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## **Classroom as a stage: Creative drama-based lesson plan proposal for second language teaching in preschool education\*\***

### **Summary**

The preschool period is a critical period for children's language development. Language learning occurs through play, interaction, and experiences in this period. Children's natural curiosity and play instincts in preschool can effectively utilise language teaching. Drama is a dynamic and participatory method that helps students develop their language skills. This study explores the pivotal role of drama-based language teaching within preschool education, particularly focusing on its integration into the preschool curriculum. Drawing from qualitative research methods and document analysis, the research explores the transformative potential of drama in fostering language acquisition and overall development among young learners. By immersing children in imaginative scenarios and interactive activities, drama facilitates language acquisition naturally and engagingly, aligning with the objectives of preschool education. The study underscores examining Peter Slade's drama approach and its application in the preschool curriculum. The research provides insights into the design and implementation of drama activities. The lesson plans designed around themes such as "Colours and Shapes", "A Day at the Zoo", "A Journey to the Magic Forest", and "A Magical Journey to the Enchanted Castle" in the preschool (3-5-year-olds)

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exemplify how drama can effectively enhance language learning while encouraging children's creativity, collaboration, and self-expression.

**Keywords:** children, creative drama, implementations, preschool, second language teaching.

## Introduction

In today's globalised world, language skills have determined individuals' capacity to interact with different cultures and increase their communication skills. In this context, language teaching, especially in the preschool period, is critically essential in opening the doors of a second language to children and introducing them to different languages at an early age. At this point, drama in foreign language teaching in the preschool period stands out as a tool that supports children's natural tendency to learn and their desire to explore and as an innovative approach that aims to develop language skills by utilising children's natural curiosity and creativity.

Creative drama has a significant role in enhancing cognitive and social skills in children (Whitebread & O'Sullivan, 2012). It offers secure conditions for developing their emotional, physical, linguistic, and social skills (Qianyi & Anna, 2019). Creative drama is a highly effective tool for teaching foreign languages in early childhood. This method not only improves children's language skills but also contributes to their social and emotional development. The imaginary scenarios presented by drama expand children's vocabulary and strengthen their empathy and problem-solving skills (Dawoud, Hasim, & Saad, 2022). Furthermore, through creative drama, children not only learn a foreign language but also experience the use of linguistic structures in real-life scenarios (Greenfader & Brouillette, 2017).

The importance of this research lies in the alignment of drama-based teaching methods with the developmental characteristics of preschool-aged children, who learn best through play, interaction, and hands-on experiences (Cameron, 2011). By using Peter Slade's drama principles and incorporating drama techniques like role-playing, pantomime, and improvisation, the study aims to create authentic and engaging linguistic experiences. These activities not only support vocabulary and language structure development but also foster essential social, cognitive, and emotional skills, contributing holistically to children's growth.

Building on the role of creative drama in the development of cognitive, linguistic and social skills in early childhood, and particularly in the context of foreign language learning, this study explores how drama-based activities, such as those inspired by Peter Slade's approach, can be effectively integrated into the preschool second language teaching curriculum. Designed in line with the Ministry of National Education's preschool curriculum, the integration of these activities aims to create immersive, real-life linguistic experiences for young learners. Furthermore, this

study addresses the importance of drama-based language teaching in preschools. It presents a research study on the design of drama activities in the preschool curriculum for particular education institutions prepared by the Board of Education of the Ministry of National Education. In this context, a series of research questions related to drama-based language teaching were developed:

1. How can Peter Slade's drama approach be integrated into second language teaching in the preschool period?
2. How can drama-based activities be used in the preschool curriculum prepared by the Board of Education of the Ministry of National Education in second language teaching?

