it in front of people who are complete strangers to me I think I would have had hard times (St 9).*

The same student went even further by stating that it was a relief that the show was not staged in front of a real audience in the end.

*In a way I was relieved we did not have the final performance. I would probably have been a bit embarrassed (St9)*

Yet, despite feelings of embarrassment at the thought of acting in public, one student also admitted that if the challenges were higher they could improve more despite their initial shyness:

*If I had to act before an audience I think I would forget everything and yet, I think I would improve even more my accuracy and pronunciation by dint of "getting it right" (St3).*

However, although shyness was perceived many times as a difficulty for the students, they also tried to overcome it once they realized it was beneficial for their language improvement, and they started having fun:

*I was shy speaking out loud in front of others, that is all, but I feel I improved a lot even if I used to make lots of mistakes, and I am still making them, but, at least, I took a risk. However, I do not know to what extent I succeeded (St7).*

On the contrary, another student expressed the view that she would have liked to have had a final performance, and lack of time for the memorization of their lines was also regretted and expressed in their interviews:

*It was such a pity we didn't have enough time for successfully learning all our lines by heart. I would have liked to have a final performance (St1).*





## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

This chapter will discuss the findings obtained from the study as presented in Chapter 4. I shall re-examine, summarize and discuss the results of the testing for both RQ1 and RQ2 as reported in the Results chapter: firstly, the results for the two approaches when taken together and compared with the control group are discussed; and, secondly, a discussion of the findings when the two approaches were compared against each other for each subcomponent of CAF separately is provided. The discussion of fluency will take into consideration the results of the story-retelling task, comparing and contrasting them with the findings on accuracy and complexity for the story-retelling tasks only.

Next, I will discuss the themes developed regarding the qualitative findings which emerged from the follow-up interview and the open-ended questions in the questionnaire together, as described in the Results chapter for RQ3 which concerns learners' attitudes towards the two approaches. Subsequently, rather unconventionally and contrary to the order presented in the Results section, this chapter will end with a discussion of the quantitative part of the questionnaire. The rationale for such a choice is that the aim of the follow-up interview was to explicate more in-depth learners' choices on the Likert scales, and hence, most of the reasons had already been touched upon in the section on the themes presented in the qualitative part. However, connections will be made between the quantitative and qualitative results, by additionally clarifying and emphasizing important points mostly concerning the differences in participants' attitudes towards the text- and performance-based approaches. In order to support the interpretation of the findings, the related literature will be revisited throughout the chapter.

### **5.1 Discussion of the results for RQ1 and RQ2**

RQ1 and RQ2 considered whether the learners' oral skills improved through drama-based approaches and, if so, (1) to what extent did the learners' complexity, accuracy and fluency improve compared to a formal instruction approach; and (2) which type of approach better

promoted learners' complexity, accuracy and fluency: the text-based approach or the performance-based approach?

Overall, over the duration of the twenty-week instruction period, both groups of learners, in the experimental group and in the control group, displayed changes in all dimensions, as would be expected from any course of instruction. However, when the results of the pre-test were compared with those of the post-test, which corresponds with the comparison of the formal instruction to the drama-based instruction, the results for the experimental group proved to be significant in all three of the main dimensions: complexity; accuracy; and fluency. However, the control group obtained significant results only for global accuracy. Regarding complexity, learners' scores increased for subordination but not for the mean length of AS-units. As far as the results within the experimental group are concerned, the phase involving teaching through performance seemed to be more effective than that involving teaching through play extracts, with highly significant results in terms of global accuracy, pronunciation, subordination complexity, speed fluency and phonation time ratio.

### **5.1.1 Complexity**

#### **5.1.1.1 Syntactic complexity**

Syntactic complexity is important in language learning as it implies the development of a repertoire of syntactic structures, and thus, a more advanced stage of language. With regard to the results for syntactic complexity, when comparing the text-based instruction with the performance based-instruction, two main points emerged which need to be addressed. Firstly, a higher development of a repertoire of syntactic structures after the text-based instruction phase has been found, which means the students were experimenting with more varied grammatical structures to produce more complex sentences in terms of subordination. By their nature, authentic pieces of literature contain more complex and varied language. It is likely that exposure to a variety of styles and registers, and to a greater richness of syntax and lexis may have led to a significant improvement, which is reflected in students' test results after the text-based first phase was compared to the performance-based one. In fact, their syntactic complexity was highly significant in the text-based instruction phase unlike in the performance-based instruction phase.

Secondly, in individual cases, a trade-off effect was observed between a growth in complexity and a reduction in accuracy which seems to confirm the theory of limited attention capacity (Skehan & Foster 2001). Similarly, Ferrari's study (2012) showed that a growth in complexity may be achieved at the expense of accuracy. Her study with six participants both Italian learners of English and native speakers revealed that over the years, the learners displayed changes in all dimensions and in particular, she found that learners' target language skills decreased in accuracy and gained in complexity. Looking only at the syntactic complexity result, when coding the data for the present study, it was observed that some learners in the present study made more errors in the text phase than in the performance phase, probably because they took the risk in experimenting with a more complex language including more complex syntactic structures at the expenses of accuracy. Also, participants increased their fluency in terms of breakdown, which means that they started pausing less and delivered their speech at a higher rate.

#### **5.1.1.2 Mean length of AS-units**

The findings for the MLAS showed that an AS-unit tended to be longer, which means that the number of words used in an AS-unit increased, but this was not significant in either of the two phases. According to Ferrari (2012: 258), "not only is the syntactic complexity construct multi-faceted, but it is also problematic to assume that it grows in a linear way, or even that it grows over time altogether". Moreover, especially at higher levels, it is well known that the improvement becomes slower over time. Given the pre-existing relatively high level of language of some of the participants in the study, it is likely that the ceiling effect played an important role here and might have influenced the final results. These findings are also in line with recent findings by Mora & Valls-Ferrer (2012) who showed that after a one-year period of full-immersion study abroad, participants in their study improved significantly in all areas with the exception of the MLAS.

## **5.1.2 Accuracy**

### **5.1.2.1 Global accuracy**

In the control group, learners' grammatical accuracy improved significantly on the post-test, as would be expected at the end of a course of instruction. During the formal intervention, the students were exposed to constant grammatical practice and, as a consequence, their error rate improved over time. However, their achievement was lower than the experimental group when both approaches, - the text-based approach and the performance-based approach -, were taken together.

Learners' grammatical accuracy in the experimental group did not improve significantly on the mid-test, after the implementation of the text-based instruction, but it did improve on the post-test at the end of the period of performance-based instruction. It was expected that grammatical accuracy would improve more through the text-based approach and it was therefore somewhat surprising to find that students did not improve their accuracy through the use of texts, a phase in which grammar was still taught explicitly and the focus was mostly on correct structures, but learners' accuracy improved more through performance as the means showed. This association might be explained in the following ways: firstly, the learners' accuracy might have improved more in the second phase due to the repetition that occurred in the numerous phases of the rehearsals. This offered learners the opportunity to pay attention to different features of the discourse, amongst them the syntactical, morphological and lexical errors, as the focus was on "getting it right", so as to make themselves understood both by the audience formed by peers during rehearsals and by the other actors in order to get the appropriate lines delivered back. Another reason behind the higher improvement in learners' global accuracy may be offered by peer-correction, which prompted awareness of errors and provided the necessary corrections. They had multiple chances to correct their erroneous grammar, as the more times a grammatical error is produced, the more opportunities there are for learners to notice it.

Secondly, another explanation may lie in the fact that a performance-based approach creates a constant need for interaction between learners to help them achieve a common goal in a purposeful and meaningful context, where learners used language together while undertaking

cultural and linguistic analyses, or when working on production-related activities such as creating costumes, props, etc. In this sense, the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis (Swain 1985) is relevant. In the process of interaction when a learner has received some negative input, the learner is pushed to use alternate means to convey his or her message. Thus, the process of achieving Comprehensible Output leads to a more accurate production of the foreign language (1985: 248). Working on the performance gave students opportunities not only to internalize and produce correct structures but also to communicate meaningfully. Learners were not instructed to focus on any specific aspect of their language use during this phase and they were rarely corrected. However, they became more aware of their mistakes over time and started correcting themselves. In other words, they became aware of their errors instead of just producing the language unconsciously. This phenomenon was also noticed when learners increased the proportion of self-repairs on the mid-test with a trade-off in fluency measure. Similar results have been found in studies by Miccoli (2003), Ryan-Scheutz & Colangelo (2004) and Marini-Maio (2010).

In the performance-based phase, the students did not learn all their lines by heart but they actively participated in all the activities required for the preparation of the production. They memorised lines in the class, performed repeatedly in front of their peers, discussed critically and reflected on how they could improve their performance. Furthermore, they engaged with their character's motivation and thoughts and they discussed the preparation of costumes, props and music, which should have increased their level of attention to the accuracy of their linguistic output.

#### **5.1.2.2 Pronunciation accuracy**

The learners' pronunciation in the control group did not improve significantly on the post-test but the experimental group achieved a highly statistically significant improvement after the performance-based instruction when both approaches were taken together. However, within the experimental group, despite a slight improvement after the text-based approach was implemented, a significant result was obtained only for the performance based-approach.

It is unsurprising that the learners' pronunciation in the experimental group improved significantly through performance compared with teaching through the texts. It may seem logical since, once again, the rehearsal phase necessarily required and forced learners to practise speaking more than in the texts phase and it also required them to rehearse their pronunciation and to experiment with pitch, volume and intonation patterns. Firstly, they had to repeat the same words or sentences several times in order to memorise their dialogue. Secondly, they had to pay attention to accuracy of pronunciation in particular, in order to make themselves understood both by the audience and by the other peer-actors who needed to deliver the appropriate lines for their response. Similarly, as in the case of global accuracy, peer corrections, might have played an important role in developing learners' pronunciation as multiple repetitions also provide more opportunities for the other "actor" to prompt awareness of pronunciation errors and to provide the necessary correction. Learners were more motivated to speak as accurately as possible, as they knew the focus was also on the way they delivered the lines: ideally with the correct pronunciation, tone of voice, pace and gestures.

The performance offered a safe atmosphere in which the learners could take risk regardless of the danger of mispronunciation and, as a consequence, their pronunciation skills improved. Thus, the performance provided a useful setting for learners to practise their pronunciation in an effective way. The improvement in pronunciation accuracy is in line with findings from previous studies (Dodson 2002, Miccoli 2003, Jàrfàs 2008, Ryan-Scheutz & Colangelo 2004, Ronke 2005, Gill 2013), confirming the effectiveness of the performance based-approach, and in particular, of memorisation and the rehearsal stage in this specific area of language learning.

### **5.1.3 Fluency**

An important point to be raised at the outset is that, unlike the accuracy and complexity constructs, only the story-retelling was used for the analyses of fluency. However, in order to build up a more comprehensive picture, syntactic complexity, MLAS and global accuracy were additionally calculated for the story-retelling task for the purposes of contrasting and

comparing the results. As expected, the findings showed that the students who had learned English through drama-based approaches performed significantly better on all five measures of fluency - speed fluency, repairs fluency, MLR, breakdown fluency and phonation time ratio - at the end of their period of instruction. A striking finding is that drama-based approaches almost doubled the students' fluency scores on all the measures analysed in this study compared to formal instruction over the course of the two terms of teaching, confirming the hypothesis advanced in the literature. Yet, despite a slight linear improvement over time, the control group did not register any significant scores for any of the aforementioned constructs of fluency, whereas the learners in the experimental group delivered their speech with greater easiness, higher eloquence and smoothness. This result is not surprising since the drama-based approach is mainly used in language teaching to promote students' fluency rather than accuracy or complexity. In this case, the use of drama clearly confirmed its potential for activity and receptivity, leading to the acquisition of fluent interaction in the target language (Wessels, 1987), since it provided learners with multiple opportunities to practice speaking through meaningful interaction. Taken as a whole, the students' fluency increased as a result of taking a risk through participating in drama games, discussions and debates. In the performance-based approach, the collaborative and experiential nature of the project and the meaningful context provided helped learners to shed their inhibitions and to gain confidence in using the target language with the expected result that they started processing more language in a shorter period of time, with fewer pauses and repairs. Repeating language in memorisation and rehearsals could have also been beneficial in this sense. Galante & Thompson (2016) recently conducted a study in which they employed drama-based techniques and showed that this type of instruction, which is more communicative in nature, can positively affect oral L2 fluency in particular. Repeating the same classroom task several times has previously been shown to lead to more fluent speech within the context of the task itself (e.g. Nation, 1989). However, Galante & Thompson (2016) assert that the drama techniques employed in their study appear to help learners develop strategies that are generalizable to a variety of novel speaking tasks.

Nonetheless, within the experimental group, not all facets of fluency were affected to the same degree by the two types of approaches and the results showed differential effects for the



various aspects of fluency. The learners performed significantly better on breakdown fluency after the period of teaching through texts, whilst significant results were obtained on speed fluency after the period of teaching through performance and no significant results were registered for MLR and repairs fluency on either type of drama-based instruction. Instead, both approaches increased significantly the phonation time ratio. As previously mentioned, researchers have shown that the types of tasks used can also affect the measures of fluency in a different way (De Jong 2012). For example, a narrative monologic task has been shown to increase accuracy and complexity at the expense of fluency (Skehan & Foster 1997, Skehan 2009, Ferrari 2012). Witton & Davies 2014 showed that performance in a dialogue was constantly more fluent than that in monologues with higher speed rates, less pausing and fewer repair words as “being the key characteristics of dialogic performance” (Tavakoli 2016: 136). According to Robinson’s Cognition Hypothesis (2001), when cognitive demands are increased, second language speakers’ attention is heightened, and it appears that complex tasks are performed less fluently than simple tasks (Gilabert 2005, 2007a). Based on this assumption future research could be oriented towards a more thorough investigation of the way in which the text-based approach and the performance-based approach affect students’ fluency by including the two remaining dialogic tasks, namely the OPI and the guided role-play in the analyses. It is expected that learners’ levels of fluency in the target language would increase when the three tasks are combined, and hence, there remains a deficit in the research which will be addressed in Chapter 6 (see Section 6.6).

#### **5.1.3.1 Breakdown fluency**

Breakdown fluency is related to the extent to which “the learner is confident that what has been stored is reliable” (Towell 2012: 55). Both approaches gave learners abundant opportunities to speak. However, when comparing the findings obtained from the two types of approaches within the experimental group, the significant result was registered on the text-based instruction phase which took place in the first part of the study, on a temporal line, whilst on the performance-based instruction which followed the text-based one, the score was not significant, which is contrary to the scores obtained for speed fluency. One explanation may be offered by the fact that the dramatic games in which learners actively participated,

and the continuous collaborative discussions about the texts in pair or groups, as well as the in-class debates kindled by their engagement with the subtext, might have led to improved levels of confidence. The result was that the students started to use the target language with greater ease, pausing less and for shorter periods of time. In the texts phase, the students were rarely corrected unlike in the performance phase, which might have boosted their self-confidence by making them less self-conscious about errors. In fact, the accuracy was not significant in this phase and it appears that the learners paid more attention to delivering the discourse at a faster pace. The students not only learned more of the language and became more capable of processing it, but they became more confident in delivering their speech at a faster pace and simultaneously being able to pause less.

By contrast, on the performance-based phase, the participants were more conscious of the need to speak correctly when memorizing their script. When rehearsing, they were constantly corrected by their peers and this probably made them more aware of their mistakes, so that in the final test, they paused for longer in order to plan their discourse more carefully. In fact, the participants' accuracy improvement was much greater after this phase. A longer planning period can be also suggested by the fact that the learners increased their speed fluency significantly, that is to say, the density and rate of speech. As Towel (2012: 55-56) points out, "whilst the outward manifestation of fluency will be revealed in oral (phonological) output, the underlying process and mechanism must relate to the manner in which linguistic information has been stored and can be recalled from memory system". When a student memorises the script, perhaps by speaking, they pay attention only to remembering the script. The learner does not generate the language as they would in the usual manner of processing speech in real production (Levelt 1989). However, the text-based approach did not involve any memorization but instead the language was processed in a natural way. Additionally, the language used was more complex, and therefore it may be that students focused their attention more on the vocabulary and lexis used and they took more care over the planning of the discourse and retrieving the information. This resulted in longer pauses on the performance-based approach compared to the text-based form of instruction. It may also be that the trade-off hypothesis (Skehan 2009), is proved here, showing that the learners' greater

ambition, realized in greater complexity, served to restrict gains in fluency and, in particular, in breakdown fluency on the performance-based approach.

### **5.1.3.2 Speed fluency**

Speed fluency is a measure of the rate and density of delivery (Tavakoli & Skehan 2005) and is “reliant on procedures for storage and recall” (Towell 2012: 55). The results of this study showed that students in the experimental group did not increase their speed fluency through the text-based instruction approach, and a significant result was obtained only on the performance-based approach, at the end of the entire period of instruction. One possible explanation is that the performance-based approach created the opportunity for learning the language by doing, enabling the students to store the linguistic information in a more memorable way, thus facilitating its recall when needed. Another reason may be that the performance offered the chance for an improved sense of confidence in the learners’ ability to learn the target language through the various phases of rehearsals. It appears that performance proved useful in helping students to overcome their shyness when delivering their message. They were less intimidated by the prospect of making mistakes, a fact which probably led to a higher level of language processing. A further explanation may be that the performance-based approach, due to its collaborative and interactive nature through the numerous phases of rehearsals and the time spent on discussion of technical elements in the preparation for the final show, offered numerous opportunities for constant meaningful interaction and this may have significantly incremented the rate of delivery and the density of speech. Finally, practice effect may be another cause because at this point students have already practised their speaking more thoroughly. Therefore, it is not surprising that the learners’ speed in the experimental group improved significantly through performance unlike that with the teaching through texts. By engaging in warm-ups, theatrical physical exercises and corporeal expression, or spontaneous participation in in-class discussion, problem solving and debates, students participated in constructive informal interactions in the target language. The dynamic created in the class through constant practice might have increased their level of ease and comfort in the target language which resulted in a higher rate and density of delivery. Moreover, a significant improvement in syntactic complexity and MLAS

was also attained in the performance-based approach phase which suggests that learners might have become more adept at manipulating more complex language with a higher rapidity as reflected in the increase in speed fluency. It is evident that learners contemporaneously acquired both knowledge of more complex syntax and the ability to use the language more quickly.

### **5.1.3.3 Repairs fluency**

According to Towell (2012: 55) repairs are “related to the extent to which the learner has also created procedures which can be brought into operation to repair the situation when communication breakdown occurs, for whatever reason”. They are related to measures of linguistic accuracy (Gilabert 2007a) since they denote both attention to form and an attempt at being accurate. Findings in the present study showed that, over time, learners in the experimental group tended to repeat themselves less and to make fewer self-corrections and reformulations, which means that they processed the information in the target language much more accurately and rapidly at the same time. However, the fact that neither of the approaches separately led to a significant improvement over time can be explained as follows: firstly, tasks that are more cognitively demanding lead to more repairs (De Jong 2012); thus, the monologic complex task used to measure fluency might be responsible for this lack of improvement. Secondly, it may be that the period of time allocated for instruction was insufficient for both types of drama-based approach alone, to allow students to attain a significant level of improvement regarding repairs. Lastly, as far as the performance-based approach is concerned, it could also be the case that a high improvement in global accuracy and in both measures of complexity did not allow significant progress to be made towards repairs fluency.

Based on previous findings (Ferrari 2012: 291) monologic tasks, like the story-retelling used in this study, elicit longer and more syntactically complex utterances compared to interactive tasks. Correspondingly, learners are likely to produce more pauses and hesitations in this type of task as they search for complex structures, while they tend to pause and hesitate less in the interactive type. Ferrari (2012) also found that in the case of individuals who use many repetitions and filled pauses, those pauses will generally be shorter.