## Literature Review

### Creative Drama

The term “drama” may first conjure up images of “theatre”. However, when discussing the use of creative drama in language education, it is important to distinguish between the broader concept of drama and its association with theatrical performance. The term “drama” often extends beyond staged performances, encompassing a wide range of activities that involve role-playing and imagination, which can be highly effective in educational settings. Holden (1981) defines drama as “any activity that asks the participant to portray themselves or another person in an imaginary situation” (p. 6). Grady (2000) compares theatre and drama as presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Difference between theatre and drama according to Grady (2000, p. 98)

Theatre	Drama
Stage	Classroom, playing area, space
Scenery	Environment, setting
Actors	Students, participants, players, teacher-in-role
Director	Teacher, leader, facilitator, artist-teacher
Playscript	Scenario, story, material, ideas
Rehearse	Practice, work on, experiment with, explore
Perform	Share, show, play out, dramatize, improvise
Audience	Observers, peers
Critique	Assess, discuss, and reflect
Product	Process

Peter Slade's ideas and studies in the 1950s formed the basis of the modern application of drama in education. Peter Slade created a particular drama method by working with groups of children and introduced this method in his books. Peter Slade explained his approach to drama in his book "Child drama" in 1954. According to Slade, "drama is an art for children, and in this way, children can develop both physically and mentally" (Bozdoğan, 2003, p. 33). Since drama requires active participation, contributes positively to children's emotional, social, and cognitive development (McCaslin, 1990; Stewig & Buege, 1994). On the one hand, drama makes children's language learning a process that focuses on transferring knowledge, establishing emotional bonds, communicating, and using their imagination. On the other hand, drama makes language learning a fun and participatory experience through games, role-playing, and interactive activities. Therefore, foreign language teaching through drama in the preschool period has a strong potential to introduce children to the magical world of language and turn this process into an enjoyable experience.

There are certain phases of drama in education. These phases are designed to increase students' participation, develop their in-depth understanding, and make learning more effective. The phases in a classical drama work should be warming up, playing (pantomime and role-playing), improvisation, formation, and evaluation. The warm-up phase consists of actively using the five senses, developing the ability to observe, performing various physical activities, getting acquainted, and interacting (Demirel, 2016). In drama studies, students participating in the activity should feel comfortable. For this reason, recognition and acquaintance-based studies should be carried out so people can get to know each other well and feel more comfortable (Üstündağ, 1997). The improvisation phase aims to adopt and assimilate the process with the creative drama techniques used by making animations and improvisations by assimilating the gains acquired in the warm-up phase. It is a stage where individual and group creativity comes to the fore (San, 1996). At this stage, the aim is to gain the subject specified in the warm-up phase in the revitalisation phase. Techniques such as consciousness corridor and frozen images can be used in the animation stage (Uysal, 2014). Finally, in the evaluation phase, the products and achievements that emerged from the activities carried out in the revitalisation phase are evaluated at this stage. The participants shared the process, the importance of the stage, and feelings and thoughts about the process. In short, at this stage, opinions are exchanged about whether what is desired to be learned has turned into achievements.

Using drama activities has clear advantages for language learning, as with any other field. It helps children develop a positive attitude towards the environment by supporting them in learning about themselves and their environment. Accord-

ing to Hendy and Toon (2001), and Szecsi (2008), drama helps children gain sensitivity toward their environment by introducing alternative worlds and developing respect for different perspectives. Children who can use real-world knowledge and experiences to create an imaginary world in drama learn to analyse events and relationships through the situations and roles they design. O'Neil and Lambert (1991) suggest, in this process, children investigate relationships and events by identifying with the roles they play. This way, children can express themselves, be sensitive to others, and cooperate in groups (Woolland, 1993). Significantly in children's foreign language learning, using fun and interactive methods contributes to the natural adoption of the language (Maley & Duff, 2005; Philips, 1999). It encourages children to speak and allows them to communicate using non-verbal communication, such as body movements and facial expressions, even with limited language.

Additionally, creative drama is a teaching approach in which children actively participate in learning and develop their linguistic and social skills. It significantly improves vocabulary learning and is a more effective and durable method for teaching foreign languages in preschool education than traditional techniques (Brachaczek & Polok, 2023). The implementation of creative drama fosters a supportive learning environment that encourages children to express themselves, develop social awareness, and build self-esteem (Gezen, 2022). This approach not only helps the development of individual and social skills but also fosters healthy relationships among peers, ultimately contributing to the formation of strong social bonds and a sense of community.