#### 5.1.3.4 Mean Length of Run (MLR)

As far as MLR is concerned, within the experimental group the findings were similar to those regarding repair fluency. Despite the fact that the students started processing longer units within the same run as shown by the means and improved linearly, there was no significant result registered for either type of drama-based instruction. Towell (2012: 121) argues that “*a priori* an increased MLR indicates that the speaker is able to process more language within a single time span and could therefore indicate a greater proceduralization of knowledge”. More specifically, it may indicate that the learner has created productions in the formulator, which “allow(s) swifter accesses to all the syntax and the lexis which the learner controls” (*ibid*: 121). He also suggests that runs of greater length may also indicate that the learner has created formulaic language, probably stored in the lexicon, which allows rapid access to standard phrases. Given that the students had time to prepare the discourse before delivering it in the testing phase, it could also be argued that the increased MLR may be due to the planning condition and to the learners having spent time planning the utterance before delivery (Towell, 2002). However, if the instruction period for both types of drama-based approaches was extended, this would probably allow students to attain a significant level for MLR.

#### 5.1.3.5 Phonation time ratio

Phonation time ratio gives an overall view of whether or not more time was devoted to pausing and speed delivery than other facets of fluency and thus, to overall fluidity of speech. In this study, the result for phonation time ratio was found to be significant after both types of approaches; however, the means showed that there was a slightly higher improvement through the text-based approach within the experimental group than through the performance-based approach. An increase in the phonation time ratio expressed as an amount of time devoted to speaking after the text-based instruction, showed that the learners learned to store, access and produce more speech more quickly. It is likely that discussion about the texts, and the games and various activities boosted students’ confidence in expressing themselves with greater rapidity in the target language. The learners also gained in the ease

with which they manipulated more complex and accurate language after this phase, as showed by the means although they did not score highly significantly on syntactic complexity, MLAS or global accuracy on story re-telling. Another explanation may be that the learners had some time for planning the narration which might have increased significantly their phonation time ratio. Research into tasks has shown that pre-task planning helps learners to produce language that is more fluent and more complex when they perform a task (Yuan & Ellis 2003). It seems that the performance-based approach was slightly more effective in promoting more complex and more accurate language than the performance-based approach along with increased fluency in terms of speed but not in terms of pauses (breakdown fluency). After the performance phase, probably due to numerousness phases of rehearsals where the focus was mostly on accuracy, learners might have become more conscious about paying attention to the correctness of the discourse, pausing for longer to plan the discourse, which resulted in a significant improvement on both measures of complexity, in their accuracy, speed and phonation time ratio.

## **5.2 Discussion of the results for R03**

The main themes that emerged from the qualitative results will be discussed with reference to the Literature Review (Chapter 2) and to the quantitative results, comparing and contrasting with existing studies which deals with similar concepts. One of the goals of the study was to identify the learners' attitudes towards the two methods, as stated in RQ3. As shown in the Results section (Chapter 4), the reasons learners enjoyed the two types of drama-based approaches were mostly closely connected with the reasons why they felt it to be useful, whilst the very few reasons they gave for not enjoying some of the activities were because they found them problematic or did not consider them useful. Thus, many of these reasons are examined in the following subsections without distinguishing between enjoyment and usefulness, as they are inextricably interconnected.

## **5.2.1 Discussion of the qualitative results (interviews and questionnaires)**

### **5.2.1.1 Novelty effect**

From the results of the two approaches, it is apparent that learners show a tendency to immensely appreciate the new learning experience. The novelty effect associated with these two types of approaches was highly valued by the students and it was mentioned throughout the interviews and questionnaires as a source of enjoyment and motivation. The students perceived these approaches as being useful for language improvement but not without some problems or difficulties. All learners were highly enthusiastic about the new methods. They admitted that the drama-based English class was new to them and different from their previous classes. Nonetheless, they immensely enjoyed the new experience. They had been used to a teacher-centred approach, drills and grammar exercises with very few opportunities for collaborative and active ways of learning, since they had started learning English, which meant they also had limited opportunities to practise their speaking skills. Therefore, working with authentic material in an active, playful and interactive way in the English classroom was strongly felt by learners to be a unique and fresh experience.

As discussed in the Literature Review, the proponents of teaching through authentic texts (Lazar 1993, Short 1996, Paran 2006, Carroli 2008) believe that students will be more motivated to learn using such texts. In fact, authentic dramatic scripts used during both phases of learning were very much appreciated for various reasons. Firstly, learners enjoyed the content of the dramatic scripts as they felt they were learning new things and building knowledge about a different culture, along with language which could be applied to real-life situations. This boosted their interest and encouraged active participation. Students also appreciated the fact that such texts shed light on differences in roles and status. In fact, as Fleming (2006) suggests, it is necessary to encourage the students to be aware of the way in which our in-built views of our roles and those of others are defined and clarified through language in order to avoid teaching language in a vacuum. In real-life language use, when we talk to people, we need to be aware of their role in relation to ourselves: learners need to know not only the grammatical rules and how to form sentences but also to know when,

where and with whom they should use these sentences in a speech community and how to vary sentences according to the social context (Hymes 1971).

In general, the novelty effect did not seem to diminish as the weeks went by. Learners' level of excitement remained constant throughout the whole text-based approach phase, perhaps because they were faced with different stories and situations, appropriate and varied dramatic games and a variety of interesting and new activities. The debates carried out on the play-text extracts provided an opportunity for independent thinking, which they had been not accustomed to until that point and students were pushed to use language as a means of expressing their ideas and offering their views. Yet, the most appreciated element of novelty were the dramatic games in which learners actively took part because they felt that they were learning language in a purposeful way, and somehow unconsciously, which made it seem effortless. Indeed, as suggested by drama games proponents (Maley & Duff 2003, Almond 2005, Fleming 2006, Schewe 2013) these games encourage students to feel less self-conscious about speaking and bring an emotional connection to words that would otherwise be hard to garner in more traditional classroom activities. As a negative critique to the text-based phase, only one student criticised the text-based phase on the grounds that working with play scripts alone became rather repetitive because they were only presented with one literary genre, namely dramatic texts. For the sake of variety, learners would probably have liked to work with others literary genres such as poems or prose as well.

With regard to the performance-based approach, learners were simultaneously excited and anxious about it long before the classes started. They did not have any theatre-making experience and they were eager to discover what new ideas and activities they would be presented with in future lessons. Learners mentioned that engaging in warm-up exercises and activities in which they took part wholeheartedly, along with the experience of understanding how it felt to put themselves in somebody else's shoes when performing their role(s), offered a unique opportunity for enjoyment and the improvement of their linguistic skills. In addition, they mentioned that the warm-up exercises made them feel more relaxed and helped them to focus on the lesson. Students tended to become more deeply involved as the two approaches offered a new dimension to language learning through laughter and fun, and all



the students explicitly stated that the element of novelty increased their motivation and desire to learn because it made the experience more meaningful.

Nonetheless, the nature of a performance-based approach meant that the issues of acting and memorization of lines were repeatedly raised both in the interviews and in the open questions on the questionnaire as constituting a novel and interesting approach to language learning, but not without difficulties. Taking on roles in the production of a play and rehearsing scenes in front of their peers who offered constructive criticism were largely very enjoyable experiences for the learners, especially in the early stages of preparing for a performance. These were described as very useful activities for improving their language skills. Students were simultaneously intrigued and anxious long before the performance-based phase started. In the preparation for the stage production, students had to deal mostly with the rehearsals of their scenes, but even when they became accustomed to such a routine the novelty effect didn't appear to fade for the majority of them. Most of the learners put considerable effort into the memorization of their lines and rehearsed every week. Far from getting bored, the majority of the learners found that rehearsing and preparing props remained very enjoyable, especially because these activities boosted their confidence as they felt their level of language improved. Only one learner mentioned that she began to perceive this process tedious due to its repetitive nature, but at the same time it was not found to be too excessive. Even more so, as they began to get used to playing a character, being in somebody else's shoes and performing in front of their classmates, they also started deliberately exaggerating their roles in order to make the situations more interesting, or more dramatic or humorous. In his study regarding the effects of drama on English oral skills, Gill (2014) also found that students learning through drama exhibited more animated paralanguage and their voices become more expressive.

However, the novel way of learning was also cited as the cause of slight difficulties and problems, especially for those students with a lower level of language proficiency. Firstly, the language used in the authentic texts meant they were initially perceived as quite challenging by lower/intermediate level learners who mentioned that they did not fully understand the narration at first glance because it contained too many unfamiliar words. Yet,

gradually, as the weeks went by, they started to understand more and more and then they were delighted to be able to increasingly enjoy such texts. Secondly, learning grammar in an inductive way using such texts was also perceived as quite difficult by the same lower-intermediate level students who had largely been used to explicit explanation of the grammatical rules and their application to drills prior to that point. Interestingly, they stated they would still prefer a deductive approach to teaching grammar and they were pleased to have homework which included fill-in the gap exercises, which I continued to set as homework from time to time during this phase. These findings largely suggest that, depending on the learning situation and students' learning strategies, deductive approaches should not necessarily be excluded as when combined with other types of exercises they can still be a valuable activity for language learning.

Another element of novelty which posed some initial challenges for the low-level proficiency students was the fact that the classes were conducted mostly or exclusively in English which seemed to hinder their full understanding of what was happening in the story. The language employed in the authentic texts, coupled with the classes being conducted mainly in English, was a new experience that was initially perceived as difficult by learners with a lower level of language proficiency, compared to the more traditional type of teaching that the students had been used to until that point. However, the learners grew to appreciate the linguistic immersion because they could benefit from it, and they explicitly stated that, as the time passed by, they became accustomed to the language of the authentic texts and their understanding increased, to the extent that classes conducted in English were no longer a problem in the performance-based approach.

Regarding the use of acting and memorization in the performance-based approach, not all of the learners were positive about these aspects since this was their first attempt at a full-scale performance process. A couple of students perceived memorization as being difficult, whilst most of them thought it was the least enjoyable part of the whole process of learning. In addition, they were pressed for time due to their upcoming final exams and so they did not learn all their lines by heart. In fact, some students read their part from a script whilst rehearsing instead of reciting it by heart, to the frustration of some of their classmates. On the

other hand, although acting made the shy students feel uncomfortable to start with, as time went by, most of them managed to overcome their shyness because they had a lot of fun and because they perceived that through acting they could gain linguistic benefits. Numerous previous studies have confirmed that by taking on roles in a performance, initial inhibitions are broken down and students' self-esteem increased (Bourke 1993, Liu 2002, Dodson 2002, Jàrfàs 2008, Aden 2010, Sirisrimangkorn & Suwanthep 2013 to name but a few). Additionally, memorizing lines and subsequently acting were such novel activities for the learners that some of them reported feeling insufficiently prepared for being good actors. Although the process oriented-approach put emphasis on the process of learning the language rather than on being a good actor, they further stressed that if they had previously been more accustomed to theatre-making they could have performed better, a finding that underlines the strong appeal of such activities and the extent to which they engaged the learners. Furthermore, some students also regretted not getting the opportunity to perform in front of an audience because of the lack of time to fully prepare. As previously mentioned, one of the reasons for not staging the performance was that students did not have enough time to memorize their lines adequately and this was cited as a negative issue. In fact, some learners pointed out that if they had had more time to practise their part they could have performed the play to an audience. Nonetheless, through such activities, they greatly improved their complexity, accuracy and fluency as the students themselves perceived and as shown by the quantitative results of this study.

#### **5.2.1.2 Interactive and cooperative learning**

One of the distinctive features of drama-based approaches is the cooperation and interaction with others that it involves. Learners talked about and described issues concerning these aspects as enjoyable or not enjoyable, and gave reasons why they thought these activities were useful or not useful, or in some cases problematic. Qualitative findings retrieved from the students' interviews and questionnaires showed that they immensely enjoyed activities done either in pairs or as a group because they found them more lively, motivating, purposeful and meaningful, and consequently they were able to improve their level of language to a greater extent.

As discussed in the Literature Review many proponents of the drama method in the language classroom believe that students tend to become more involved and, in this way, they also get more opportunities to experiment with the language than would be the case in a traditional class arrangement. As Vygotsky's (1987) socio-cultural theory regarding the importance of interaction in L2 acquisition asserts, students learn best when they work with other people, that is, when they engage in meaningful interaction with others. Indisputably, one of the characteristic features of the employment of drama in language learning is that it is collaborative and mutually supportive. Fleming (2006) points out that drama promotes a social activity, and therefore, it can only operate through active cooperation. Overall, learners regarded the dramatic approaches as lively, fresh and interesting: not only did they greatly enjoy taking part in the drama games activities and warm-up exercises and had a lot of fun

In the text-based approach, most of the learners found it very enjoyable working, confronting and discussing the content of the authentic scripts with other people, as well as sharing ideas and doing activities, which they also found highly motivating. Students repeatedly reported that working in pairs or in small groups improved the class atmosphere and provided greater opportunities to use the language. All of them were willing to take part wholeheartedly in the dramatic activities and games, which they found stimulating and fun, since they did not always know what to expect. Also, when faced with the challenge of expressing themselves verbally or non-verbally in the dramatic exercises, learners become skilled in observing and learning from their classmates' behaviour. The students enjoyed working collaboratively because, apart from creating a relaxed atmosphere, it made them more attentive to each other's performance. Pair-work and group-work learning necessarily entail interaction in the classroom, as well as genuine language input in achieving meaningful communication. In the text-based approach, the students appreciated that they could use the target language when negotiating the meaning of the texts. Together with the benefit of talking to people, learners expressed the opinion that this approach to learning was effective for enabling them to acquire English more naturally and for improving their speaking skills.

In the performance-based approach, the findings revealed that students greatly enjoyed working together, and this was rarely mentioned as being problematic and never as a negative

experience. This phase called for a higher degree of cooperation and interaction than the text-based approach, which is paramount for achieving the common goal of putting on a performance, and which students deemed very useful for improving their language skills. As previously mentioned in the Literature Review, a performance-based approach stresses the “ensemble-like” nature of the classroom and emphasizes cooperation. The literature suggests that most of the language acquired during a drama project will stem from the preparation and discussions of the production (Wessels 1987). Learners found the rehearsals and problem-solving activities very useful because they engaged them in meaningful interaction which unquestionably motivated them more: they were a single group who took part in the decision-making process by sharing information and helping each other, which appear to be highly conducive to the enhancement of their receptive and productive skills. In line with previous studies (Jarfàs 2008, Lutzker 2007, Miccoli 2003), the findings of this study which emerged from the learners’ interviews revealed that cooperative learning promoted the positive group dynamics essential for successful learning and there is no doubt that, a play production approach permitted a higher level of student participation than conventional language learning exercises. Weaker students had the opportunity to actively take part, and they also had the chance to be helped by the more proficient or creative students, as well as offering their help to others as the project advanced, something which certainly increased their self-esteem and motivation. As Jarfàs (2008: 50) points out “when cooperative learning occurs, students get just the input they need from their peers, which truly helps them to achieve, which gives them safety and confidence and a sense of motivation”.

Ronke (2005) found that rehearsals, in particular, create a genuine need for intensive and longer-lasting-interaction. Students tend to be highly motivated to work together when learning their lines, creating scenery and costumes, or putting on make-up, in order to achieve their goal of producing a good quality performance. In this sense, it is therefore unsurprising that, memorizing lines, which was often cited as a not very pleasurable activity in itself, especially when done individually at home, and not always entirely successfully, was found to be a pleasant and amusing activity when practised with the whole class through suitable group activities and games. Some of the learners also commented that when

activities were done together, in an interactive way, it made them laugh which also helped to reduce their anxiety.

Another insight to emerge from the data was that dramatic activities promoted social interaction and students learned about cultural differences, by interacting in the culture of the language. Students appreciated being able to explore, experiment and acquire an understanding of the target culture, both from analyzing the script together with other peers and particularly from the process of interaction with others when acting. What is more, they learned a lot from other people's behaviour especially during rehearsals. Some of the students mentioned that they found it immensely useful to be given the chance to stand in front of the group and observe themselves as they played different roles and tried out various forms of behaviour from which they learned about culture and language at the same time. They practised their lines together and gave each other language support and acting advice, and undoubtedly, these activities led to increased fluency and accuracy.

Cooperative learning and interaction are key aspects of acquiring communicative competence. Interaction involves understanding what other people are saying and the ideas they are expressing, which should lead to oral skill growth. In fact, students reported that by interacting with others they improved their speaking skills because they made a conscious effort to listen and to speak as accurately as possible, both from a grammatical and a pronunciation point of view, so as to be able to reply effectively and make themselves understood. In addition, they frequently reported that, in the process of interaction, they learned vocabulary and expressions used by other people or by their interlocutors in the games or the decision-making processes. Particularly, in relation to the scenes acted out in class, the learners are likely to have retrieved a wide range of vocabulary and expressions repeatedly uttered by the other student actors. Clearly, they needed to understand what their classmates were saying so they could deliver the appropriate lines in response. In addition, some students brought up different and also sometimes unexpected ideas. As they continued to participate in the activities, learners not only acquired language, but they also practised their pronunciation and accent by repeating the lines and correcting each other, all of which proved to have a positive effect, as results for RQ1 revealed (see Section 4.1). Byron (as cited

in FitzGibbon 1993: 272) points out that a large amount of commonly used vocabulary is informational, whereas in drama, most of the vocabulary will be expressive and interactional in mode. Hence, learners' language use becomes more varied, and "subjective responses and feelings may be articulated and shared on an interactional basis, whilst expressive language offers students more opportunities for abstract thinking and more complex language use than an informational one" (*ibid*: 272), which was the case for most of the class activities.

Problems and difficulties with uncooperative students were also raised in relation to the performance-based approach; yet, this was never the case with the text-based approach. Proponents of preparing a play as a full-scale project in language learning (Moody 2002, Marini-Maio 2010, Fonio 2010) warn that insufficient preparation on the part of some student actors would negatively affect both the process and the final product, if carried out in a compulsory curriculum; however, this would not be the case if such a project is implemented as an extracurricular activity in which students take part voluntarily and the level of motivation is very high. Everyone's commitment is crucial for the success of the final product. In fact, one student expressed feelings of frustration with uncooperative classmates during the rehearsal of their scenes, especially when the "actors" failed to learn their lines by heart and hindered the process of achieving the final product. Yet, most of the students took the production of the play very seriously, learning their lines assiduously and there were only a very few who, despite participating actively in the class rehearsals by reading their script and trying to memorize their lines because it was fun, failed to commit to the high degree of dedication required for such projects. These learners may have regarded the play production more as a way of learning the language in an amusing, exciting way, whilst those who were more committed would have liked them to take it more seriously, reporting the above as a negative issue. As Carson (2012: 56) rightly points out, much of what is described above regarding students' experience of group work aligns with the "real-world" reality of collaborative activities which "at times is full of frustration, with difficulties in assigning roles and activities, but also enjoyable and enabling".

### **5.2.1.3 Active, kinaesthetic and playful way of learning**

One of the most intriguing themes of the present study was constituted by the active, playful and kinaesthetic way of learning. Most learners incorporated “active participation” and “learning by doing” in their reasons why they greatly enjoyed the two types of approaches, as they thought that they learned more easily and faster, and these factors were only raised sporadically as a problem. In fact, advocates of drama in language teaching accept that drama, by its very nature, keeps learners actively engaged. Undoubtedly, in the safe environment which drama classes create, learners normally choose to participate instead of trying to escape or avoid situations, especially when they feel they can benefit linguistically. Dramatic exercises also promote interaction between students and the group dynamics encourage learners to get involved, generally enabling learners to seem willing to participate actively (Maley & Duff 1984, Sam 1990, Almond 2005), all of which maximise speaking opportunities. The findings of this study revealed that learners enjoyed being active participants in the activities as they were somewhat different from the type of teaching they had been used to up until that point. They sensed it was useful because it engaged not only the mind, but also the body and emotions, making the process of learning more interesting and motivating. As appraised from the literature, learning happens not only at a cognitive level but also on the emotional and physical level since the body and emotions are part of the learning process and all levels are connected to some extent. Physical activity combined with emotional involvement can lead to improved retention of language because through the action, which dramatic games and warm-up exercises involve, students satisfy their body’s need for movement, activate their brain and relieve stress so that learning can take place (Ronke 2005, Sambanis 2013). Certainly, most of the learners asserted that they learned more and retained language better by actively participating in the lessons instead of merely being passive receivers. In essence, drama results in increased oral output because it is kinaesthetic experience and activity-oriented, which is more motivating than a non-drama-based teaching methodology (Gill 2013).