There are studies on various creative drama applications in foreign language teaching in preschool. For example, in a kindergarten in Poland, creative drama activities were applied for 2 months to 16 children. At the end of 2 months, it was seen that the children's vocabulary improved, and creative drama had a significant and long-lasting effect on English vocabulary learning (Brachaczek & Polok, 2023). In China, 116 foreign language lessons were taught to 4-5-year-old children by dividing half of them into an experimental group and half into a control group. While creative drama activities were applied to the children in the experimental group, those in the control group were taught with traditional methods. At the end of the study, it was found that the experimental group's language skills (listening and expressing, reading and narrating) increased significantly compared to the control group (Yu et al., 2023). Consequently, such practices show that they are effective not only in language learning but also in the development of children as well-rounded individuals in general. Therefore, creative drama should be considered more comprehensively in the context of language teaching with both pedagogical and psychosocial dimensions.

Incorporating cross-cultural perspectives and situating these findings within a broader international context enriches discussing using drama-based activities for second language acquisition in preschool education. Remarkably, the global applicability of drama-based learning is broader than specific educational settings or cultures. In Norway and Sweden, research underscores the role of creative drama in early childhood education. For example, a study by Sheridan and Gjems (2017) examines how preschool teachers in these countries perceive preschool as a platform for children's language learning. The findings reveal that Swedish and Norwegian educators value play and experiential learning as pivotal for language development, aligning with the principles of drama-based pedagogy. In East Asia, countries like Japan and South Korea have increasingly incorporated role-playing and storytelling into preschool curricula to support second language acquisition, mainly English. A comparative study by Kim and Yun (2019) discusses theory- and evidence-based language learning and teaching for young children, emphasising the importance of interactive talk in the classroom.

In multicultural and multilingual nations such as India, Canada, and South Africa, creative drama addresses the complexities of teaching second languages in linguistically diverse classrooms. Drama activities, like role-playing and improvisation, provide a neutral ground for children with varied linguistic backgrounds, promoting inclusivity and equitable language exposure. For instance, a study by Dutton and Rushton (2022) highlights how drama pedagogy using translanguaging-based Readers Theatre supports students learning English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) to develop knowledge of language central to their engagement with learning.

## Method

This study used qualitative research methods, and data were collected using a document analysis technique. Qualitative research is method in which qualitative data collection techniques such as unstructured observation, unstructured interview, and document analysis are used, and a qualitative process is followed to reveal the facts and events in their natural environment realistically and holistically (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). Creswell (2015) states that document analysis is a good source for text data in a qualitative study. In the process of document analysis, written documents are analysed in detail and systematically in terms of content (Wach & Ward, 2013). This approach allowed for identifying relevant themes, pedagogical strategies, and instructional practices applicable to drama-based language learning. The document analysis process took place over a period of four weeks. During this time, the researchers systematically examined the preschool curriculum of pri-

vate education institutions prepared by the Ministry of National Education, Board of Education. In light of the findings obtained from the data analysis, activities based on creative drama techniques were designed by considering the preschool curriculum prepared by the Ministry of National Education Board of Education for preschool education in private schools. The activities prepared for creative drama were presented to two experts in creative drama and second language teaching for their opinion. According to the feedback received, the activities prepared for the themes in the curriculum were finalised.

To enhance validity, we engaged in several validation processes. Expert opinion was taken from two academics with doctoral degrees in the field of teaching English to young learners and pre-school education to confirm that the activities met educational and pedagogical standards and were developmentally appropriate. Triangulation was achieved by combining multiple sources (curriculum documents, expert feedback, and prior literature review on drama in education) to ensure that the findings were comprehensive and grounded in a well-rounded perspective. To ensure reliability, the document analysis followed systematic coding and categorisation methods, enabling consistent interpretation across reviewers.

### **Creative drama-based lesson plan preparation**

Preschool education focuses on developing children's psychomotor, social-emotional, cognitive, and language areas and self-care skills (Shin & Crandall, 2013). The lesson plans based on drama activities should be planned and implemented per children's developmental characteristics, needs, and interests. For this reason, there are some points to be considered (Maley & Duff, 2011) when planning and realising activities:

- Activities should be designed following children's interests, needs, developmental levels, and ages.
- Attention should be paid to children's developmental characteristics and individual differences.
- Drama activities should be aimed at developing children's creativity, problem-solving skills, internal discipline, sense of responsibility, and cooperation skills.
- A suitable and safe place should be chosen for drama activities.
- Children should not experience a sense of failure, and the concepts of winner or loser should not be included.
- The behaviours and actions that occur during drama should be accepted as part of the natural development process of children.

- Different methods should be used to ensure that children interact with each other.
- Drama activities should progress from simple to complex and be supported using concrete materials.

Considering the points above, activities were designed by considering the stages of the drama approach according to the acquisitions determined in the preschool curriculum. 40-minute lesson plans were prepared for the themes of “Colours and Shapes”, “A Day at the Zoo”, “A Journey to the Magic Forest”, and “A Magical Journey to the Enchanted Castle” in the preschool (3-5 years old).

Evaluating these drama-based activities in preschool education incorporates process- and outcome-oriented approaches. According to Schreiber et al. (2016), process-oriented assessments focus on observing and evaluating children’s engagement, creativity, and active participation throughout the drama activities, emphasising their developmental progress and interaction with peers. Outcome-oriented assessments, on the other hand, aim to measure the tangible impacts of these activities on children’s language acquisition, problem-solving skills, and socio-emotional development, ensuring that the stated learning objectives are achieved.

## Implementations

### Lesson 1: Colours and Shapes

#### Learning objectives:

**Vocabulary development:** Introduce and reinforce basic vocabulary related to colours and shapes in the second language.

**Listening and speaking:** Enhance listening comprehension and speaking skills through role-play and interactive activities.

**Confidence building:** Help children feel comfortable and confident using the new language in a fun and creative context.

**Materials needed:** Colourful scarves or cloth pieces (for acting out colours), shape cut-outs (e.g., circle, square, triangle), puppets or stuffed animals to act as characters, large open space for movement, music or a tambourine (optional).

#### Lesson procedure:

1. Warm-up activity (5-7 minutes)

**Objective:** Prepare children for creative movement and speaking in the second language.

**Action song:** Start with a song or chant in the target language that introduces colours or shapes. For example, sing a simple song like “Red, Red, Show Me Red” while showing objects in that colour.

**Movement game:** Play a “Simon Says” game where children act out simple commands in the second language (e.g., “Touch the red scarf!” or “Jump like a triangle!”).

## 2. Introduction to colours and shapes (5-7 minutes)

**Objective:** Introduce target vocabulary in the second language.

**Flashcards or real objects:** Use colourful props or flashcards to introduce basic colours and shapes in the second language. Show each colour or shape and repeat its name, encouraging children to say the words with you.

**Interactive questions:** Ask questions like, “What colour is this?” or “Can you find the red scarf?” in the second language, prompting children to answer.

## 3. Main drama activity: Role-playing with colours and shapes (15-20 minutes)

**Objective:** Engage children in language-rich creative drama activities to reinforce vocabulary.

**Storytelling with props:** Use a puppet or stuffed animal to tell a simple story in the second language. For example: “Our puppet friend needs to find the blue circle to open the magic door! Can you help?”

The children then help the puppet by identifying and interacting with different colours and shapes.

**Act out the colours:** Divide children into groups or pairs. Give each group a different colour scarf or shape. Have them role-play situations like:

Pretend the blue scarf is water, and you are swimming.

Pretend the yellow circle is the sun, and you are warming up under it.

Act like you are a red triangle that turns into a rocket ship flying into space.

Use creative body movements to act out shapes (e.g., stretch tall like a rectangle, curl up small like a circle).

**Drama game: “Find the colour”:** Hide different coloured props around the room. Call out the colour in the second language, and the children must find the object and bring it back to the centre. You can add a dramatic element by pretending they are on a “colour adventure”.

## 4. Group reflection (5 minutes)

**Objective:** Reinforce what children have learned by reflecting on the activities.

Gather the children in a circle and ask questions such as:

“Which colour did you like acting out the most?” (in the second language),

“Can you show me a shape you remember?” (in the second language).

Have children try to say a few words or sentences in the second language about their favourite part of the drama activity.

5. Cool-down activity (3-5 minutes)

Objective: Help children transition from the active lesson to a calm state.

Breathing exercise: Lead a simple breathing exercise where children pretend to blow up a balloon of their favourite colour (in the second language).