The qualitative findings from this research showed that, more often than not, learners were happy to take part in the dramatic games and warm-up exercises with a very positive attitude,



which in turn, helped to stimulate their oral skills. In the text-based approach, the dramatic games created opportunities for both active participation and physical involvement. The students often found games exciting and fun as the students did not always know what to expect. These unexpected situations made the process of learning more engaging and interesting for them. In fact, as pointed out in the review of the literature (see Section 2.2.), physical and active learning increase students' motivation to learn and, most of the learners admitted that because dramatic games kept them active, they helped to dispel the boredom that they would usually feel in the more traditional classroom setting.

As reported in the literature, one of the most significant aspects of teaching through drama is “the unconscious learning in a natural, uncontrived manner” (Wessel, 1987: 13). By constant interaction with the texts and through dynamic discussions between peers in the target language, a kind of acquisition takes place, as opposed to conscious learning (Via 1972, Wessel 1987, Bourke 1993). In view of that, in both approaches, when working on texts or when preparing the technical elements of a play, learners frequently pointed out that they learned language very easily, without too much effort, because they were more concerned with presenting their ideas rather than with the grammatical way in which they were presenting them. They felt that this way of learning was more natural and promoted both learning and acquisition because the learners practised more than just the core vocabulary and generated natural discussions amongst themselves. The same perceived ease of learning was mentioned by most of the students who very willingly took part in the dramatic games in a lighthearted atmosphere which helped to overcome the affective filter, allowing them “to become more playful, spontaneous and responsive in the new language” (Ronke 2005). Answers retrieved from the students' interviews showed that due to their perceptions of *playfulness*, they learned a large amount of language without even realizing. Most importantly, drama games fostered in the students a need to speak and it has been demonstrated that the more the students get the chance to practise the language in combination with physical actions “the more fluently, freely and naturally they will speak and language and movement will happen more subconsciously” (Ronke 2005: 124). In fact, participants in the present study reported that they were amazed by how easily and unconsciously they learned the target language because they were not concentrating

exclusively on the language but on the situation, and therefore, they learned somehow unconsciously, in a natural and uncontrived manner.

It is widely agreed that in the drama method emphasis is placed not only on verbal but also on non-verbal expressions, promoting active rather than passive learning. In this regard, students mentioned that, faced with the challenge of expressing themselves verbally and non-verbally, they became more skilled in observing and learning from other learners' behaviour, either when they were participating in dramatic games in the text-based approach or from the rehearsals in the performance-based approach. New vocabulary presented in the drama framework has the advantage of being acted out, thus providing students with a powerful mental picture of the words and their meaning that has been experienced visually, aurally, and kinaesthetically. Through a drama activity new words are defined and subsequently reinforced, and thus, students "have concrete examples in multiple modalities to complete their understanding of the lexical item" (McMaster 1998: 578).

Undeniably, rehearsing and acting in a play is a physical activity *par excellence*. The learners found that taking on roles in the production of the play and repeatedly performing in front of their peers, accompanying their speech with movements and suitable gestures in order to express their meaning most appropriately, helped them to retain vocabulary and expressions more easily. As opposed to classrooms where students generally sit at desks, in a drama rehearsal they are expected to stand up and move about in a largely empty space, and thus, as Lutzker (2007) asserts, it is apparent that, both psychologically and physiologically, the degree of physical presence and levels of energy which a rehearsal demands will necessarily be much higher than what is usually required in a traditional classroom. The learners also explicitly stated that being involved physically and emotionally in the process of learning made it more memorable for them: they remembered the language better not only because they put words into practice, accompanying them with gestures and body language, but also because they lived out that fictional reality. Learners felt stimulated by the fact that they were encouraged to use their imagination and express emotions, thereby training their emotional memory. In a performance framework, the learning and the use of grammar and vocabulary

is linked to the inner motivations of the characters in the play and thus, the language will be more easily understood, retained and remembered when necessary (Del Fattore-Olson 2010). As already acknowledged in the literature, Stanislavski (1961) theorizes that by remembering feelings that have been genuinely experienced in acting the character, the learner will express the language more easily and more spontaneously.

Given that effective communication is dependent on both verbal and non-verbal language, drama activities bring physical expression to the fore. In order to communicate with others, people need vocal and physical expression and acting usually involves motor functions, posture, mimicry, and gestures. In view of this, learners also revealed that, through acting out their roles in the play, they learned to use not only their verbal skills but their whole body as a means of expression, which also “broke down inhibitions and [allowed them to] experience themselves as a whole person more intensely” (Ronke 2005). The process of acting was also felt to be very beneficial because, by repeating their lines together with movement, the students felt they learned the correct pronunciation along with the intonation, emphasis, rhythm, and the means to express themselves in the target language, something which they considered equally important. Accompanying words and phrases with gestures not only makes them more memorable, but can also help learners to internalise the correct rhythm and intonation (Dubrac 2013, as cited in Giebert 2014). Some learners additionally mentioned that, through this process, the act of speech also becomes more real and believable.

Another factor greatly appreciated by the learners, which emerged from the data, was the cultural element of the language. Noticeably, language is a form of social action that is embedded in a special socio-cultural context and, when we talk to people, we usually move about and use some kind of facial expression, depending on whom we are addressing and what we are talking about. “Language has meaning by virtue of the fact that it is embedded in a wide cultural context” (Fleming 2006: 1), and drama raises cultural awareness by emphasising this connection between spoken language and body language. Some learners affirmed that they learned both language and absorbed culture not only from the contact with the authentic scripts but mostly by experiencing these themselves through the process of acting in the performance-based approach. Moreover, given that verbal and non-verbal

communication teach us about cultural differences and similarities with respect to forms of physical contact, emotional expression, eye contact, cultural beliefs, identities and values, many students mentioned that they also learned from other people's behaviour when acting out their role(s). They discovered that learning to function appropriately in the target culture is as important as knowing the words and linguistic structures. Consequently, the participants pointed out in their interviews that they noticed and learned to analyse and imitate culture specific-gestures or other non-verbal cultural behaviour through acting out such gestures in specific scenes, which was also much more real and impressive for them than having a word and its cultural context explained by the teacher. Indisputably, in drama exercises the learner is no longer an observer or a passive receptor of the language, but instead a mentally and emotionally engaged participant who experiences foreign language situations (Ronke 2005).

#### **5.2.1.4 Affective impact of the two approaches: motivating and building confidence**

The findings from the qualitative results showed that working within the framework of the two types of drama-based approaches was perceived as extremely enjoyable and motivating and mostly very useful for building students' self-confidence.

Firstly, students found it very motivating to work with authentic play texts in both approaches because they were instructive and constituted input for sharing knowledge; hence, they stimulated fresh thoughts, which created opportunities for speaking. The authentic play scripts aroused learners' interest in both types of approaches because they helped them to discover new things through the stories presented. The students also revealed that they felt they had learned the language somehow unconsciously. Caroli (2008) points out that working on authentic texts is a collective journey of discovery and discernment through negotiation of meaning, which can lead to learning and achievement. Learners were highly motivated to participate enthusiastically in discussions as the story told through the scripts aroused their curiosity and engaged their imagination, driving them to use linguistic means in order to share ideas and express their thoughts on what lay beneath the surface of the text to

uncover deeper meanings. Lazar (1993) asserts that the subtext in an authentic script sparks students' imaginations and gives rise to endless debates, thereby increasing the desire to learn more. In fact, learners pointed out that they were also more concerned with expressing their ideas and conveying their meaning, rather than formulating their sentences correctly. Grammar was not totally de-emphasized, but learning grammar in a context which promoted active discussions proved to be more meaningful than undertaking simple grammar exercises, as the majority of the students stated, and thus it was more motivating for them.

The literature reviewed on the use of drama demonstrated that taking part in drama activities breaks down inhibitions and helps students overcome their shyness, and therefore they feel more confident about their oral proficiency simply because they have plenty of opportunity for speaking and interacting in a meaningful context (Miccoli 2003, Collangelo 2004, Almond 2005, Fleming 2006, Wager *et al.* 2009, Ryan-Scheutz & Colangelo 2010). In this regard, there was a consensus among the learners that both types of approaches helped them to increase their self-confidence since they provided multiple opportunities for speaking in a safe learning environment, which generally made them less inhibited and embarrassed than in the classroom setting. However, due to the rehearsals and preparation of technical elements of the play, the performance-based approach was favoured over the text-based approach by the majority of the students. Nevertheless, the learners greatly valued having an unthreatening atmosphere in which they could talk without worrying unduly about making grammatical or vocabulary errors, and which enabled them to let their imaginations run free. A lack of confidence hinders learners from speaking and this might also be connected to a lack of opportunities for speaking. Indisputably, in both approaches, learners mostly oriented themselves towards the achievement of the communicative goal rather than focusing on language forms.

Accordingly, in the text-based approach, week by week, learners witnessed their self-confidence increasing through active participation in the classroom activities: they had to sit down in pairs or in groups to discuss their scripts knowledgeably and to take part in games. However, in this phase they did not draw on their self-confidence as much as in the performance-based approach. Taking on roles in the production of the play and acting out

various scenes in front of their peers called for greater courage than simply taking part in the games. The performance-based approach required learners to perform in front of their classmates, as well as to critically discuss the scene they acted out. Students deemed that they had to be as near perfect as possible, both from a linguistic and from an acting point of view. This required them to come out of their shells, and hence to build, develop or reinforce their linguistic and acting skills. The more introverted learners were initially nervous and experienced feelings of discomfort and embarrassment when acting, which made some participants reluctant because they were not accustomed to this way of learning a foreign language. After a few rehearsals and some practice, however, most learners seemed to get used to performing roles in front of their peers. They even went further by deliberately exaggerating their roles in order to make the experience more fun and, in so doing, created richer contexts, which is precisely one of the functions of using drama in language learning (Fleming 2006). This effect was also observed when students performed their role-plays in the post-test. Their motivation to learn was also increased as they reaped the linguistic benefits of constant “trial and error” in order to perfect their lines and get them right. Finally, their confidence developed throughout the course, starting from an initial level of passive resistance to speaking English clearly and loudly in front of others. Additionally, they stated that they gained greater confidence through the performance-based approach by interacting and collaborating with other people. Moreover, they had to solve various problems of a technical nature in order to stage the scene, which required more impromptu and unexpected issues to be dealt with through spontaneous collaboration. However, given that the performance-based approach followed the text-based approach, it might be that students felt more confident as, by this time, they had already practised their speaking skills to a greater extent.

Most students enjoyed being plunged into an artificial reality and pretending to be somebody else, which also increased their self-esteem. Playing roles is all about entering into a realistic situation and experimenting with the language and the culture which the fictional character and setting represents. When a situation closely resembles that which learners would encounter in real life it may be more enjoyable and motivating. Furthermore, they identified themselves with the role, and in some cases even felt that inhabiting a fictional character

gave them a form of protection, which could also have served as an impetus for speaking without fear and inhibition. As Giebert (2014: 141) observes, “the role of a fictional persona is often felt by learners to be a kind of protection and they seem to experience less embarrassment about making mistakes”. The study play was chosen on the basis that it was likely to meet learners’ needs and positively appeal to them. Students also realized that portraying a range of characters gave them the opportunity to speak in different ways, bringing the cultural element into play, and allowing them to experiment with all aspects of speaking, such as tone of voice, stress, intonation patterns, and pronunciation.

An intriguing finding from this study was that learners admitted to benefiting from a sense of having invested their own personality in the activity, because they enjoyed doing it, and so they felt a sense of self-worth on successful completion of the activity. As Carlin (2008) points out, motivation in drama classes comes from personal involvement rather than from satisfaction at having successfully carried out the teacher’s instructions. Also, learners repeatedly mentioned that their self-confidence improved because they had been given the opportunity to speak.

#### **5.2.1.5 Affective negative impact**

Only a few affective negative attitudes towards the two approaches were expressed, and these by a limited number of students. Regarding the text-based approach, one of the learners mentioned that learning language exclusively through play scripts could be repetitive and thus not very exciting, whilst another student whose level of proficiency was lower than most of the others found it somewhat difficult and challenging. One of the students mentioned a lack of motivation because the self-standing extracts studied were not deemed interesting enough to arouse her curiosity. With regard to the performance-based approach, the negative aspects were mainly linked to issues associated with taking on roles and acting. The more introverted students found acting slightly threatening. Initially, they were too shy to act out roles and this issue was not linked to their level of proficiency. On the one hand, the problem emerged from students’ beliefs that they needed to possess good acting skills, although it was repeatedly emphasized that the purpose of the lessons was not to promote skillful acting but

to enhance their language skills through learning meaningfully by doing. On the other hand, some of the students also felt that the mere novelty of the activities prevented them from being 'bold' actors. Additionally, one of them declared that she was anxious at the thought of acting in public because she would feel embarrassed, and thus those students were somewhat relieved at not having to perform to a full audience, but only in front of their classmates. Even so, most of them admitted that they overcame their reticence, had a lot of fun and perceived great improvement in their oral language skills, especially through the rehearsals.

However, despite their initial shyness and the fact that the more timid students sometimes found inhabiting other characters demanding, they did not make an issue of it and still took on roles and did not give up, because they felt that doing so was beneficial for their linguistic achievement. Yet, although it was not cited as a problem, those more introverted students admitted that the text-based approach would suit them better than the performance-based approach because they found the simple act of moving around or being touched by another "actor" when the stage directions required, more challenging. Perhaps, as some of them pointed out, they were not yet accustomed to this new learning method and were initially afraid to expose themselves to a new situation. As outlined in the Literature Review, the full commitment of all participants is essential for the achievement of a full-scale performance. In fact, unlike in the text-based phase, in the preparation phase for the stage production, some learners also believed that having partners who participated fully and actively would contribute greatly to the success of the performance. If an "actor" had not learned his or her lines properly by heart, the more prepared students did not enjoy the activity as much, and felt frustrated. There were some complaints about their partner's laziness in failing to memorize lines, but no one mentioned their language proficiency as a problem. It appears that active participation was considered much more important than language proficiency at this stage and some of the learners felt discontented because they believed they could have done better if all their peers had put more effort into learning their lines. Some of them considered this to be one of the reasons why they failed to achieve the final product.



### 5.2.1.6 Chance to talk and improve

Being given multiple opportunities to talk, improve their L2 oral skills and then apply language to real life circumstances were the reasons why learners enjoyed the two types of approaches and felt they were useful. Only isolated aspects were reported as being not very pleasurable or challenging, but never as highly problematic. As it has been frequently mentioned, the students previously lacked opportunities to speak English in their usual language classes. Many advocates of using drama (Fleming 2006, Wesels 1987, Giebert 2014) contend that drama is unparalleled in providing an environment in which learners can talk safely. Dramatic activities allow for activity-centred immersion, which can give language learners optimum exposure to a target language because it creates a need to learn the language by placing more responsibility on the learner as opposed to the teacher. In this regard, Pietro (1987) claims that students who are not naturally talkative often appear more willing to join in the discourse when they realize they are not being dominated by a teacher figure. In drama lessons the teacher usually takes a less dominant, more supportive role, and allows the students to explore the language activities so that they can take more responsibility for their own learning. In this way, every student can become a potential teacher for their peers.

Due to the design of the two approaches, learners mentioned that they welcomed being given plenty of opportunities to speak and improve their language skills. In the text-based approach, because they worked on a variety of self-contained extracts, improvements in the areas of vocabulary and grammatical accuracy were among the most frequently mentioned aspects reported by the students, whereas better pronunciation and increased fluency were more frequently cited in the performance-based approach. In the text-based approach, the dramatic games and activities were purposely designed to offer students more opportunities to practise both the grammar presented in that day's class and the new words previously encountered in the scripts. Through dramatic games, students benefited from observing the new lexis being acted out, thus providing them with a strong mental image of the words. Furthermore, discussions on the authentic scripts also provided opportunities for them to express their thoughts verbally using the new words and expressions.

A striking finding that emerged from the data was that improvement in pronunciation was amongst the most frequently mentioned benefits that the students gained from the performance-based approach, along with improved rhythm, emphasis and tone of voice, in contrast to the text-based approach. Their improved pronunciation undoubtedly contributed to an increase in students' self-confidence, as previously discussed. Mebus (1990), as mentioned in Ronke (2005), considers that pronunciation and intonation problems are more of an obstacle to communication than grammatical mistakes, simply because unclear or incorrect pronunciation can hinder or completely interrupt the flow of communication and can be frustrating for both the speaker and the listener. Additionally, this can lead to a fear of speaking and increase inhibitions. Many other phonetic aspects like word accent, sentence accent, pauses, rhythm and melody are also very important for intelligible communication and the performance-based approach provided numerous, repeated opportunities for developing these aspects through rehearsals. Hence, because the pronunciation "on stage" had to be clear, correct and expressive in order for the audience to understand what was being said, the students worked hard towards achieving those goals where drama created an "experimental context" for the phonetic aspect in a more natural way than traditional methods. As Ronke (2005) points out, in the process of rehearsal, when students deliver their lines, they automatically instill an emotional inflection and natural sounding melody into the words, because words are connected to the thoughts and feelings being expressed for a reason in that context. Some of the learners were excited about improving their pronunciation and saw acting and rehearsing as the only way through which they could achieve such goals. The numerous phases of rehearsal gave them the opportunity to further improve their pronunciation, in contrast to the activities undertaken in the text-based approach, because the students were more focused and took care to deliver their lines as accurately as possible in order to make themselves understood by their peers. In addition, by taking on roles, they clearly expressed the idea that they felt they were representing different characters and for this reason they were able to speak English differently too, a fact that might have encouraged them to experiment with the language in a different way, which was beneficial at the phonological level. A further reason could be that drama emphasizes the appropriate associated body movement, which also facilitates successful pronunciation and intonation in

an unobtrusive and cooperative way (Bourke 1993). In fact, learners' perceptions are fully confirmed by the quantitative findings of this study which showed a highly significant improvement in pronunciation after the period of teaching through performance, as well as corroborating the findings of previous studies (Miccoli 2003, Ryan Scheutz & Colangelo 2004, Jàrfàs 2008), which reported self-assessed improvement in students' pronunciation through the numerous phases of rehearsal.

Students also cited improved fluency as an important addition to their oral skills in both types of drama approaches. Moreover, and interestingly, they mentioned that their speech became more lively and fluent through the performance-based approach as opposed to the text-based phase. Research shows that, in order to develop fluency, students need opportunities for repeated reading of the same material and suggests that we need to "trick them into wanting to reread" (Bidwell 1990:40); they should also have a real purpose for doing so. Both approaches gave them that opportunity: in the text-based approach they were motivated to reread an authentic script for the purposes of understanding the plot, learning new grammar tenses and expressions, and discussing it intelligibly, whilst in the performance-based approach they read a script repeatedly, initially with the purpose of better understanding it and, subsequently, with the objective of learning their lines. Most of the students also felt that, when working on the technical elements involved preparing the production for the stage, they improved their fluency because they were much more engaged in meaningful conversation as well as being much more willing to take risks in order to resolve problems. Carlin (2008) states that in dramatic exercises, communication is put into context: the exercises are not just random questions and answers, but they offer students a genuine reason for speaking the foreign language. It is more goal-oriented than language oriented and tends to be informed by the spirit that "we need to get something done", rather than "concentrating on producing correct grammar". Whereas in a traditional class frequent corrections can hinder active participation and fluency and create embarrassment for the students, it is not problematic for learners when they are rehearsing; they accept a constantly changing process of "experiment, modification and re-experiment" which is normal in theatre practice (Hawkins 1993: 62).

Conversely, some learners expressed the view that their vocabulary improved more in the text-based approach. Given that they were presented with a variety of scripts on various themes, which employed a wide range of vocabulary and different linguistic registers, the learners felt that they were retrieving and learning new words and expressions with every new lesson. By contrast, in the performance-based approach they were forced to repeatedly focus on a single entire play script, which seems to have made them think that once they had read and learned the new words presented in the play, they did not continue to add to their vocabulary knowledge as much as in the first phase.

The text-based approach offered learners abundant opportunities for speaking through discussions arising from the texts and active participation in the games. However, in the performance-based approach, although some students were shy, they realized that by repeating their lines through acting them out, all of them, regardless of their level of proficiency, had something to say and were able to participate equally in the process of learning, something which was very much appreciated because it boosted their level of confidence. As research has demonstrated, drama breaks down feelings of alienation and sensitivity to rejection (Federowicz & Wodzinska 2002, Aden 2010, Belliveau 2010). All the students, and especially those with a lower level of language proficiency, felt they were never overlooked and instead were pushed to actively take part in the process of learning, even if, in another situation, they would probably have chosen not to participate. In the text-based approach, these students were not always able to express their thoughts competently in the discussions arising from the scripts, either because they did not fully understand the text or in some cases because they lacked sufficient vocabulary. Dissimilarly, in the performance-based approach, by rehearsing their lines, students had always something to say. They admitted that they took risks, despite their initial feelings of shyness or embarrassment, and only by trial and error did their fluency and eventually their language accuracy and complexity improve.

### 5.2.1.7 Opportunities to apply language to real life situations

Another interesting finding was that all the learners, without exception, remarked that they found it useful that the two approaches proposed prepared them to use the language in real-life situations. Firstly, they found that the language that appeared in the authentic scripts was different to the language they had previously been used to: it was perceived as livelier and more real due to the naturalistic vocabulary, colloquial expressions, and appropriate registers, which they could use outside the classroom. As suggested in the Literature Review, proponents of contemporary authentic texts hold that working on such texts boosts students' motivation and interest and is conducive to better language learning because the learners sense that the language can be used in real life. Accordingly, most of the learners considered that the language employed more closely resembled a real conversation, unlike the artificial drills they had been used to in previous English lessons and, consequently, they found learning easier because they were more motivated.

Secondly, most of the situations imagined in the texts were real-life situations. Some of the games offered "as-if" situations and thus, within this "real" context, learners could experiment and learn to speak and act communicatively through interactive discussion and activities. They also took the opportunity to apply the grammar and vocabulary that they had acquired to scenes that could occur in real life, something which cannot be done with 'fill-in-the-blank' or other types of question and answer exercises encountered in textbooks. For this reason, they participated pro-actively in the activities proposed in the text-based approach. As Nunan (1988) argues, learners may be more enthusiastic about learning when classroom activities are related to real-world tasks, which prepare them to operate in the real world outside the classroom. Students are typically more motivated when they can apply what they have learned in their own life to a realistic situation, when they can be creative, or when they feel they have a reason and a purpose to communicate.

What the performance-based approach additionally offered was that it made the language more real and memorable through the various situations that were acted out. Both the rehearsal and activities proposed with a view to staging the performance were perceived as useful because the students sensed that they could learn a language and act in a fictional

situation, which could also be easily transferred to everyday life outside the classroom. Working on the performance provided students with situations that were not only authentic but also interesting, meaningful and useful to them in a supportive environment in which they could speak with intention; whether through the creative act of choosing a piece of music, choreographing movement, or managing some props, they communicated in the target language in order to get things done, hence it was always for a purpose. This precise process blends authentic need with imagination and social interaction and, consequently, the target language is acquired with a sense of enjoyment and fun. It follows that the new grammar and vocabulary, which is brought into the picture to satisfy the purpose of the dramatic process and language, will be learned through the inherent need to meet the objectives of a final product (Carkin 2008). With regard to the preparation of the stage production, almost all students reported that they were provided with meaningful situations and real-life contexts for learning and improvement. In addition, they enjoyed the theatrical warm-up exercises and found them useful both as a means of getting students up on their feet and moving whilst they were speaking and for helping them to focus better on the lesson. In this regard, Lester (as cited in Via 1976: xiv) emphasizes that the purposeful, goal-orientated nature and “realness” of performing a play is what most engages the students’ interest: “drama is a purposeful activity because it gives students something to do that has a beginning, a middle and an end, even if the end is a performance in front of their own classmates.”

The majority of the learners recognized that, through memorization, despite it being deemed a not very pleasurable activity, they learned plenty of grammar, vocabulary and colloquial expressions, as well as ready-made sentences which they felt confident about applying to real situations in the future. In line with these findings, Almond (2005) also reported that on several occasions students commented that they had used lines from the play in everyday life. However, an unexpected, interesting insight that emerged from the data was that one of the learners whose level of proficiency was more advanced, criticised memorisation because he felt he would not be able to apply the ready-made chunks of speech to real-life situations, whilst the lower-level students expressed precisely the opposite view. This may be due to the fact that the more advanced-level learners had a greater ability to construct their own sentences because they had a wider range of vocabulary available to them compared to

lower-level students who found memorization very useful merely because they still needed to learn more vocabulary and grammatical structures in order to express themselves proficiently. One learner stated that he was not sure whether he could use the memorized sentences when having a conversation in a real-life situation, unless he found himself in exactly the same circumstances. It may also be the case that the students with higher level English language skills might be more engaged if they were encouraged to be creative and improvise their lines.

### **5.2.2 Discussion of the quantitative results (questionnaires)**

This section is devoted to a discussion of the quantitative results obtained from the questionnaire. The questionnaire, which provided not only qualitative data but also a large amount of quantitative data as mainly Likert scales were used, was filled-in by the students before the interviews were conducted. For this reason, the findings resulted from the two research instruments are presented in chronological order in the Results chapter (see section 4.2.1): first, the questionnaire results and then, they were followed by the interview ones. Conversely, the discussion chapter will follow a reverse pattern in that the discussion regarding the quantitative section of the questionnaire will be presented after the discussion of its qualitative part, for most of the reasons offered by the students regarding the choices they made on the Likert scale items were disclosed in the interviews and thus, they have already been mostly discussed in the section about the themes developed (see section 5.2.1.). The discussion regarding the quantitative results of the questionnaire will primarily help to clarify, add additional information and emphasize the qualitative findings in the interviews.

Q1.A/B The first question of the questionnaire, Question 1, in both section A and section B, which inquired about pupils' experience of learning English through the two approaches in terms of enjoyment, interest, usefulness, meaningfulness, difficulties and satisfaction, yielded some surprisingly intriguing answers. Most of the students found the performance-based approach more enjoyable in comparison to the text-based approach because they had a lot of fun with it, and they felt freer to behave spontaneously and to say whatever they wanted. They enjoyed taking on roles and playing characters by experimenting with language, postures and voices, pitch, volume and tone. They also took pleasure in experiencing

particular roles and practising specific language functions, which they could use in real life. The novelty effect of the theatrical games and warm-up exercises, the relaxed atmosphere that was established, and the cooperative learning were also among the sources of enjoyment reported by the students, along with the content of the chosen play.

An equally high level of interest was registered for the two approaches. The main reason reported by the students lay in the novelty effect of the whole process of learning: the authentic texts and the dramatic activities used raised levels of motivation and kept learners engaged throughout the lessons most of the time.

As far as levels of usefulness were concerned, the learners' reasons for finding the text-based approach more useful were connected with the fact that they felt that they needed to be taught grammatical rules explicitly. Above and beyond this, they deemed the variety of texts presented very useful, for the huge amount of vocabulary and expressions they contained, whilst in the performance-based approach they dealt exclusively with a single text.

Conversely, the performance-based approach was deemed more meaningful compared to the text-based approach because it required students to constantly interact with each other, place themselves in various situations and knowledgeably discuss problems of a variable nature. They also felt that in this phase the language used was more spontaneous, immediate and easily transferable to the real world, and therefore, taken as a whole, the full-immersion theatre experience was perceived as more meaningful. As Bolton (1979: 177) asserts, "drama is about meaning: meaning indicating, meaning seeking, meaning making and meaning finding".

In terms of satisfaction, the findings showed that students felt more satisfied when working on the text-based approach. This result derived from the issue of memorization, on the one hand, which was mostly reported as problematic and difficult and, to some extent, not very pleasurable since it required a high degree of concentration and commitment. Rehearsals were also found to be repetitive at times by one student. On the other hand, initially, some learners were also slightly reluctant to take part in the acting process. Consequently, the levels of ease reported for this phase were lower compared to the text-based approach for the



same reason. Although memorization was beneficial in terms of linguistic gains, the students found memorizing their lines *per se* tedious and in some cases not very engaging, and thus they were evidently not entirely satisfied with this aspect of learning pertaining to the performance-based approach.

*Q1C. How comfortable (at ease) did you feel when working with texts or on performance?*

It appears that the learners felt more at ease when involved in learning through the text-based approach as the mean was slightly higher than for the performance-based approach. As performing involved a lot of exposure and acting in front of other people, some students felt a degree of shyness and discomfort. This type of effect has been commonly found in educational research where the teacher has intervened using drama-based approaches, at least at the beginning of the instruction period (Moody 2002, Jàrfàs 2008). Having a role in the performance of a play, acting and memorizing lines were found to be more challenging because students were obliged to contribute and get more involved when working with their peers compared to the text-based approach where there was still a fair amount of individual or pair work.

*Q2C. How much did you feel in control of your English (speak correctly) by working with texts or on performance?*

With respect to feelings of control over the language, students also reported that they felt slightly more in control in the text-based approach. The reason for this lies in the fact that, in the text-based approach, as long as they were still taught grammatical points explicitly and required to reinforce the grammar and vocabulary through drama games, they felt that they could still pay attention to form rather than meaning and have a certain degree of control over the language, from an accuracy point of view. Discussions about the texts to which they had constant access also provided strong linguistic support by helping learners to use words and expressions, which they could see directly in front of them on the page. In the performance-based approach, by contrast, participants engaged to a greater extent in more spontaneous and vivid informal forms of conversations through different problem-solving issues arising from the translating, rehearsing and acting process, and had to rely mostly on the language acquired up to that point and retrieve it spontaneously from memory. Hence, perhaps students

sensed that they had less control over the language from the point of view of accuracy, complexity and fluency with the performance approach.

*Q3C. How much were you able to communicate (say whatever you wanted) when speaking by working with texts or on performance?*

When asked if they had enough language to communicate, the findings showed a slightly higher preference for the performance-based approach over the text-based approach. Both approaches offered numerous opportunities for speaking whereby learners made use of the target language and it appeared that, regardless of the type of activity, they did not have any particular problems in expressing their thoughts orally. However, the performance-based approach seemed to be more favoured in this regard; this might be because students with a lower level of language proficiency found it easier to communicate once they had memorized their lines in the rehearsal. This largely suggests that drama-based approaches were welcome in the language lessons, as they did not stifle students' capacity for linguistic expression but rather stimulated and fostered their use of the target language.

*Q4C. How freely and spontaneously could you express yourself when working with texts or on performance?*

The results suggested that learners felt somewhat more spontaneous and free to express themselves when they engaged with the English needed for the activities involved in the performance-based form of instruction than in the text-based approach. The authentic communicative situations in which the language was produced was considered more spontaneous, and thus learners seemed to engage in more natural conversations mainly through informal interactions and problem-solving in the pursuit of a common goal, namely the staging of the performance.

*Q5C. In your English classes which would you prefer to work more on: a) texts, b) performance, c) both, d) neither of them?*

When questioned about which type of drama approach they would like to work on more (i.e. prefer) in the future, both approaches were favoured by the majority of the respondents. However, the fact that students' preference for the performance-based approach rose only slightly compared to the text-based approach, and was outstripped by their preference for the

text- and performance-based approaches alike can be explained by a number of possible reasons: one reason directly derives from the answers to Q1A and Q1B of the questionnaire (see discussion of Q1A/Q1B in this section). Given that the two approaches were beneficial for the learners in different ways, as the text-based approach was considered more useful, easier and more satisfying, whilst the performance-based approach was more enjoyable and meaningful, it was likely that learners could not separate the two forms of instruction since they benefited from them at different levels. Additionally, the fact that they found both equally interesting and highly motivating, coupled with the constructive nature of all the in-class activities, which involved active participation, was another explanation for their choice. It appeared that both approaches were interesting in their own ways, and thus they enabled learners to improve different aspects of the target language.

*Q6C. How much do you think you improved your oral skills by working on the following: coursebook, texts, performance?*

Their responses to the question about their perceptions of linguistic improvement when learning from coursebooks, or a text-based or on a performance-based approach, indicated that students' English oral skills improved mostly through a performance-based approach, followed by the text-based approach, and a significant difference was registered between the performance-based approach and the more traditional method of formal instruction. These perceptions of their overall linguistic improvement may be directly linked to the results from the previous question regarding their preference: learners favoured the performance approach more because the linguistic gains from it were perceived as being greater. Since learners expected to improve their speaking skills, they chose the approach which would involve a higher degree of oral participation and interaction. In fact, the quantitative results showed that their level of language proficiency was clearly higher on the three constructs - complexity, accuracy and fluency - after the performance-based instruction had been implemented, and thus at the end of their entire period of instruction. The practice effect, engagement in purposeful conversations and meaningful interactions necessary for staging the play, along with gains in confidence over time, may all be considered reasons for their perceptions of higher linguistic achievement through the performance-based instruction. This confirms the importance of implementing a performance-based approach in the compulsory

curriculum in order to develop not only students' oral linguistic skills but also to boost their motivation to learn and to build their confidence.

In the following chapter, I shall draw conclusions from this study. Firstly, I will give a summary of the study and its results. Subsequently, I shall identify the strengths and limitations of the research. Next, I shall consider the contribution (implications) of the study to the field of ELT and finally, in the remainder of the Conclusion chapter, I shall suggest ideas and recommendations for possible future research.



## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored, longitudinally, the effectiveness of teaching from authentic contemporary texts through two types of drama-based approaches in an Italian context to develop oral skills and potentially, increase learners' positive attitudes towards foreign language learning. According to Canale & Swain (1980: 33), a language lesson should be characterized by “aspects of genuine communication such as its basis in social interaction, the relative creativity, and unpredictability of utterances, its purposefulness and goal-orientation and its authenticity”. As outlined in the literature review, drama-based approaches surely meet these requirements and should greatly appeal to learners and satisfy their needs. More specifically, in this study I have attempted to implement longitudinally, over a period of two terms, two types of drama-based approaches in a high school compulsory curriculum, i.e. a text-based approach followed by a performance-based approach, with the aim of gauging the level of learners' oral skills in terms of *complexity, accuracy and fluency* along with their perceptions and attitudes towards such approaches. To fulfil this aim, I adopted a mixed-methods approach combining both quantitative and qualitative data.

### 6.1 Conclusion for RQ1

*RQ1 Does the drama-based approach promote the development of oral skills in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency better than the traditional approach?*

The first research question sought to establish the extent to which learners exposed to drama based approaches improved their oral skills in terms of CAF measures. The differences in pre-test and post-test scores for the experimental group and the control group showed that learners who learned through drama-based approaches significantly improved their pronunciation accuracy, all measures of fluency – i.e. speed, breakdown, repairs, MLR, phonation time ratio - and complexity, whilst there was no significant statistical result for global accuracy between the two groups. However, the accuracy achievement in the experimental group was greater than that of the control group with a greater effect size. That is to say, the two types of drama-based approaches when taken together were more effective than the traditional approach in developing learners' spoken skills. The participants in the

experimental group, as a result of exposure to drama-based approaches, started speaking more accurately using a wider range of vocabulary, at a faster pace and employed fewer and shorter pauses in their speech, whilst their self-repairs decreased. A noteworthy result of this study is that learners in the experimental group improved their oral skills at nearly double the rate of the control group over the same period of time. It appears that authentic texts, dramatic activities and games spurred learners' motivation and offered opportunities for learning grammar and lexicon in context. In addition, teaching via drama allowed input for endless discussions and thus, increased the learners' level of oral output across all measures of CAF. Cooperative learning and meaningful interaction increased students' confidence in manipulating language, as it seems that a more natural and spontaneous interaction was promoted by the authentic communicative situations created in drama-based approaches rather than in a traditional-approach. Language games and taking on roles in the production of the play within the safe atmosphere offered by the rehearsals, performing in front of peers as well as using peer-correction made students more aware of their mistakes and they corrected each other without the risk of "losing face". Learning lines, constantly using the target language and gaining confidence during rehearsals in the performance-based approach are all likely to have successfully contributed to the students' increased competence in the target language. As stressed at various points throughout this thesis, the meaningful tasks used towards achieving a final goal offered plenty of opportunities for speaking in an embodied, emboldened and engaging way, furthered by the novelty of this experience.

Although previous studies, which employed drama-based approaches, did not divide fluency and accuracy into sub-components, as highlighted in the Literature Review, they also reported a high level of improvement in students' fluency on a global scale. Taken as a whole, the results of this study confirm the previous findings from Ryan-Scheutz & Colangelo (2004) for instance, where post-production OPI results showed greater fluency of speech, fewer error patterns and greater control of the language. Findings gained from students' self-reports in Miccoli's (2003) study also suggest that learners experienced an improvement in their oral skills especially at a fluency level, and an increased confidence in speaking in the target language (c.f. Järpå 2008; Sirisrimangkorn & Suwanthep 2013) which again mirror the results of the present study.

## 6.2 Conclusion for RQ2

*RQ2 Within the drama-based approach, which type of approach leads to improved complexity, accuracy and fluency: the text-based approach or the performance-based approach?*

The second research question, which perhaps yielded the most interesting findings, aimed at investigating whether the text- or the performance-based approach leads to higher measurements of complexity, accuracy and fluency. An interesting fact which came out of this part of the study was that when comparing the two approaches, the findings indicated that the text-based approach led to higher syntactic complexity, breakdown fluency (story-retelling) and phonation time ratio (story-retelling), whilst the performance-based approach led to a higher level of accuracy, both on the global scale and pronunciation accuracy, and on speed fluency and phonation time ratio (story-retelling). It should be reiterated and emphasized, however, that the significant results in the post-test, which was conducted at the end of the entire period of the intervention, may be due to the practice effect, which cannot be ignored here: the performance phase followed the text-based intervention and, therefore, the students had practised their speaking more at this point. Neither of the two drama-based approaches led to a significant score regarding MLAS, MLR and repairs fluency (story-retelling) despite an improvement over time, for which perhaps a longer time frame is necessary in order to attain markedly greater improvement. Interestingly, the MLAS decreased on the mid-test only to increase again on the post-test, which shows that students at different moments in time could choose to use longer or shorter sentences.

It is evident that the two drama-based approaches had a beneficial effect on developing students' complexity, accuracy and fluency on various dimensions however, in different ways. The exposure to a variety of self-standing play extracts may have contributed to learners' higher syntactic complexity in the text-based approach. Yet, interestingly, in the first phase, they paused for shorter time as confirmed by the findings on breakdown fluency whilst the vibrant atmosphere and increased level of confidence due to the learners' involvement in the performance-approach led to a higher density and increased rate of speech delivery. As already discussed, less error correction took place in the text-based approach,



unlike in the performance-based instruction where learners were more concerned with speaking accurately and instances of either self-correction, peer or teacher correction were more frequent. This perhaps influenced students' final test performance in which they stopped more often to possibly more accurately plan their discourse as they were used to doing during their rehearsals, however, at an increased articulation rate between pauses compared to the text phase. Additionally, many of the previous studies reported high rates of improvement concerning learners' pronunciation when involved in the production of a play. This study undoubtedly contributes to the existing research which confirms that the production of an authentic text play with no final staging of the performance, albeit in a compulsory curriculum, offers ample benefits for the development of foreign language skills on CAF dimensions, whilst fostering students' motivation and confidence.

### **6.3 Conclusion for RQ3**

*RQ3 What are the learners' attitudes towards the text-based approach and the performance-based approach?*

Research question three has probably generated the most intriguing results. Both quantitative and qualitative findings reflect learners' perceptions of the text-based approach and performance-based approach and brought to light both positive and negative aspects of each type of dramatic approach as presented in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 5. Investigating students' attitudes towards drama-based approaches using authentic texts, in particular when they were not voluntarily enrolled in the production of a play was considered "imperative" (Wessel 1987, Schewe 2013).

Results from the quantitative part of the questionnaire revealed that the two approaches were welcome in the students' English language class: they brought freshness and a new dimension into the language learning classroom atmosphere. Both approaches were found equally interesting and beneficial in different ways for the learners: the text-based approach was considered more useful, easier and more satisfying than traditional forms of instruction, whilst the performance-based approach was deemed more enjoyable, despite the challenges placed on the learners as revealed from their interviews, and also more meaningful compared

to the text-phase. Subsequently, the qualitative findings from respondents' interviews further helped to elucidate and explicate the quantitative results. By combining insights from both the quantitative and qualitative data, the present study aimed to offer a more coherent picture of the two dramatic approaches within the compulsory classroom curriculum.