Goodbye song: Sing a simple goodbye song in the second language, incorporating colours and shapes (e.g., “Goodbye, goodbye, red circle and blue square!”).

**Formative and summative evaluation:**

While observation and participation stages refer to formative evaluation, engagement stage is specifically designed for summative evaluation. We believe that it is best to integrate these two evaluation methods to gain a deeper insight into the development of a child (Shin & Crandall, 2013).

Observation: Watch how children use the new language during the activities. Are they able to identify colours and shapes? Do they attempt to speak in a second language?

Participation: Ensure that every child is actively involved in the drama exercises and is trying to use the target vocabulary.

Engagement: Note how engaged children are in the role-playing activities and how confidently they participate in the language exercises.

## Lesson 2: A Day at the Zoo

**Learning objectives:**

Vocabulary development: Teach children basic animal names and sounds in the second language.

Listening and speaking skills: Foster comprehension and spoken use of the target language in interactive, creative drama activities.

Movement and imagination: Encourage physical movement and creativity through role-playing different animals.

Confidence in language use: Create a fun and low-pressure environment for children to experiment with the second language.

**Materials needed:** Animal flashcards or pictures, animal costumes, masks, or simple props (e.g., tails, ears, or wings), a puppet or stuffed animal (optional), open space for movement, and music for transitions (optional).

**Lesson procedure:****1. Warm-up activity (5-7 minutes)**

**Objective:** Prepare children for active participation and introduce the target language vocabulary.

**Animal song:** Start with an action song in the second language that includes animal names (e.g., “Old MacDonald Had a Farm” or any similar song adapted for the second language).

**Movement game: “Who Am I?”:** Show flashcards or pictures of animals and ask the children to imitate the animal’s movement and sound while saying the name of the animal in the second language. For example, “I am a lion! ROAR!”

**2. Introduction to animals (5-7 minutes)**

**Objective:** Introduce target vocabulary (animal names and sounds) in the second language.

**Animal flashcards:** Show animal pictures one by one, saying the name of the animal and the sound it makes in the second language (e.g., “This is a lion. The lion says, ‘Roar!’”).

**Repetition and gesture:** Encourage children to repeat the names and sounds after you, using big gestures to act out the animal (e.g., roaring like a lion or flapping arms like a bird).

**3. Main drama activity: Zoo adventure role-playing (15-20 minutes)**

**Objective:** Engage children in an interactive drama activity where they act out animal characters, enhancing their language skills through play.

**Story setup:** Tell the children they are going on an exciting trip to the zoo. Use a puppet or stuffed animal as a “tour guide” who will lead them through the zoo (speaking in the second language).

**Animal role-playing:** Divide the children into small groups and assign each group a different animal to pretend to be (e.g., lions, monkeys, birds, elephants). Use simple props like tails or masks to help them transform into these animals. Examples:

**Lions:** Ask them to walk like lions, roar, and say “I am a lion” in the second language.

**Monkeys:** Have them jump and swing like monkeys while saying “I am a monkey” in the second language.

**Birds:** Children flap their arms and “fly” around the room, saying “I am a bird” in the second language.

**Drama game: “Zoo Keeper Says”:** Play a game similar to “Simon Says,” where the zoo keeper (teacher) gives instructions in the second language, such as:

“The lion is hungry, eat like a lion!”

“The monkey is swinging from tree to tree!”

“The bird is flying high in the sky!” This encourages children to act out the movements and speak the vocabulary in the target language.

Animal sounds guessing game: Make animal sounds or act out an animal and ask the children to guess which animal it is and say its name in the second language. This helps reinforce vocabulary comprehension.

#### 4. Group reflection (5 minutes)

Objective: Reinforce what the children learned by reflecting on the activity and repeating the target language vocabulary.

Question and answer: Ask the children to share which animal they enjoyed pretending to be and have them say its name and sound in the second language.

Group review: Go over the animals again as a group, using flashcards or props, and ask them to repeat the names and sounds in the second language.

#### 5. Cool-down activity (3-5 minutes)

Objective: Calm the children down after active play and transition them out of the lesson.