A very interesting finding, which is important to emphasize, is that students immensely enjoyed taking part in games and warm-up exercises and they never mentioned having any problems or difficulty with these types of activities. However, taking on roles in the production of the play produced mixed results: acting was found challenging by the more introverted learners but it greatly appealed to the more extroverted ones, whilst the memorization of the lines *per se* did not massively appeal to most of the learners. Yet, unexpectedly, it was striking that, although more negative aspects were mentioned with regard to the performance-based approach, on balance more students preferred it compared to the text-based one, and even a higher percentage of the learners indicated their preference for taking part in a play production in their prospective language classes. In fact, in the interviews the respondents openly admitted that despite their initial shyness they took risks because they could perceive the linguistic benefits they were gaining from their rehearsals and various activities, especially at the level of pronunciation and fluency of the language which were two aspects repeatedly mentioned. Linked to this point, a particular finding was that some of the students with the highest language proficiency level in class, although greatly enjoying their roles, did not find they could transfer their memorized lines to real-life situations, whereby learners with the lowest level of proficiency decidedly appreciated that, through the memorization of their lines, they could take part in the learning process in the collaborative and safe atmosphere of the classroom.

A further qualitative finding highlighted that dramatic authentic texts were found motivating and useful for improving the students' linguistic level. Apart from contextualizing the language items, play scripts also engaged learners' imagination, helping them to build their knowledge and learn about the culture of the target language. Yet, unexpectedly, it was found that some students with a lower level of language still preferred to learn grammar by working on drills and exercises.

The qualitative findings have further revealed that both approaches gave students plenty of opportunity for expressing themselves, and they appreciated the active participation and the kinesthetic approach in particular, which helped them not only to better retain the language by going *beyond the mere* word, but also to understand shades of meaning. As appraised from the literature, physical movement and body language are important elements in language learning. Combining verbal and non-verbal forms of expression through drama exercises motivated students to learn the target language and boosted their success rate as their test results showed. It comes as no surprise that this improvement was also perceived by the students themselves. Students' perceptions of enhanced language learning outcomes in the responses to their perceived feelings of linguistic improvement disclosed that students' English oral skills improved mostly through the performance-based approach, followed by the text-based approach, and lastly by the formal instruction. An unexpected and striking finding was that a statistically significant difference was registered between the performance-based approach and formal instruction which clearly explains why all learners with no exception, chose drama-approaches over a traditional approach, which was not preferred by any of them, in their future English lessons. I would argue that this outstanding result should not be ignored by language educators.

Additionally, this study also indicated that the problem of mixed abilities was reduced as the literature suggested. Students with a lower level of language actively took part in activities because most of the time they had something to say or do, either when they took part in games or, in particular, when having a role in the production of the play. These situations require a degree of fluency with the language and the use of lines from the script and surely can be useful with learners who are less confident or competent. (Fleming 2006). The students mentioned they sensed they were never left on the side lines and eventually, they were no longer afraid of speaking English. These findings provide further evidence of a beneficial effect which drama has on building students' motivation and suggests that a theatre process-oriented project with no final public staging of the performance in the compulsory curriculum is nevertheless a valuable tool for increasing students' self-esteem and language improvement.

As a final point, as has emerged throughout this research and has been highlighted in the qualitative and quantitative data, it may be accepted that drama is a whole-person approach which can be used to develop not only oral language skills and increase learners' positive attitudes, which were the focus of this study, but, also to develop intercultural competence and team-work skills that connect us on a human, emotional level (Almond 2015). By adding the emotional dimension, "the language is being used in a situation which is alive and real, and not just in the artificial construct of the printed page" (Butterfield 1989: 33). Although the learners repeatedly mentioned that their motivation increased because they had plenty of fun, I would conclude that the drama approach should not be regarded primarily as a "fun activity", as it mostly transpired from learners' interviews, but as a teaching approach in itself. Undoubtedly, there are constraints of time and space and rigid syllabuses to follow especially when implementing a performance-based approach in a compulsory curriculum. However, it is important to acknowledge that the value of continued practice, and a final performance among peers is what is most relevant for language learning as Wessel (1987: 10) points out: "we should not hope to achieve anything of great artistic or theatrical merit. The reward will lie in the greater confidence and ability of the students to use the target language".

#### **6.4 Strengths and limitations of the study**

An important strength of this study is that the text-based approach and the performance-based approach lessons were entirely integrated into the students' weekly English classroom routine, both built and perfectly incorporated into the compulsory foreign language syllabus. At the level of design, an additional strength was that the pre-, mid- and post-tests were used both as data collection instruments and for course assessment scope. As an important point to emphasize, it can be argued that students might have been more motivated to do better all throughout the course by taking part in the activities and performing well because the testing was part of their terms' assessment. Accordingly, they strove to achieve better marks and the overall significant results could well be influenced by this fact. A further strong point is linked to the implementation of the two approaches on the same group of students, in

particular for collecting the qualitative data,<sup>15</sup> as it enabled me to shed light on learners' perceptions and attitudes towards both types of drama-based approaches from the same group of participants. This offered a clearer picture and richer data as learners were able to make a fairer and more objective comparison between them, after fully experiencing both types of drama-based methods.

Regarding the limitations of this research, the sample of students participating in the experimental study was not randomly selected, thus, generalizability cannot be extended to all contexts and settings. Due to the unusual setting where the research was conducted, a private school with a relatively small number of students in each class, it is probably not easy to imagine how the results of this study could be transferred to school settings dissimilar to the host school, where class sizes may be relatively larger. Secondly, given the design of the study in which the participants' level of language ranged from lower-intermediate to upper-intermediate, with most of them having a mid-intermediate level, results may not be applicable to all levels of language proficiency.

An additional limitation of this study regards the analyses of fluency, for which only one task, namely the story-retelling, was coded and analysed. This fact reduced the possibility of obtaining a finer grained picture when all tasks were taken together as in the complexity and accuracy case. This was due to the fact that the automatic script in PRAAT software, which was used for data analysis, is not designed for dialogic tasks but only for the monologic one. In effect, had I wanted to include the remaining two tasks, the OPI and the guided role-play into the fluency analysis, the separation of the speeches of the two people interacting should have been done manually, paying attention to inter-turn pauses. In order to accomplish this undertaking, additional work and a considerable amount of time would have been required from the limited time and resources dedicated to this PhD research. Nonetheless, this aspect will be contemplated in the future research I intend to carry out.

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<sup>15</sup> Given the practice-effect, interestingly, the implementation of the two approaches on the same group of students can be simultaneously considered a limitation for the quantitative data results as well as a strength for the qualitative part of the study.

A further limitation drawn from the quantitative findings of this study can be the employment of the two approaches on the same group of learners consecutively, and therefore, it may be that the significant results on all measures of CAF achieved by the learners in the post-test could have been influenced by the practice-effect. The students' improvement generally had a linear trend both through text-based instruction and through performance-based instruction but the significant results were mostly registered after the whole period of instruction on all measures. Thus, the improvement in linguistic performance in the performance-based approach condition may not be completely due to the form of instruction but also to the effect of time. Because the performance teaching took place after the text-based approach, by the time students received the performance instruction they had already had some weeks of teaching which involved lots of oral tasks (e.g., discussions on the texts and drama games). Had the two types of drama approaches been implemented with two different groups of students, the study might have yielded dissimilar findings. This point leads us to the lack of a mid-test in the control group which may create confound for RQ2. For example, if there had been a mid-test, it would have been possible to see whether the result of the mid-test in the experimental group was significantly different or not from that in the control group for each approach separately. Then, a more precise and pertinent explanation could be given as to why, for instance, the text-based teaching helped to improve significantly breakdown fluency but the performance-based teaching did not. If there was a significant difference between the mid-test and the pre-test for the experimental and control group, then the effect found for the text-based teaching would be spurious because it would be due to any teaching, not the text-based teaching.

Furthermore, factors extraneous to teaching, such as how much English the learners were speaking outside of the classroom with family members or when travelling, and which could have affected their English language learning, were not measured and taken into account in data analysis. This omission can also be considered a shortcoming.

A similar point applies to a final issue which was raised repeatedly in the conferences I attended and from academic concerns: whether both the experimental and the control group should have been instructed by myself, as a drama-teacher researcher, rather than by two different teachers (see possible drawbacks mentioned in section 3.1).

The study also indicated that preparing for a performance was a beneficial approach for students, which however, has its downsides: it requires plenty of time, organization and high commitment from the learners. The project was not fully conducted through to completion as originally planned; however, the study findings showed that the students learned a lot from the process itself. Having to perform a play had put too much pressure on the students given that their final state examination was approaching. In light of this issue, language educators who wish to implement a full-scale performance might consider a different, more appropriate and feasible time frame for achieving the final product which might give even more beneficial results. Depending on the school context and foreign language objectives, one of the ways in which a performance-based approach can be incorporated in a language class lesson might be by alternating or combining a performance lesson with English language lessons where other types of curricular activities can be done, as in many schools focusing on the preparation of a performance exclusively for an entire term may not be possible.

### **6.5 Implications of the study**

The purpose of this research was to investigate the pedagogical use of authentic contemporary plays through two types of approaches, both when taken together or separately for foreign language learning at high school level. Even though, in the last decade, authors have increasingly discussed the advantages of using authentic texts and drama approaches in language classes, there seems to have been no particular research conducted to date which investigates the use of self-standing extracts and preparing for a full-scale performance by learners within a compulsory English language curriculum. Only a limited number of studies have gathered empirical data and none of them have focused on various measures across the three dimensions of oral language production: complexity, accuracy and fluency. Moreover, the study also gauged learners' attitudes towards such approaches. Thus, this study is original in design and innovative in an area which is under-researched.

The findings have clear implications for foreign language curricula in terms of their practical (oral skill development) and affective (motivation and feeling of confidence) goals. Based on the positive trends illustrated by the mid- and post-tests, the learners' exposure to drama-

based approaches had a beneficial effect on developing learners' oral skills in terms of CAF: the learners in the experimental group improved at nearly double the rate of those in the control group. One of the salient points of this study is that it shows how important it is to shed light on learners' personal opinions, their problems and difficulties and their preferences, so these can be borne in mind when designing courses and planning lessons.

I would promote the argument that language practitioners should find ways of incorporating drama approaches in their language teaching. As teachers "we are aiming to create a safe, non-threatening environment with low anxiety, productive classroom dynamics and enjoyment so that natural, meaningful learning and authentic communication take place and students remain engaged and motivated" (Almond 2013: 1). Unquestionably, text- and performance-based approaches were shown to be welcome in language classes and particularly conducive to language learning as learners improved their capacity to engage in continuous performance. Therefore, this study may be considered a valuable contribution in terms of creating an effective language learning pedagogy and might persuade teachers towards a wider implementation of dramatic approaches within compulsory curricula which can cater for more successful teaching, as it stresses not only the importance of cognitive learning but also psychological, social and physical factors which are often overlooked in the language classroom environment.

## **6.6 Ideas and recommendations for further research**

Research into the use of drama in language teaching is a relatively new field and, consequently, still under-researched (Schewe 2013) and there remain many opportunities for further investigation. Using my own data, I intend to produce research articles from this investigation to shed light on the benefits of drama approaches as a new dimension within foreign language curricula.

There are several aspects of this study that can be developed in order to obtain a clearer picture of the effectiveness of the text-based approach and the performance-based approach, both when taken together or separately to expand learners' oral skills. I shall consider broadening the statistical analysis of the data collected, coded and partially analysed, but which I was unable to incorporate into this thesis. First of all, I would like to include into any



further analysis of fluency the two remaining dialogic tasks, which were the guided role-play and OPI, so as to generate greater insights into the fluency achieved both on the three tasks combined and when taken separately. In addition to this, from the perspective of SLA, it would be worthwhile finding out to what extent learners improve their oral skills on measures of the CAF triad considered in this study on each of the three tasks separately: OPI, guided role-play and story-retelling. Then, this could be extended to other measures of CAF not contemplated in the present thesis. It would be useful to bring further insights into SLA processes as various trade-off hypotheses might surface.

Furthermore, rather than using composite measures for accuracy, I aim to expand my further analysis to types of errors within the global accuracy - grammar and vocabulary errors – apart from pronunciation errors, which have already been discussed in the present study and, which might generate attention-grabbing findings. Similarly, for repairs fluency I would like to broaden the picture to the types of repairs - *false starts*, *repetition*, and *self-repairs* - by running analysis on each one separately. Also, no distinction was made in terms of types of errors according to authors (e.g. Homburg 1984) who proposed giving errors different weight and such analyses might yield interesting results. As far as the phonology part is concerned I also aim to extend the analyses to *rhythm* and *intonation* as important components in foreign language learning.

*Lexical diversity*, which is considered one of the most important measures of *complexity* is another subcomponent which I aim to take into consideration for further analysis in order to have a more accurate understanding of the extent to which authentic texts can enrich students' level of language complexity as distinct from syntactic complexity. This could be expanded to *lexical richness* and undoubtedly supplementary measures on *complexity* could be added.

It should be admitted that there are limitations to this study as expressed in section 6.5 of this chapter. Yet, given the encouraging findings of this study, future research may also look into exploring the feasibility of extending the text-based approach and the performance-based approach to other settings with larger numbers of students in the classes and a longer time devoted to the work on performance with the goal of most comprehensively understanding the potential which such approaches could have on students' skills in a compulsory

curriculum. Also, for any further investigation, additional data collection instruments could be used, such as video-taping, as stemming from learners' interviews, which regrettably, at the time of conducting the research I disregarded as it was not the focus of the study. However, as a direct tester-observer of the learners' performance, it was obvious that students started speaking with more emphasis, using eloquent gestures and body language to express meaning in the L2 language. During their final testing phase, learners' initial length of speech recorded in the pre-test, from short and very controlled because of the fear of making mistakes turned out to be longer, more relaxed, bolder, less shy and infused with more life in the two subsequent tests. This was particularly noticeable during the guided role-play in the post-test where, in the process of interaction, learners were mostly seeking to make situations fun and entertaining in order to make others laugh rather than being serious, fearful and composed as in the pre-test where they still had a high degree of unfamiliarity with such a task. As Dalziel & Pennachi (2012: 10) acknowledge, it is important to note that, "the task will be deemed successful if a group manages to engage and amuse peers, rather than teachers/instructors praising their language use", and "rather than being afraid of mistakes, learners will be encouraged to take those risks which are so beneficial to language learning" (*ibid*).

It is also important to point out that this study made no distinction between *accuracy* and *comprehensibility*, the latter intended as ease of understanding. On the global accuracy measure, learners were judged in terms of their correct responses regardless of their communicative effectiveness. When testing, it was noticed, that in one particular case, a student in the control group was speaking very fluently with short pauses and at a high-speed rate, simultaneously employing a wide range of vocabulary, but the speech remained often incomprehensible due to numerous errors of accuracy and pronunciation. Palloti (2009: 5) argues that one can have "perfectly accurate but communicatively inadequate messages (*colourless green ideas..*) or perfectly intelligible messages violating various L2 norms (*me no like dance*)," which show that we are dealing with two different constructs: *accuracy* vs. *comprehensibility*. In a recent study, Galante & Thomson (2016) investigated the effectiveness of drama techniques for the development of second language oral fluency and overall comprehensibility. Results from their study indicated that drama-based instruction can lead to large gains in fluency, whereas comprehensibility scores also appear to be

impacted but with a much smaller effect. *Intelligibility*, defined as the degree to which a listener understands a speaker's intended meaning, as distinct from *comprehensibility* which is a judgement of the effort required on the part of the listener to understand a speaker (Munro & Derving 1995a, 1995b) would be another component worthy of investigation. A further distinction is proposed between *accuracy* and *development* (Palloti 2009) whilst other projects could also look at foreign *accentedness* (linguistic nativelikeness). These issues were not contemplated in this study and consequently, the data obtained offer without doubt rich material for additional research which I keenly aim to undertake. CAF measures alone cannot adequately capture second language development, but supplementary measures should be employed to detect development of learner interlanguage (Tavakoli 2016, conference at UCL). As a last point, future research could also look at individual differences which were not examined in this study. Building on this, it would be undoubtedly highly valuable to determine how individual students, rather than an entire group, perform over time depending also on their level of proficiency.

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## **Appendix 1: Programma di inglese**

### **Grammar:**

Sono state prese in considerazione le principali funzioni grammaticali, con particolare attenzione a:

- Pronouns
- Prepositions
- Possessive adjectives
- Modal verbs
- Comparatives and Superlatives
- Relative pronouns
- Numbers

Particolare attenzione e' stata data ai tempi verbali:

- Present Simple and Continuous
- Past Simple and Continuous
- Present Perfect and Present Continuous
- Past Perfect and Past Perfect Continuous
- Future
- Passive forms

Sono state svolte molteplici esercitazioni:

- Listening Comprehension
- Reading Comprehension
- Oral Production (Speaking)
- Written Production (Writing)

Alcune letture su argomenti di attualita' ed argomenti tecnici.

## Appendix 2: Story-retelling 1 (Pre-test)

### Test specifications<sup>16</sup>

**Text type:** authentic contemporary drama (self-standing extract)

**Text form:** narration

**Topics:** familiar to students, non-specialist

**Length:** 277 words

**Readability** (level of text): upper-intermediate

**Range of vocabulary:** non-technical

**Range of grammar:** present/past simple and continuous, present/past perfect continuous, future, passive forms, pronouns, prepositions, possessive adjectives, comparative and superlatives, relative pronouns

**Time:** 30 minutes

### Instructions:

Read the following extract from the play *A night Out* by Harold Pinter

- 1) Underline all the words you do not know
  - 2) Give back the sheet of paper to the teacher when you have finished
- You have approximately 20 minutes to prepare this

Then

- 3) Retell the story in your own words to the teacher

**Do not ask for any help from the teacher while you are retelling the story**

\*You are allowed to make your own notes if you wish

### *A Night Out*

*He ties the tie.*

MOTHER: Where are you going?

ALBERT: Mum, I've told you, honestly, three times. Honestly, I've told three times I had to go out tonight.

MOTHER: No, you didn't. I thought you were joking.

ALBERT: I'm not going .... I'm just going to Mr. King's. I've told you. You do not believe me.

MOTHER: You're going to Mr. King's?

ALBERT: Mr. Ryan's leaving. You know Ryan. He's leaving the firm. He's been there for years. So Mr. King's giving a sort of party for him at his house ... well, not exactly a party, not a party, just a few ... you know anyway, we're all invited. I've got to go. Everyone else is going. I've got to go. I don't want to go, but I've got to.

MOTHER: (*bewildered, sitting*) Well, I don't know ...

ALBERT: (*with his arm round her*) I won't be late. I don't want to go. I'd rather stay with you.

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<sup>16</sup> The task specifications are based on Huges (2003:140)

MOTHER: Would you?

ALBERT: You know I would. Who wants to go to Mr. King's party?

MOTHER: We were going to have our game of cards.

ALBERT: Well, we can't have our game of cards.

*(Pause.)*

MOTHER: Put the bulb in Grandma's room, Albert.

ALBERT: I've told you I'm not going down to the cellar in my white shirt. There's no light in the cellar either. I'll be pitch black in five minutes, looking for those bulbs.

MOTHER: I told you to put a light in the cellar. I told you yesterday.

ALBERT: Well, I can't do it now.

MOTHER: If we had light in the cellar you'd be able to see where those bulbs. You don't expect me to go down to the cellar?

ALBERT: I don't know why we keep bulbs in the cellar!

*(Pause.)*

MOTHER: Your father would turn in his grave if he heard you raise your voice to me. You're all I've got, Albert. I want you to remember that. I haven't got anyone else. I want you ... I want you to bear that in mind.

ALBERT: I'm sorry ... I raised my voice

*He goes to the door.*

*[Mumbling]* I have got to go.

MOTHER *[Following]*: Albert!

ALBERT: What?

MOTHER: Are you leading a clean life?

ALBERT: A clean life?

MOTHER: You're not leading an unclean life, are you?

ALBERT: What are you talking about?

MOTHER: You're not messing about with girls, are you? You're not going to go messing about with girls tonight?

ALBERT: Don't be so ridiculous.

MOTHER: Answer me, Albert. I'm your mother.

ALBERT: I don't know any girls.

MOTHER: If you're going to the firm's party, there'll be girls there, won't there? Girls from the office?

ALBERT: I don't like them, any of them.

MOTHER: You promise?

ALBERT: Promise what?

MOTHER: That ... that you won't upset your father.

ALBERT: My father? How can I upset my father? You're always talking about upsetting people who are dead!

MOTHER: Oh, Albert, you don't know how you hurt me, you don't know the hurtful way you've got, speaking of your poor father like that.

ALBERT: But he is dead.

MOTHER: He's not! He's living! *(Touching her breast.)* In here! And this is his house!

*(Pause.)*

ALBERT: Look, Mum, I won't be late ... and I won't...

MOTHER: But what about your dinner? It's nearly ready.

ALBERT: Seeley and Kedge are waiting for me. I told you not to cook dinner this morning. *(He goes to the stairs.)* Just because you never listen...

*He runs up the stairs and disappears. She calls after him from the hall.*

MOTHER: Well, what am I going to do while you're out? I can't go into Grandma's room because there's no light. I can't go down to the cellar in the dark, we were going to have a game of cards, it's Friday night, what about our game of rummy.

### Appendix 3: Story-retelling 2 (Mid-test)

#### Instructions:

Read the following extract from the play *The Collection* by Harold Pinter

1) Underline all the words you do not know

2) Give back the sheet of paper to the teacher when you have finished

You have approximately 20 minutes to prepare this

Then

3) Retell the story in your own words to the teacher

**Do not ask for any help from the teacher while you are retelling the story**

\*You are allowed to make notes if you like

#### *The Collection*

BILL *bends to pick up the paper.*

HARRY. Don't touch that paper.

BILL. Why not?

HARRY. Don't touch it.

BILL *stares at him and then slowly pick it up. Silence. He tosses it to HARRY:*

BILL. You have it. I do not want it.

BILL *goes out and up the stairs. Harry opens the paper and reads it.*

*In the flat, STELLA comes in with a tray of coffee and biscuits. She places the tray on the coffee-table and passes a cup to JAMES. She sips.*

STELLA. Would you like a biscuit?

JAMES. No, thank you.

*Pause.*

STELLA. I'm going to have one.

JAMES. You'll get fat.

STELLA. From biscuits?

JAMES. You don't want to get fat, do you?

STELLA. Why not?

JAMES. Perhaps you do.

STELLA. It's not one of my aims.

JAMES. What is your aim?

*Pause.*

I would like an olive.

STELLA. Olive? We haven't got any.

JAMES. How do you know?

STELLA. I know.

JAMES. Have you looked?

STELLA. I don't need to look, do I? I know what I've got.

JAMES. You know what you've got?

*Pause.*

Why haven't we got any olives?

STELLA. I didn't know you liked them.

JAMES. That must be the reason why we've never had them in the house. You've simply never been interested enough in olives to ask whether I liked them or not.

*The telephone rings in the house. HARRY puts the paper down and goes to it. BILL comes down the stairs. They stop, facing each other, momentarily. HARRY lifts the receiver. BILL walks into the room, picks up the paper and sits.*

HARRY. Hello. What? No. Wrong number. (*Replaces receiver.*) Wrong number. Who do you think it was?

BILL. I didn't think.

HARRY. Oh, by the way, a chap called for you yesterday.

BILL. Oh yes?

HARRY. Just after you had gone out.

BILL. Oh yes?

HARRY. Ah well, time for the joint. Roast or chips?

BILL. I don't want any potatoes, thank you.

HARRY. No potatoes? What an extraordinary thing. Yes, this chap, he was asking for you, he wanted you.

BILL. What for?

HARRY. He wanted to know if you ever cleaned your shoes with furniture polish.

BILL. Really? How strange.

HARRY. Not strange. Some kind of national survey.

BILL. What did he look like?

HARRY. Oh ... lemon hair, nigger brown teeth, wooden leg, bottlegreen eyes and a toupee. Know him?

BILL. Never met him.

HARRY. You would know him if you saw him.

BILL. I doubt it.

HARRY. What, a man who looked like that?

BILL. Plenty of men look like that.

HARRY. That's true. That's very true. The only thing is that this particular man was here last night.

BILL. Was he? I didn't see him.

HARRY. Oh yes, he was here, but I've got a funny feeling he wore a mask. It was the same man, but he wore a mask, that's all there is to it. He didn't dance here last night, did he, or do any gymnastics?

BILL. No one danced here last night.

HARRY. Aah! Well, that's why you didn't notice his wooden leg. I couldn't help seeing it myself when he came to the front door because he stood on the top step stark naked. Didn't seem very cold, though. He had a water bottle under his arm instead of a hat.

BILL. Those church bells have certainly left their mark on you.

HARRY. They haven't helped, but the fact of the matter is, old chap, that I don't like strangers coming into my house without an invitation. (*Pause.*) Who is this man and what does he want?



## Appendix 4: Story-retelling 3 (Post-test)

### Instructions:

Read the following extract from the play *The Birthday Party* by Harold Pinter

1) Underline all the words you do not know

2) Give back the sheet of paper to the teacher when you have finished

You have approximately 20 minutes to prepare this

Then

3) Retell the story in your own words to the teacher

**Do not ask for any help to the teacher while you are retelling the story**

\*You are allowed to make your own notes if you wish

### *The Birthday Party (Harold Pinter)*

STANLEY *crosses to him and grips his arm.*

STANLEY (*urgently*). Look-

MCCANN. Don't touch me.

STANLEY. Look. Listen a minute.

MCCANN. Let go my arm.

STANLEY. Look. Sit down a minute.

MCCANN (*savagely, hitting his arm*). Don't do that!

STANLEY. Listen. You knew what I was talking about before, didn't you?

STANLEY, *holding his arm.*

MCCANN. I don't know what you're at at all.

STANLEY. It's a mistake! Do you understand?

MCCANN. You're in a bad state, man.

STANLEY (*whispering, advancing*). Has he told you anything? Do you know what you are here for? Tell me. You needn't be frightened of me. Or hasn't he told you?

MCCANN. Told me what?

STANLEY (*hissing*). I've explained to you, damn you, that all those years I lived in Basingstoke I never stepped outside the door.

MCCANN. You know, I'm flabbergasted with you.

STANLEY (*reasonably*). Look. You look an honest man. You are being made a fool of, that's all. You understand? Where do you come from?

MCCANN. Where do you think?

STANLEY. I know Ireland very well. I've many friends there. I love that country and I admire and trust its people. I trust them. They respect the truth and they have a sense of humour. I think their policemen are wonderful. I've been there. I've never seen such sunset. What about coming out to have a drink with me? There's a pub down the road serves draught

Guinness. Very difficult to get in these parts - *(He breaks off. The voices draw nearer. GOLDBERG and PETEY enter from the back door.)*

PETEY. Oh hullo, Stan. You haven't met Stanley, have you, Mr. Goldberg?

GOLDBERG. I haven't had the pleasure.

PETEY. Oh well, this is Mr. Goldberg, this is Mr. Webber.

GOLDBERG. Pleased to meet you.

PETEY. We were just getting a bit of air in the garden.

GOLDBERG. I was telling Mr. Boles about my old mum. What days. *(He sits at the table, right.)* Yes. When I was young-ster I used to go for a walk down the canal with a girl who lived down my road. A beautiful girl. What a voice that bird had! A nightingale, my word of honour. Good? Pure? She wasn't a Sunday school teacher for nothing. Anyway, I'd leave her with a kiss on the cheek - I never took liberties- we weren't like the young men these days in those days. We knew the meaning of respect[..] I can see it like yesterday. The sun falling behind the dog stadium. Ah! *(He leans back contentedly.)*

MCCANN. Like behind the town hall.

GOLDBERG. What town hall?

MCCANN. In Carrikmacross.

GOLDBERG. There is no comparison. Up the street, into my gate, inside the door, home.

"Simey!" my old mum used to shout, "quick before it gets cold". And there on the table what would I see? The nicest piece of fish you could wish to find on a plate.

MCCANN. I thought your name was Nat.

GOLDBERG. She called me Simey.

PETEY. Yes, we all remember our childhood.

*Pause*

GOLDBERG. Too true. Eh, Mr. Webber, what do you say? Childhood. Hot water bottles. Hot milk. Pancakes. Soap suds. What a life.

PETEY. *( rising from the table)*. Well, I'll have to be off.

GOLDBERG. Off?

PETEY. It's my chess night.

GOLDBERG. You are not staying for the party?

PETEY. No, I'm sorry, Stan. I didn't know about it till just now. And we've got a game on. I'll try and get back early.

GOLDBERG. We'll save some drinks for you, all right? Oh, that reminds me. You'd better go and collect the bottles.

MCCANN. Now?

GOLDBERG. Of course now. Time's getting on. Round the corner, remember? Mention my name.

PETEY. Do my best. See you later, Stan!

## Appendix 5: Guided role-play 1 (Pre-test)

### Task specifications

**Skills assessed:** Oral skill (complexity, accuracy and fluency)

#### Operations:

**Informational skills:** information processing, provide required information, express requirements, likes and dislikes, describe, make suggestions, express preferences, decisions, opinions and justify opinions, take decisions, state preferences, give explanations, make comparisons

**Improvisational skills:** express agreement and disagreement, express purpose, check on understanding, check common ground, attempt to persuade others, solve a problem, indicate understanding by gestures and other paralinguistic means, make themselves understood, report conclusion

**Management of interaction:** initiate interactions, take their turn in the interaction, maintain the interaction, give turns to other speakers, come to a decision, end the interaction

**Addressee:** another candidate

**Reciprocity:** equal status

**Task materials:** cards

**Level:** upper-intermediate

**Expected duration:** 5 minutes

**Researcher's outline:** In this part of the test I will give each of you a sheet of paper with the information you need. You are in a travel agency where you need to book a holiday. One of you is a customer and the other one is a travel agent.

You have three minutes to study the information given in the paper. The customer needs to select the hotel based as far as possible, on the six qualities you want.

#### Task: Guided role-play

You are going to act out a scene in a travel agency where one of you is a customer and the other one is a travel agent. The customer needs to select the hotel based as far as possible, on the six qualities he wants from the requirements provided.

#### Candidate A

- 1 You have 5 minutes to read the following information and think about what you want to say
- 2 If there is anything which you do not understand, please, ask the teacher who is with you. **Do not start talking with your partner yet.**
- 3 After this 5 minutes preparation time, you will start interacting with another candidate.

### A. Customer

You want:

- A double room
- To go to a hotel in Miami for 5 nights. You can spend up to £400 on the hotel
- To be as near as possible to the city centre
- To go to a hotel with a good discotheque
- A children's swimming pool for your small son
- Someone to be available to look after your son at the hotel
- The hotel to serve a good food
- A comfortable room

### Task: Guided role-play

You are going to act out a scene in a travel agency where one of you is a customer and the other one is a travel agent. The customer needs to select the hotel based as far as possible, on the six qualities he wants from the requirements provided.

#### Candidate B

1. You have 5 minutes to study the following information carefully so that you can answer A (customer)
2. If there is anything which you do not understand, please, ask the teacher who is with you. **Do not start talking with your partner yet.**
3. After this 5 minutes preparation time, you will start interacting with another candidate.

### B. Travel agent

	Sun Inn	Regency Park	Paradiso	Oasis
Cost per night (double room)	£60	£45	£90	£40
View	☺	☺☺	☺☺☺	☺☺
Distance from the centre	10 miles	12 miles	20 miles	3 miles
Disco	☺	☺☺	☺☺☺	--
Restaurant	☺☺	☺☺☺	☺☺☺	
Adults' swimming pool	☺☺☺	☺	☺☺	☺
Children's swimming pool	--	☺☺	☺	--

Note: The different numbers of smiles indicates quality.

☺☺☺ = excellent, ☺☺ = very good, ☺ = good

## Appendix 6: Guided role-play 2 (Mid-test)

### Task: Guided role-play

You are going to act out a scene in a theatre where one of you is a customer and the other one is a box-office assistant. The customer wants to book a ticket for a performance based on few of the requirements provided.

#### Candidate A

1 You have 5 minutes to read the following information and think about what you want to say

2 If there is anything that you do not understand, please, ask the teacher who is with you. **Do not start talking with your partner yet.**

3 After this 5 minutes preparation time, you will start interacting with another candidate.

#### C. Customer

You want:

- A comedy or a historical play
- To be played in a foreign language
- To spend up to 15 pounds
- The theatre to be as near as possible to the city centre
- An evening performance
- To be a contemporary play
- Tickets for two people

### Task: Guided role-play

You are going to act out a scene in a theatre where one of you is a customer and the other one is a box-office assistant. The customer wants to book a ticket for a performance based on the requirements provided.

#### Candidate B

1. You have 5 minutes to study the following information carefully so that you can answer A (customer)

2. If there is anything that you do not understand, please, ask the teacher who is with you. **Do not start talking with your partner yet.**

3. After this 5 minutes preparation time, you will start interacting with another candidate.

#### D. Box-office assistant

Performance	Theatre	Day	Language	Ticket price
Henry V, Shakespeare	The Globe	Saturday, 7pm	English	£ 15
Blood Brothers, Willy Russell	Oliver Theatre	Wednesday, 2pm	Italian	£ 17
Absent Friends, Alan Ayckbourn	National Theatre*	Saturday, 8pm	Italian	£ 5
The Patient, Agatha Christie	Palace Theatre*	Sunday, 2pm	English	£ 10
Us and Them, David Campton	Hall Palace	Tuesday, 7pm	English	£ 16
Endgame, Samuel Becket	National Theatre*	Saturday, 2pm	Italian	£ 9

\*the theatre is situated right in the centre of the town

## Appendix 7: Guided role-play 3 (Post-test)

### Task: Guided Role-play

You are going to act out a scene in a bookshop where one of you is a customer and the other one is a shop assistant. The customer wants to buy a book as a present for a friend based on few of the requirements provided.

#### Candidate A

- 1 You have 5 minutes to read the following information and think about what you want to say
- 2 If there is anything that you do not understand, please, ask the teacher who is with you. **Do not start talking with your partner yet.**
- 3 After this 5 minutes preparation time, you will start interacting with another candidate.

#### A. Customer

You want:

- A book of poetry or a novel
- Possibly a classic book
- To be written in a foreign language, preferably in Russian or French
- To spend up to 22 pounds
- To be wrapped in a nice coloured paper as a present

### Task: Guided Role-play

You are going to act out a scene in a bookshop where one of you is a customer and the other one is a shop assistant. The customer wants to buy a book as a present for a friend based on few of the requirements provided.

#### Candidate B

1. You have 5 minutes to study the following information carefully so that you can answer A (customer)
2. If there is anything that you do not understand, please, ask the teacher who is with you. **Do not start talking with your partner yet.**
3. After this 5 minutes preparation time, you will start interacting with another candidate.

#### A. Seller agent

Book	Author	Language	Genre	Price
<i>The Doll's House</i>	Ibsen	Italian/French	Play	£ 15
<i>Songs of Innocence</i>	Blake	English/Italian	Poetry	£ 17.23
<i>Animal Farm</i>	George Orwell	English/Russian	Novel	£ 19.40
<i>Poems</i>	Wordsworth	English/Italian	Poetry	£ 16.20
<i>Crime and Punishment</i>	Dostoyevsky	Russian/Italian	Novel	£ 23.00
<i>The Stranger</i>	Camus	French	Novel	£ 9.15

## Appendix 8: OPI 1 guidelines (Pre-test)

### Test specifications

**Skills assessed:** oral complexity, accuracy and fluency

**Types of text:** interview (conversation)

**Addressee:** the teacher-researcher

**Reciprocity:** higher status

**Topic and operations:** Family, hobbies, school; familiar topics about which the learner can *express* thanks, requirements, opinions, comment, attitude, confirmation, apology, wants or needs, information; *narrate* a sequence of events; *elicit* information, directions, or service

**Management of the interaction:** initiate interactions, take their turn in the interaction, give turns to other speakers, come to a decision, end the interaction

**Expected duration:** around 15 minutes

**Examiner's outline:** In this part of the test I will ask you few questions about yourself. Do not be afraid of saying whatever you want to say for as long you want to talk. Try to give me as long and complete answers as possible.

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- Tell me something about your family
- What is your sister/brother like?
- Do you enjoy reading? What kind of books are you reading?
- Can you tell me about the last book you have read?
- What is your hobby?
- Tell me three things you did yesterday
- Where did you learn to speak English?
- What foreign country have you visited?
- What did you see there?

Now I would like you to ask me a few questions about whatever you like

## Appendix 9: OPI 2 guidelines (Mid-test)

### Test specifications

**Skills assessed:** oral complexity, accuracy and fluency

**Types of text:** interview (conversation)

**Addressee:** the teacher-researcher

**Reciprocity:** higher status

**Topic and operations:** Family, hobbies, school; familiar topics about which the learner can *express* thanks, requirements, opinions, comment, attitude, confirmation, apology, wants or needs, information; *narrate* a sequence of events; *elicit* information, directions, or service

**Management of interaction:** initiate interactions, take their turn in the interaction, give turns to other speakers, come to a decision, end the interaction

**Expected duration:** around 15 minutes

**Examiner's outline:** In this part of the test I will ask you few questions about Easter holiday. Do not be afraid of saying whatever you want to say for as long you want to talk. Try to give me as long and complete answers as possible.

- How was your Easter holiday?
  - What do you usually do at Easter?
  - Have you done something special at Easter this year?
  - Can you tell me something about how you spend Easter with your family?
  - Does your family cook traditional meals for Easter?
  - Do you usually travel over the Easter holiday or do you stay at home?
- Now, I would like you to ask me a few questions about whatever you like



## Appendix 10: OPI 3 guidelines (Post-test)

### Test specifications

**Skills assessed:** oral complexity, accuracy and fluency

**Types of text:** interview (conversation)

**Addressee:** the teacher-researcher

**Reciprocity:** higher status

**Topic and operations:** Family, hobbies, school; familiar topics about which the learner can *express* thanks, requirements, opinions, comment, attitude, confirmation, apology, wants or needs, information; *narrate* a sequence of events; *elicit* information, directions, or service

**Management of the interaction:** initiate interactions, take their turn in the interaction, give turns to other speakers, come to a decision, end the interaction

**Expected duration:** around 15 minutes

**Examiner's outline:** In this part of the test I will ask you few questions about you summer holiday, the preparation for your final exam and your future careers plans. Do not be afraid of saying whatever you want to say for as long you want to talk. Try to give me as long and complete answers as possible.

- What are you going to do on your holiday?
- Will you travel or stay at home?
- Are you prepared for your examination?
- What do you plan to do after finishing school?
- What job would you like to do?
- Can you tell me why you would like to pursue that particular career?

Now, I would like you to ask me a few questions about whatever you like

## Appendix 11: Questionnaire

### Texts or performance in the English language class?

Date: .....

Name.....

\*The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out your preferences for working with authentic texts and for performance in the English classes

\*This is not a test. There is not a right or wrong answer. The results of this survey will be used only for research purposes so please, give your answers genuinely.

Thank you very much for your help!

### Part A: TEXTS

\* Please, circle the number on each line, depending on how close the word describes your idea about the concept, from **NOT AT ALL** (enjoyable, interesting, etc.) to **EXTREMELY** (enjoyable, interesting, etc.).

#### 1. How did you find working with authentic drama texts:

	Not at all	Little	Somewhat	Much	Extremely
Enjoyable	1	2	3	4	5
Interesting	1	2	3	4	5
Useful	1	2	3	4	5
Meaningful	1	2	3	4	5
Easy	1	2	3	4	5
Satisfying	1	2	3	4	5

\*Please, try to give as accurate answers as possible to the questions

#### 1. What did you like best when working on texts? Why?

.....

.....

.....

.....

#### 2. What did you like least when working on texts? Why?

.....

.....

.....