Breathing exercise: Lead the children in a simple breathing exercise where they “breathe in like a big elephant” and “breathe out like a small mouse,” using the animal names in the second language.

Goodbye song: Sing a simple goodbye song in the second language, perhaps incorporating the animal names they’ve just learned (e.g., “Goodbye lions, goodbye birds!”).

### **Formative and summative evaluation:**

While observation and participation stages refer to formative evaluation, engagement stage is specifically designed for summative evaluation.

Observation: Throughout the activities, observe how confidently and accurately children are using the target language. Are they able to recall animal names and sounds in the second language?

Participation: Ensure all children are actively participating in the role-playing activities. Encourage shy children by pairing them with more confident peers.

Engagement: Note how engaged children are in the lesson. Are they excited to participate in the animal activities and use a second language?

## **Lesson 3: A Journey to the Magic Forest**

### **Learning objectives:**

Vocabulary development: Teach and reinforce basic action verbs (e.g., run, jump, walk, sit) in the second language.

**Listening and speaking skills:** Enhance children's listening comprehension and encourage them to use the target language while participating in creative drama activities.

**Confidence in speaking:** Build confidence in using the second language through expressive body movement and role-playing.

**Creative expression:** Encourage imagination and physical movement while learning the target language.

**Materials needed:** Simple costumes or props (e.g., scarves, crowns, hats), a large open space for movement, flashcards with action verbs in the target language, and music for transitions or background (optional).

### **Lesson procedure:**

#### **1. Warm-up activity (5-7 minutes)**

**Objective:** Prepare children for physical movement and introduce the target language.

**Action song:** Start with a simple action song in the second language, such as "If You're Happy and You Know It" or a similar song adapted to the target language, where children perform actions like clapping, jumping, or spinning.

**Movement imitation:** Lead a movement game where you demonstrate actions (e.g., run, jump, sit) and say the corresponding word in the second language. Encourage the children to imitate both the action and the word.

#### **2. Introduction to action verbs (5-7 minutes)**

**Objective:** Teach basic action verbs using flashcards or props.

**Flashcards:** Show a series of flashcards or images that depict different actions (e.g., run, jump, sit, walk, dance). Say the action aloud in the second language and ask the children to repeat it.

**Demonstration:** Act out each action while saying the word in the second language. Encourage the children to mimic both your actions and words, making the connection between movement and language.

#### **3. Main drama activity: Journey to the Magic Forest (15-20 minutes)**

**Objective:** Engage children in an imaginative role-playing adventure that reinforces action words in the second language.

**Story setup:** Tell the children they are about to go on an adventure to a magic forest where they will meet animals and magical creatures. Use a prop (like a magic hat or wand) to start the story, narrating in simple sentences in the second language.

**Role-playing actions:** As you lead them through the "forest," prompt them to act out different actions in the second language. For example:

“Let’s run to the magic tree!”: Children run while saying the word “run” in the second language.

“Now jump over the river!”: Children jump in place, repeating the word “jump” in the second language.

“We have to tiptoe quietly past the sleeping dragon.”: Children tiptoe, whispering the word for “tiptoe” in the second language.

“The fairy wants us to dance!”: Encourage them to dance and repeat the word “dance” in the second language.

Animal role-play: In the forest, the children encounter different animals. Act as the narrator and have them pretend to be different animals (e.g., birds, lions, rabbits) while performing the related action (e.g., fly, roar, hop) in the second language. Use props like scarves for wings or hats for animal ears to make it fun.

Magic word game: At certain points in the story, introduce “magic words” (simple action verbs like run, jump, sit) that they need to perform to continue the adventure. For example, “To open the magic door, you have to say the word ‘run’ and run in place!”

#### 4. Group reflection (5 minutes)

Objective: Reflect on the adventure and reinforce the action verbs learned.

Discussion: Gather the children in a circle and ask them to share their favourite part of the magic forest adventure, using the action words in the second language. For example, ask, “What action did you like the most?” Encourage them to say, “I like to jump!” in the second language.

Review: Use flashcards to quickly review the action words they learned, encouraging the children to repeat the words and perform the corresponding actions one last time.

#### 5. Cool-down activity (3-5 minutes)

Objective: Calm the children down and conclude the lesson in a relaxing way.