## Part B: PERFORMANCE

*\*Please, circle the number on each line in the table to show your degree of preference for performance from NOT AT ALL (enjoyable, interesting, etc) to EXTREMELY (enjoyable, interesting, etc).*

### 1. How did you find working on the staging of the performance?

	Not at all	Little	Somewhat	Much	Extremely
Enjoyable	1	2	3	4	5
Interesting	1	2	3	4	5
Useful	1	2	3	4	5
Meaningful	1	2	3	4	5
Easy	1	2	3	4	5
Satisfying	1	2	3	4	5

*\*Please, try to give as accurate answers as possible to the questions*

### 1. What did you like best when working on performance? Why?

.....

.....

.....

### 2. What did you like least when working on performance? Why?

.....

.....

.....

## Part C: TEXTS or PERFORMANCE?

### 1. How comfortable (at ease) did you feel when working with texts or on performance?

*(1- very uncomfortable, 2-uncomfortable, 3 - not sure, 4 - comfortable, 5 - very comfortable)*

texts	1	2	3	4	5
performance	1	2	3	4	5

### 2. How much did you feel in control of your English (speaking correctly) by working with texts or on performance?

*(1-not at all, 2- little, 3-somewhat, 4-much, 5- very much)*

texts	1	2	3	4	5
performance	1	2	3	4	5

**3. How much were you able to *communicate* (say whatever you wanted) when speaking by working with texts or on performance?**

*(1-not at all, 2- little, 3-somewhat, 4-much, 5- very much)*

texts	1	2	3	4	5
performance	1	2	3	4	5

**4. How freely and spontaneously could you express yourself when working with texts or on performance?**

*(1-not at all, 2- little, 3-somewhat, 4-much, 5- very much)*

texts	1	2	3	4	5
performance	1	2	3	4	5

**5. In your future English classes which would you prefer to work more on? (\*Please, circle the corresponding letter to show your degree of preference)**

- a. Texts      b. Performance      c. Both      d. Neither of them

**6. How much do you think you improved your oral skills by working on the following?**

*(1-not at all, 2-little, 3-somewhat, 4-much, 5- very much)*

My English improves when I learn from the course book	1	2	3	4	5
My English improves when I work on texts	1	2	3	4	5
My English improves when I work on performance	1	2	3	4	5

**7. Please, give any further comments you would like to make regarding your preference for texts or performance in the space below:**

## Appendix 12: Example of a self-standing extract

### The Patient (Agatha Christie)<sup>17</sup>

(in *Twenty One-Act Plays: An Anthology for Amateur Performing Groups* ed. Stanley, 1978)

**Emmeline:** There's not much doubt is there, who she meant? 'B.'*(She looks at Wingfield.)*  
Not much doubt about that, is there, Bryan?

**Wingfield:** You always hated me, Emmeline. You always had it in for me. I tell you here and now, I didn't try to kill my wife.

**Emmeline:** Do you deny that you were having an affair with that woman there? *(She points at Brenda.)*

**Brenda:** *(Rising)* It's not true.

**Emmeline:** Don't tell me that. You were head over ears in love with him.

**Brenda:** *(Facing the others)* All right, then. I *was* in love with him. But that was all over ages ago. He didn't really care for me. It's all over, I tell you. All over!

**Emmeline:** In that case it seems odd you stayed on as his secretary.

**Brenda:** I didn't want to go. I - oh, all right, then! *(Passionately)* I still wanted to be near him. *(She sits.)*

**Emmeline:** And perhaps you thought that if Jenny were out of the way, you would console him very nicely, and be Mrs Wingfield Number Two...

**Wingfield:** Emmeline, for heaven's sake!

**Emmeline:** Perhaps it's "B" for Brenda.

**Brenda:** You horrible woman! I hate you. It's not true.

**Ross:** *(Rising)* Bryan - and Brenda. It seems to narrow it down to one of you two all right.

**Wingfield:** I wouldn't say that. It could be B for brother, couldn't it? Or Bill?

**Ross:** She always called me William.

**Wingfield:** After all, who stands to gain by poor Jenny's death? Not me. It's you. You and Emmeline. It's you two who'll get her money.

**Ginsberg:** Please - please! I can't have all this argument. Nurse, will you take them down to the waiting room.

**Nurse:** Yes, Doctor.

**Ross:** *(Turning to Ginsberg)* We can't stay cooped up in a little room with all of us slanging each other.

**Inspector:** You can go where you please on the hospital premises, but none of you is actually to leave the place. *(Sharply)* Is that understood?

**Wingfield:** All right.

**Ross:** Yes.

**Emmeline:** I have no wish to leave. My conscience is clear.

**Brenda:** *(Going up to her)* I think - *you* did it.

**Emmeline:** *(Sharply)* What do you mean?

**Brenda:** You hate her - you've always hated her. And you get the money you and your brother.

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<sup>17</sup> The grammar point taught by using this extract was Past Tense Simple

**Emmeline:** My name does not begin with a 'B', I'm thankful to say.

**Brenda:** (*Excitedly*) No – but it needn't. (*She turns to the Inspector*). Supposing that, after all, Mrs Wingfield *didn't* see who it was who pushed her off the balcony.

**Emmeline:** She has told us that she did.

**Brenda:** But supposing that she didn't. (*Crosses to the Inspector*) Don't you see what a temptation it might be to her? She was jealous of me and Bryan – oh, yes, she knew about us – and she was jealous. And when that machine there (*she gestures towards the electrical apparatus*) gave her a chance to get back at us – at me – don't you see how tempting it was to say 'Brenda pushed me...It could have been like that, it could!

**Inspector:** A little far-fetched.

**Brenda:** No, it isn't! Not to a jealous woman. You don't know what women are like when they're jealous. And she'd been cooped up there in her room – thinking – suspecting – wondering if Bryan and I were still carrying on together. It isn't far-fetched, I tell you. It could easily be true. (*She looks at Wingfield.*)

**Wingfield:** It's quite possible, you know, Inspector.

**Brenda:** (*To Emmeline*) And you *do* hate her.

**Emmeline:** Me? My own sister?

**Brenda:** I've seen you looking at her often. You were in love with Bryan – he was half engaged to you – and then Jenny came home from abroad and cut you out. (*Facing Emmeline*) Oh, she told me the whole story one day. You've never forgiven her. I think you've hated her ever since. I think that you came into her room that day, and you saw her leaning over the balcony, and it was too good a chance to be missed – you came up behind her and (*With a gesture*) pushed her over ...

### Post-reading questions:

- 1) Do you know about the works of Agatha Christie?
- 2) Have you seen any films of her books, like *Murder on the Orient Express*?
- 3) Where does this scene take place?
- 4) How many characters are involved?
- 5) Who is the victim?
- 6) What possible motives each of the following character have for wanting to kill the victim: Brian, Brenda, Bill and Emmeline?
- 7) Who do you think tried to kill the victim? Give reasons for your choice.
- 8) Why is the letter "B" so significant?
- 9) What do you think preceded this scene?
- 10) How do you think the scene will continue?

### **Appendix 13: Plays from which self-standing extracts have been selected in the text-based approach phase**

- *The Patient*, Agatha Christie
- *The Hollow*, Agatha Christie
- *Skirmishes*, Catherin Hayes
- *Little Brother, Little Sister*, David Campton
- *The Green Eye of the Little Yellow Dog*, Harry Austen
- *Us and them*, David Campton
- *Blood Brothers*, Willy Russell
- *Educating Rita*, Willy Russell

## Appendix 14: Drama games used in the text-based approach

### 1. Alibi (15 min)

The students are told that a crime has been committed and two of them are under suspicion. The two leave the room and must decide upon a story which explains what they were doing from 9:00 to 11:00 p.m. the previous night. They return to the room (one at a time) and are cross-examined by the “jury” composed of the rest of the class. The jury asks some specific questions and by asking the same questions to both of them they try to discover the discrepancies in their stories (e.g. “But what colour was the car?” “What did you order at the restaurant?” “What movie did you watch?” “How did you reach your home afterwards?”...). The object of the game is to trick the two people into making statements, on which they do not agree.

*Purpose:* practise with the past tense in affirmative, negative and interrogative questions, close the lesson on the same theme

### 2. The Chain Game (10-15 min)

The students sit in a circle. One of the student starts by saying a sentence in the past tense, the student next to him has to repeat the sentence and add to it a new one, the next student has to repeat all sentences and add a new one.

*Example:* I went to town and I bought a car. I went to town, I bought a car and I had a coffee. I went to town, I bought a car, I had a coffee and I ate a sandwich...

If a person makes a mistake, s/he is out of the game. Continue until there is one overall winner or when you have gone round the group at least once.

*Purpose:* reinforce previously taught grammar and vocabulary points

### 3. Yes and No<sup>18</sup>

Write down on the table some sentences, the students have to read and say No or Yes, using different tones.

*Example:* Your favourite team *has just scored* a goal

Your friend *has just told* you his dog has died.

Your mother *has just asked* you to tidy your room.

Someone *has just asked* you a boring questions.

Someone *has just told* you an interesting piece of gossip.

Your favourite team *has just lost* the world championship.

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<sup>18</sup> Maley, A. & Duff, A. (2003), (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) *Drama Techniques in Language Learning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 75.



*Purpose:* understand the present perfect continuous, activate the schemata, and energize the group

#### **4. Jumbled Story**

A story is cut into small pieces (two or three sentences at the most) and given to students to be memorized (e.g. The Worst Tourist<sup>19</sup>). The parts into which the story is cut depends on the number of students in class. You can form groups if you like. The students' task is to reconstruct the story. The groups are to be told only that: "each of you has the fragment of a story; read and memorize the fragment, then, by *talking* to the others, try to find out where it fits into the story".

The story can be mimed at the end if there is time.

*Purpose:* reinforce previous taught language, enhance the memory, and introduce the grammar point of the day

#### **5. Switch If<sup>20</sup> . . . (7-10 min)**

The director arranges chairs in a circle; one for each student. Standing in the middle of the circle, the director gives the students a command: switch places if . . . (e.g., you have a brother, you have ever been to Rome, you and your family go out to eat often, etc.). Students who meet the given criteria must get up and run to find another seat. The director, as well, runs to find a seat, leaving one student standing. That student chooses the next criterion. Students will often be very creative in singling out one classmate by coming up with a criterion that only one person meets (i.e., switch if you are wearing a red shirt, a black watch, sandals, and a beaded necklace).

*Purpose:* Practise the imperative form, the conditionals, use verbs in various tenses, work with vocabulary words, energize group and improve agility

#### **6. Who am I?<sup>21</sup>**

Pin or sellotape the name of a famous person on the back of each student. Then they mill around the room asking questions and trying to find out who they are. An alternative could be that every student in turn comes in front of the class and ask questions to the class until he/she finds out who he/she is.

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<sup>19</sup> Maley, A. & Duff, A. (2003), *Drama Techniques in Language Learning*, (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.111.

<sup>20</sup> Ryan-Scheutz, C. & Colangelo, L. M. (2004), "Full-Scale Theater Production and Foreign Language Learning," in *Foreign Language Annals* 37(3), pp. 374-389.

<sup>21</sup> Wessels, C. (1987), *Drama (Resource books for teachers)*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 34.

*Example: Am I dead? Am I alive? How did I die? How old was I? Am I a character in a fairy tale? Did I write any book? What kind of books have I written? Where did my plays where performed?...*

*Purpose:* Practise asking questions rather than giving answers, introduce the new reading text or the new theme of the lesson

### **7. If: The Circle Game**

The teacher starts the game with a sentence as an example, then, the students continue by picking the second sentence of the conditional type and transforming it into a new sentence and adding to it a new one so as to form another conditional.

*Example: “If I had a car I would take you into the mountains”, “If I took you into the mountains I would show you the forests and the rivers”, “If I showed you the mountains and the rivers you would realise how beautiful they are”....*

*Example: “If I had known their secret I would have told you”, “If I had told you their secret you would have accused me of being dishonest” ...*

*Purpose:* Practise the second and third type conditional, practise new vocabulary

### **8. The Envelope Game**

A sentence in the third type conditional is written down on cards (one word per card) which are simply mixed and put in an envelope. Prepare as many envelopes as the number of students in the class. Ask students to arrange (on the floor) the sentence in the correct order. Once they have finished they will have to check and correct if necessary the neighbouring student's sentence. Cards are mixed again, put in the envelope and students exchange envelopes. They will need to form another sentence and go through the same process again.

*Purpose:* consolidate the third-type conditional (*if*- clause), memorize new vocabulary

### **9. The Mime Game<sup>22</sup>**

Students are paired and sit alongside each other but with one of them facing the “acting area” and the other, unsighted with their back facing it. A kind of “Information Gap” takes place. The teacher explains that s/he will depict a situation and the watcher should describe the action to their “blind” partner, as it happens. A scene is played. There are countless scenarios, but as a way of example one can take this:

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<sup>22</sup> Adapted from Butterfield, T. (1989), *Drama through language through drama*, Oxford: Kembles Press, pp. 29.

“A person comes downstairs one morning stiff and yawning. S/he takes the daily newspaper from the mat. S/he reads it in a desultory fashion but soon comes across a piece which grabs his/her full interest – an advert for a job. After reading and re-reading, the person rushes for pen and paper and hastily scribbles a reply. An envelope is found and addressed. Time seems of the essence and the character rushes for his coat. Runs to the post-box and posts his/her “application”. But as soon as the letter falls inside the box, the sender realises that he/she has forgotten to stamp it. He/she tries in vain to slip a narrow hand into the post-box but it is no good.....”

The student will have worked in the present continues as the action unfolds. But now the “blind” partner has to repeat what was told them. They will function in a past tense. Finally, each pair is asked to explain what “should have been done” or “should have been avoided”. Each pair has to think up a new conditional phrase – using a tense which in grammar terms may be three years away!

*Purpose:* consolidate verb tenses, teach new vocabulary

## **Appendix 15: Warm-up exercises, theatrical techniques and games used in the performance-based approach**

### **1. Focus**

*Description:* Stand in a circle with your feet slightly apart taking deep breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth. Stand on tip-toes for three seconds and then down again. Repeat this until everyone can do it without wobbling for seven seconds. Then ask the learners to close their eyes and stand on their tip-toes. Again, repeat the action until everyone can perform the task without wobbling.

*Purpose:* help to focus and concentrate on the lesson

### **2. Finger to Finger**

*Description:* Put students into pairs (A and B) and ask them to make contact with the forefingers. 'As' close their eyes whilst 'Bs' leads them around the room by the forefinger. After a couple of minutes reverse role.

*Purpose:* make them aware of the physical space, of getting the feeling of the space in the room and of the proximity of people around

### **3. Breathing Exercises**

Students sit in a circle and the teacher gives directions: Imagine how you might breathe if you had just climbed a long flight of stairs, you had just learned you had passed an examination you had expected to fail, had managed to catch a train by running after it, etc. Students have to act the imagined scene.

*Purpose:* improve listening skills, learn new vocabulary, help to focus and concentrate on the lesson

### **4. Tongue Twisters**

*Description:* Students are given slips of papers with some tongue twisters (one each). They are given time to memorize it and then, in turn they try to say it as best as they can in front of the other classmates. Some of them can be repeated in chorus.

*Purpose:* improve pronunciation, listening skills, vocabulary and fluency, energize group

## 5. Minefield<sup>23</sup> (15 min)

### Minefield (directions☺) - left, right, ahead, backwards, forwards

*Description:* Students are divided into two teams and separated by an empty space of perhaps 10 to 15 feet. All participants take off their shoes and toss them into the central space; each shoe now represents a land mine. One team is made up of soldiers who have been captured by the enemy; the other students are their comrades who are trying to free them. The enemy has performed medical experiments on the soldiers, however, so they are now blind (that is, blindfolded!) One at a time, students must take a companion across the field, being very specific with their directions (e.g., “Now take a very tiny step to the right”). If the student touches a shoe, they are eliminated. The stakes can be raised by imposing a time limit, by having two pairs go at once, or by having other students create distracting noises (e.g., barking dogs, shouting prison guards, machine guns).

*Purpose:* Energize group, practise giving accurate directions, emphasize the importance of specificity, and provide a starting point for a discussion about the art of theatre in general

## 6. The Glove (improvisation game)<sup>24</sup>

*Description:* Students sit down on the floor forming a circle. A glove is thrown into the middle of the circle. One by one the students would have to imagine a short situation where the glove is used as representing something, stand up spontaneously, pick up the glove and act the scene in front of their peers either miming or using their voice. After all students completed their turn some of the scenes can be commented on so as to reveal what they were all about.

*Purpose:* offer an opportunity to improve imagination, fluency, accuracy, vocabulary; help to focus and concentrate on the lesson

## 7. Observation of the Room<sup>25</sup>

*Description:* The students are asked to walk round the room and “have a good look at it” for not more than about two minutes. They are then suddenly told to take a seat and close their eyes. The teacher starts with asking a simple question, such as: How many doors/lights are there? “What colour are the curtains?” Then students can also ask questions spontaneously. The students should listen and reply spontaneously. They can also confirm or infirm the answer. The game stops when there no further questions to be asked.

*Purpose:* improve listening skills, attention, ability of asking questions

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<sup>23</sup> Ryan-Scheutz, C. & Colangelo, L. M. (2004): “Full-Scale Theater Production and Foreign Language Learning,” in *Foreign Language Annals* 37(3), pp. 374-389

<sup>24</sup> Game learnt in *Introduction to Drama and theatre* classes, Department of Literature and Theatre Arts, University of Essex

<sup>25</sup> Maley, A. & Duff, A. (2003) *Drama Techniques in Language Learning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), p.29

## 8. La le De Da Ohh la la<sup>26</sup>

*Description:* Students are put into pairs. Some functions are written on the board and each pair is asked to choose one. The list might include: persuading, complaining, warning, apologising, threatening or accusing. Pairs improvise a short scene making sure one of them is, for example, *persuading* while the other is *being persuaded*. They run their chosen scene with all blocking (i.e. movement), facial expression but no dialogue. Instead, one actor mimes “la de da” whilst the other mimes “ooh la la”.

*Purpose:* Practise facial expressions and inflexion, learn new vocabulary, get them focused on the lesson

## 9. I am a tree

*Description:* In the exercise “I am a tree” students spontaneously create a statue whilst the game is in progress. Students sit in a half circle. One student gets up, stands in the middle, assumes a pose and tells the others what he/she represents (e.g., “I am a tree”). One after the other (in big classes, this exercise is best limited to only a part of the class), the students position themselves in a way that adds to the picture and say what/who they portray, e.g., “I am the apple that hangs on the tree”; “I am the bush next to the tree”; “I am the dog that pees on the tree”, etc. The first person always sets the theme for the statue, e.g. “I am a circus tent” “I am a student in our German class”; “I am a train”, etc. The individual statues can come alive when, for example, an observing student taps them on the shoulder, whereupon each member of the statue spontaneously makes a statement fitting to their image (e.g. “The apples on me are heavy”; “When will the class be finally over?”).

*Purpose:* Practise non-verbal expression and improvisational speech, as well as vocabulary and sentence structure

## 10. Poetry Alive!<sup>27</sup>

*Description:* Students are asked to choose a short part of their lines which they need to memorize and ask each learner to commit it to memory. They are instructed to walk around the space and *externalise* the lines. In other words, they should use gestures with the words as they move around the space. After a few minutes when learners have experimented with the lines, they should choose another and follow the procedure again.

*Purpose:* Help students to memorize the lines, practice non-verbal expression, make them aware of the space.

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<sup>26</sup> Almond, M. (2005), *Teaching English with Drama*, Brighton: Pavilion Publishing, pp.77.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, pp.78.

## 11. Memorisation Game<sup>28</sup>

*Description:* Write on the blackboard/whiteboard a few of the emotions and moods from the play you are rehearsing (brainstorm as many emotions and moods as possible from the play). Learners mill around the room repeating their lines. Every 10 seconds call out an emotion. Students must keep repeating their lines with this emotion until you call out another one. For each of the emotions/characters, encourage the students to overreact and exaggerate. Let them have fun with this.

*Purpose:* Memorizing lines for the rehearsal in a funny way, practise with non-verbal expression, learn and practise new vocabulary, learn how to form adverbs

<i>Suspiciously</i>	<i>bewildered</i>	<i>mumbling</i>	<i>shuddering</i>	
<i>doubtfully</i>	<i>pleasantly</i>	<i>Sharply</i>		
<i>Laughing</i>	<i>irritably</i>	<i>unwillingly</i>	<i>bluntly</i>	<i>sulky</i>
<i>with shocked</i>	<i>surprise</i>	<i>Breathlessly</i>	<i>shyly</i>	<i>Muttering</i>
<i>wide-eyed</i>	<i>wearily</i>			

<sup>28</sup>Adapted from Almond, M. (2005), *Teaching English with Drama*, Brighton: Pavilion Publishing, pp. 83.

## Appendix 16: Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form for the teacher

**Project:** Text or Full-scale Performance? Exploring the Language of Authentic Contemporary Plays in the EFL classroom

### What is the project about?

The study investigates to what extent authentic contemporary plays as text or/and as full-scale performance enhance students' oral skills in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency and which approach is more motivating for students. I am conducting this study for my PhD thesis in English Language Teaching under the supervision of Dr Julian Good, Language and Linguistics Department of the University of Essex ([jrpgoo@essex.ac.uk](mailto:jrpgoo@essex.ac.uk)).

### What does participating involve?

The study involves providing the researcher-teacher with the appropriate experimental group and control group to take part in the project. It also involves providing the school syllabus prior to the project and all necessary information regarding the students taking part in the project.

*Please tick the appropriate boxes*

#### Taking Part

	Yes	No
I have read and understood the project information given above.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in the project. Taking part in the project will include being audio-recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Use of the information I provide for this project only

I understand my personal details such as name, email address and phone number will not be revealed to people outside the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that the data collected may be used in publications, reports, web pages and other research outputs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Use of the information I provide beyond this project

I agree for the anonymized data I provide to be archived at the UK Data Archive, the archive of the University of Essex and any other research archive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that other genuine researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that other genuine researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant [printed]                      Signature                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Simona Bora  
Researcher [printed]                      Signature                      Date

Project contact details for further information:  
Simona Bora                      Email: [sbora@essex.ac.uk](mailto:sbora@essex.ac.uk)



## Appendix 17: Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form for the students in the control group

**Project:** Texts or Full-scale Performance? Exploring the Language of Authentic Contemporary Plays in the EFL classroom

### What is the project about?

The study investigates to what extent authentic contemporary plays as text or/and as full-scale performance enhance students' oral skills in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency and which approach is more motivating for students. I am conducting this study for my PhD thesis in English Language Teaching under the supervision of Dr Julian Good, Language and Linguistics Department of the University of Essex ([jrpgoo@essex.ac.uk](mailto:jrpgoo@essex.ac.uk)).

### What does participating involve?

The participants in the control group will be asked to complete a pre-test and a post-oral test consisting of a story-retelling, an oral proficiency interview and a guided role-play. The students will be audio-recorded whilst taking the test. The data will be stored anonymously and separately from any information about individual participants; no information about individual participants will be passed on to people outside the research project.

*Please tick the appropriate boxes*

#### Taking Part

	Yes	No
I have read and understood the project information given above.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in the project. Taking part in the project will include being orally assessed, and interviewed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Use of the information I provide for this project only

I understand my personal details such as name, email address and phone number will not be revealed to people outside the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that the data collected may be used in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Use of the information I provide beyond this project

I agree for the anonymized data I provide to be archived at the UK Data Archive, the archive of the University of Essex and any other research archive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that other genuine researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that other genuine researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web, pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

_____ Name of participant [printed] <u>Simona Bora</u>	_____ Signature	_____ Date
_____ Researcher [printed]	_____ Signature	_____ Date

Project contact details for further information: Simona Bora

Email: [sbora@essex.ac.uk](mailto:sbora@essex.ac.uk)

## Appendix 18: Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form for the students in the experimental group

**Project:** Texts or Full-scale Performance? Exploring the Language of Authentic Contemporary Plays in the EFL classroom

### What is the project about?

The study investigates to what extent authentic contemporary plays as text or/and as full-scale performance enhance students' oral skills in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency and which approach is more motivating for students. I am conducting this study for my PhD thesis in English Language Teaching under the supervision of Dr Julian Good, Language and Linguistics Department of the University of Essex. ([jrpgoo@essex.ac.uk](mailto:jrpgoo@essex.ac.uk)).

### What does participating involve?

The participants will be asked to attend English classes taught through a text-based approach and a performance-based approach and to complete a pre-test, a mid-test and a post-oral test consisting of a story-retelling, an oral proficiency interview and a guided role-play, a questionnaire and a follow-up interview. The students will be audio-recorded whilst taking the test. The data will be stored anonymously and separately from any information about individual participants; no information about individual participants will be passed on to people outside the research project.

*Please tick the appropriate boxes*

#### Taking Part

	Yes	No
I have read and understood the project information given above.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in the project. Taking part in the project will include being orally assessed, and interviewed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Use of the information I provide for this project only

I understand my personal details such as name, email address and phone number will not be revealed to people outside the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that the data collected may be used in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Use of the information I provide beyond this project

I agree for the anonymized data I provide to be archived at the UK Data Archive, the archive of the University of Essex and any other research archive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that other genuine researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that other genuine researchers may use my words in publications, reports, Web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of participant [printed] Simona Bora	Signature	Date
Researcher [printed]	Signature	Date

Project contact details for further information: Simona Bora

Email: [sbora@essex.ac.uk](mailto:sbora@essex.ac.uk)

## Appendix 19: Example of coding for accuracy, AS-units and repairs fluency in monologic (Story-retelling) and dialogic tasks (OPI)

### Story-retelling

The story is called *The Collection* by Harold Pinter. |<sup>1</sup> We have some characters |<sup>2</sup> and in the first part there are Bill and Henry. |<sup>3</sup> Bill is taking a paper |<sup>4</sup> but Henry doesn't want # that Bill take it # so they fight |<sup>5</sup> but in the meantime comes Stella (G) with a tray of coffee and biscuits (P) |<sup>6</sup> and ask to (G) James # if he wants some coffee or biscuits. |<sup>7</sup> And FS but James doesn't want (G) biscuits |<sup>8</sup> because he do not (G) want to get fat. |<sup>9</sup> [So, Stella ask to him if...no,] FS so James ask (G) # if there's (G) some olive (P) |<sup>10</sup> but Stella says # that in the house there isn't (G) olive (G). |<sup>11</sup> After that the phone rings # so Henry comes [to] R to answer |<sup>12</sup> [and] R and Henry say (G) # that it was an unimportant...[the]...the...(V). |<sup>13</sup> After that Henry come (G) back in the kitchen |<sup>14</sup> and Henry and Bill starts (G) to eat together |<sup>15</sup> and they can chose # if they want roast or chips |<sup>16</sup> but Bill say (G) # that he doesn't want (G) potatoes. |<sup>17</sup> [During the] R during the meal Henry say (G) # that the last night there there R was a man |<sup>18</sup> but Henry doesn't know # who this person is |<sup>19</sup> and Henry only knows # that this person have (G) a (G) lemon hair, nigger brown teeth, an wooden leg, and bottle green eyes and a toupee. |<sup>20</sup> They really doesn't (G) know # who is this person (G) |<sup>21</sup> but the only thing # that Henry say (G) is # that the man was there last night. |<sup>22</sup> And another [thing] R thing # that Henry knows # is # that this person wore a mask. |<sup>23</sup> Henry [ is very ] FS is not happy # that some strange person coming (G) into his house without any invition (V). |<sup>24</sup>

### OPI

P: So, My holiday was pretty cool. |<sup>1</sup> I went in (G) Innsbruck for a few days, |<sup>2</sup> then I come (G) back to Trento |<sup>3</sup> and I went to the disco so, |<sup>4</sup> yes, I went to the disco on Saturday [Saturday] R night |<sup>5</sup> and, yes, I drank a little bit. |<sup>6</sup>  
P: I was drunk |<sup>7</sup> then [I] R I've gone back home (G) |<sup>8</sup> and I studied |<sup>9</sup> so, the next day I studied on (G) the test # we had on Monday. |<sup>10</sup> And yeah, that is (Ar) that's it. |<sup>11</sup>  
P: I went at (G) Innsbruck another time # because my grandmother lives there |<sup>12</sup> and I [I I I] R was there with my girlfriend for five days. |<sup>13</sup> We didn't do anything. |<sup>14</sup> So, we were (V) on the sofa |<sup>15</sup> we watched TV, |<sup>16</sup> we eat (G) a little bit |<sup>17</sup>.  
P: A little bit, then I had a football game, a football match |<sup>18</sup> and we won 36 to 0. |<sup>19</sup>  
P: Yes. It was very cool! |<sup>20</sup>  
P: Yes, [I] R I played only the first quarter # because then # I broke something on (G) my foot. |<sup>21</sup>  
P: No, no... |<sup>22</sup>  
P: Yes, I twisted my leg # so, I was outside taking picture. |<sup>23</sup>  
P: Pretty good. |<sup>24</sup>  
P: No, no. [It was] FS...I only can't...I couldn't (Ar) walk for a few days |<sup>25</sup> but then it disappeared by itself. |<sup>26</sup>

P: story... (V)|<sup>27</sup>

P: History, sorry. History test.|<sup>28</sup> But the teacher wasn't here |<sup>29</sup> and we made (G) the test with internet with a few (V) help, so |<sup>30</sup>

P: [We was in the class] We were (Ar) in the class |<sup>31</sup> and the teacher left [left] R said (V) # you can use the [the] R papers # I gave you and # if you want (G) internet|<sup>32</sup> I do not know why|<sup>33</sup> but she says so<sup>34</sup>

P: Me too. |<sup>35</sup>

P: Oh, yes. I go outside a few days a week # to take pictures |<sup>36</sup> and I have a friend # who works in (G) the journal, in (G) the newspaper, the Adige |<sup>37</sup> and sometimes he publish (G) my photos for some service [service] R services [services] R (Ar), like the photos of the match.|<sup>38</sup> He took few (G) photos of mine|<sup>39</sup> and one became very famous # because it was a very good a very good shoot [shoot] R |<sup>40</sup> so directly in the moment when someone was blaket # I do not know blaket (V)... and it's on a few football page (G) # so it becomes a little famous (G). |<sup>41</sup>

P: No, I have the picture and the football sites.|<sup>42</sup>

P: Yes, sure.|<sup>43</sup>

P: Yes, in Bologna there is in August. (G)|<sup>44</sup> We make (G) an exhibition with a group # their...their...[their] R name is AEM |<sup>45</sup> and in Bologna there will be a congress, a little show about pictures.|<sup>46</sup> There are # I think about one thousand people.|<sup>47</sup> They are showing their photos, their shoots |<sup>48</sup> and then the congress will say # if they will be published (P) on their page or not.|<sup>49</sup>

P: August, at 8 August (G) in Bologna.|<sup>50</sup>

P: It's on single person (G), another person, so another group, only one person (G) a time. |<sup>51</sup> So, I bring the photos of this winter, of the snow and of the football matches and the shoots # I do in (G) the next time.|<sup>52</sup> So, I can bring so (G) many pictures I want.|<sup>53</sup> There is no limit.|<sup>54</sup>

P: Forty up to now.|<sup>55</sup> So, the best ones.|<sup>56</sup> I think # the others wouldn't be so good # because they are a little moved # and the light is not so good.|<sup>57</sup> I bring only forty for this. (G) Yes, up to now.|<sup>58</sup>

P: So, yes, now there is anice sun # so, I will take photos on the mountains (P) and a lot of children photos|<sup>59</sup> so, about children. |<sup>60</sup> They are very loved by the team |<sup>61</sup> and I will take a few of these photos.|<sup>62</sup>

P: When they are playing soccer|<sup>63</sup> or playing something with the cord, so playing.|<sup>64</sup> Only happy children.|<sup>65</sup>

P: I think, yes.|<sup>66</sup> In the spring, FS I think that # in spring time the best emotion is happiness.|<sup>66</sup> If I'll take (G) some crying picture # I think # I convert it to black and white, |<sup>67</sup> that's another slice, another part of the context.|<sup>68</sup>

P: Mine are colored.|<sup>69</sup>

P: I would like to play with the color, so, the children, FS|<sup>70</sup> so, I know these children|<sup>71</sup> so they will dress # like I say # or how I say, not in green or not in yellow, (G) so, in red.|<sup>72</sup> I think more in red or in blue.|<sup>73</sup> Pictures colours which aren't in the nature (P) (G) at the time, so, like in the winter colours|<sup>74</sup> so, they are blue and white|<sup>75</sup> and then, I take only yes, red, green and these coloured pictures.|<sup>76</sup>

P: No, only the dress, the dresses of the children.<sup>77</sup> (G) So, the emotions, all the things they do # they will be spontaneous.<sup>78</sup>

P: No, they doesn't. (G) <sup>79</sup>

P: Yes, the parents know that, me and the parents (V)<sup>80</sup> Because I said (G) them # I will divide them in two teams, one team dressed in red and one team dressed in another colour # I think, in blue.<sup>81</sup>

P: Yes, I read an interview with Benjamin Franklin <sup>82</sup> and the interviewer said (P) # (G) so, asked him # why he failed 999 times to project a bulb <sup>83</sup> and he said # that he didn't fail 999 times to project a bulb<sup>84</sup> he projected 999 times something # which is not a bulb. <sup>85</sup> But he needed only that one the (G) single time # to invent the bulb.<sup>86</sup>

### Index:

G - grammar error

P - pronunciation error

V- vocabulary error

FS - false start

[..] R- repetition

Ar - auto-repair

<sup>86</sup> - AS-units

# - clause boundary within an AS-unit

## Appendix 20: Interview coding-scheme

Text-based approach	Performance-based approach
<p>1. AFFECTIVE POSITIVE RESPONSES</p> <p>1.1. ENJOYMENT</p> <p>1.1.1. Novelty effect</p> <p>1.1.2. Active participation</p> <p>1.1.3. Playful aspect through games</p> <p>1.1.4. Cooperative learning</p> <p>1.2. MOTIVATION</p> <p>1.2.1. Engagement with the story</p> <p>1.2.2. Engagement with the subtext</p> <p>1.2.3. Cultural element</p> <p>1.2.4. Building knowledge</p> <p>1.2.5. Learning language in context</p> <p>1.2.6. Playfulness</p> <p>2. AFFECTIVE NEGATIVE RESPONSES</p> <p>2.1. Uninteresting texts</p> <p>2.2. Grammar learned inductively</p> <p>2.3. Repetitive (working constantly with scripts only)</p>	<p>3. AFFECTIVE POSITIVE RESPONSES</p> <p>3.1. ENJOYMENT</p> <p>3.1.1. Active way of learning</p> <p>3.1.2. Playing a role</p> <p>3.1.3. Interactive learning</p> <p>3.1.4. Feelings of identity</p> <p>3.1.5. Disguising</p> <p>3.2. MOTIVATION</p> <p>3.2.1. Engagement with the story</p> <p>3.2.2. Cultural element</p> <p>3.2.3. Building knowledge</p> <p>3.2.4. Contextualized learning</p> <p>3.2.5. Situational language learning</p> <p>3.2.6. Kinesthetic learning</p> <p>4. AFFECTIVE NEGATIVE RESPONSES</p> <p>4.1. Less interesting (a single script)</p> <p>4.2. Repetitive (rehearsals)</p> <p>4.3. Feelings of discomfort when acting</p> <p>4.3.1. Anxiety at the thought of acting in public</p> <p>4.3.2. Embarrassment at the thought of acting in public</p> <p>4.4. Frustration with uncooperative partners</p> <p>4.5. Dissatisfaction with memorization</p>
<p>5. USEFULNESS and PRACTICALITIES</p> <p>5.1. Easier way of learning</p> <p>5.1.1. Unconscious way of learning</p> <p>5.1.2. Real conversation</p> <p>5.2. Apply to real life situations</p> <p>5.2.1. Colloquial expressions and slang</p> <p>5.2.2. Appropriate linguistic registers</p> <p>5.2.3. Situational application</p> <p>5.3. Building confidence</p> <p>5.4. Listening skills improvement</p> <p>5.5. Language improvement</p> <p>5.5.1. Vocabulary</p> <p>5.5.2. Fluency</p> <p>5.5.3. Less common words</p>	<p>6. USEFULNESS and PRACTICALITIES</p> <p>6.1. Helpful practice for language learning</p> <p>6.2. Easier way of learning</p> <p>6.2.1. Repetitions helps retention</p> <p>6.2.2. Easier to learn by doing</p> <p>6.2.3. Acting trains emotional memory</p> <p>6.3. Language transferable to real life</p> <p>6.4. Body language</p> <p>6.5. Building confidence</p> <p>6.5.1. Having something to say</p> <p>6.5.2. Being able to participate</p> <p>6.6. Language improvement</p> <p>6.6.1. Pronunciation</p> <p>6.6.2. Accuracy</p> <p>6.6.3. Fluency</p> <p>6.6.4. Rhythm</p> <p>6.6.5. Tone of the voice</p>

	<p>7. NEGATIVE RESPONSES</p> <p>7.1. Memorization not useful (to apply to real life)</p>
<p>8. PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES</p> <p>8.1. Lack of language proficiency – difficult to understand script</p> <p>8.2. Classes conducted exclusively or mainly in English</p> <p>8.3. A new grammar teaching style</p>	<p>9. PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES</p> <p>9.1. Acting</p> <p>9.1.1. Difficult to interpret a character</p> <p>9.1.2. Anxiety at the thought of acting</p> <p>9.2. Lack of time for memorization</p>

## Appendix 21: Questionnaire coding-scheme

Text-based approach	Performance-based approach
<p><b>1. AFFECTIVE POSITIVE RESPONSES</b></p> <p><b>1.1. ENJOYMENT</b></p> <p>1.1.1. Novelty effect (9)</p> <p>1.1.2. Active participation through discussion (9)</p> <p>1.1.3. Playfulness (7)</p> <p>1.1.4. Learning new words and expression (8)</p> <p>1.1.5. Learning new things from the authentic texts(2)</p> <p>1.1.6. Involvement in the lessons</p> <p>1.1.7. Learning slang (1)</p> <p><b>2. AFFECTIVE NEGATIVE RESPONSES</b></p> <p>2.1. Some play-texts uninteresting (1)</p> <p>2.2. Some scripts difficult (language) (1)</p> <p>2.3. Grammar learned inductively (2)</p>	<p><b>3. AFFECTIVE POSITIVE RESPONSES</b></p> <p><b>3.1.ENJOYMENT</b></p> <p>3.1.1. Active way of learning (8)</p> <p>3.1.2. Taking on roles (5)</p> <p>3.1.3. Novelty effect (9)</p> <p>3.1.4. Feelings of identity (2)</p> <p>3.1.5. Chances for speaking (6)</p> <p>3.1.6. Disguising (being somebody else when acting) (1)</p> <p>3.1.7. Improving pronunciation through acting (7)</p> <p>3.1.8. Playful way of learning (5)</p> <p>3.1.9. Unconscious way of learning (4)</p> <p>3.1.10. Learning authentic language (3)</p> <p><b>4. AFFECTIVE NEGATIVE RESPONSES</b></p> <p>4.1. Authentic language difficult (1)</p> <p>4.2. Shyness when acting (5)</p> <p>4.3. Frustration with partners (1)</p> <p>4.4. Memorization non enjoyable (7)</p> <p>4.5. Regret for not having video-recorded (1)</p> <p>4.6. Disappointment with not having staged the performance (2)</p> <p>4.7. Feelings of confusion when preparing the performance (1)</p>
<p><b>5. USEFULNESS and PRACTICALITIES</b></p> <p>5.1. Easier way of learning</p> <p>5.2. Language improvement</p> <p>5.2.1. Vocabulary</p> <p>5.2.2. Fluency</p>	<p><b>6. USEFULNESS and PRACTICALITY</b></p> <p>6.1. Opportunities for speaking</p> <p>6.2. Language improvement</p> <p>6.2.1. Pronunciation (9)</p> <p>6.2.2. Fluency (6)</p> <p>6.2.3. Rhythm (1)</p>
<p><b>7. PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES</b></p> <p>7.1. Memorization difficult (2)</p>	