Breathing exercise: Lead the children in a simple breathing exercise using the second language. For example, “Breathe in like a big bear... Breathe out like a small mouse.”

Goodbye song: Sing a goodbye song in the second language, incorporating some of the action words they learned (e.g., “Goodbye, goodbye, we’ll jump and say goodbye!”).

#### **Formative and summative evaluation:**

While observation and participation stages refer to formative evaluation, engagement stage is specifically designed for summative evaluation.

**Observation:** Observe how confidently and accurately children use the action verbs during the role-playing activities.

**Participation:** Ensure every child participates and engages in the activities, using both movement and language.

**Engagement:** Take note of the children's enthusiasm and involvement during the drama activity, as well as their ability to recall and use the action verbs in the second language.

#### **Lesson 4: A Magical Journey to the Enchanted Castle**

##### **Learning objectives:**

**Vocabulary development:** Teach and reinforce basic action verbs (e.g., run, jump, sit, wave) and greetings (hello, goodbye) in the second language.

**Listening and speaking skills:** Develop children's ability to understand and respond to action commands in the second language through drama.

**Creative expression:** Encourage imaginative play and creativity while learning new language concepts.

**Confidence building:** Help children become comfortable using the target language through playful and interactive drama activities.

**Materials needed:** simple props or costumes (e.g., capes, crowns, magic wands), flashcards with action verbs in the second language, open space for movement, and background music for transitions (optional).

##### **Lesson procedure:**

###### **1. Warm-up activity (5-7 minutes)**

**Objective:** Introduce the target language and prepare children for creative movement.

**Action song:** Begin with an action-based song in the second language (e.g., "Clap Your Hands" or any song that includes actions like jumping, running, or sitting). Encourage the children to follow the actions while singing along.

**Movement game: "Follow the Leader":** The teacher acts as a leader, demonstrating various actions (e.g., run, jump, spin, wave). Say the action verbs in the second language as you perform them, and have the children repeat both the words and the movements.

###### **2. Introduction to key vocabulary (5-7 minutes)**

**Objective:** Teach children basic action verbs and greetings in the second language.

Flashcards: Show flashcards with pictures of people performing actions (e.g., running, jumping, sitting, waving). Say the corresponding word in the second language, and ask the children to repeat it.

Demonstration: Act out each action as you say the word, encouraging the children to imitate you. Use big gestures to make the actions clear and fun (e.g., jump high, wave your arms enthusiastically).

Greetings: Practice simple greetings like “Hello” and “Goodbye” in the second language. Have the children practice saying these words while waving or shaking hands.

### 3. Main drama activity: The Magical Journey (15-20 minutes)

Objective: Engage children in a dramatic adventure where they perform actions and respond to commands in the second language.

Story setup: Explain to the children that they are about to go on a magical journey to an enchanted castle. Use props like magic wands or capes to set the scene. Tell the story in simple sentences, using the second language to describe the actions they will need to perform. Example:

“We are going to the enchanted castle! But first, we need to run across the magical forest!” (Children run in place).

“Now, we have to jump over the river!” (Children jump in place).

“Let’s sit down and wait for the magic door to open.” (Children sit down).

Role-playing with actions: Divide the children into small groups and assign them roles as knights, princesses, wizards, or animals they might meet on their journey. Have them act out their roles using the target language.

Knights: Have the children pretend to ride horses while saying “I’m riding!” in the second language.

Wizards: The children wave their wands and say “I’m casting a spell!” in the second language.

Animals: Have them crawl like cats or hop like rabbits while saying the animal names in the second language.

Freeze game: During the journey, play a “freeze” game where the children must stop and hold their position when you say “freeze.” Then, ask individual children to describe what they are doing using the second language (e.g., “I’m jumping!” or “I’m running!”).

### 4. Group reflection (5 minutes)

Objective: Review and reinforce the action words and greetings learned during the activity.

Discussion: Sit in a circle and ask each child to share which part of the magical journey they liked the most. Encourage them to use the action verbs in the second language. For example, “I liked jumping!” or “I liked running!”

Review with flashcards: Show the flashcards again and ask the children to say the action word in the second language and demonstrate the corresponding action.

#### 5. Cool-down activity (3-5 minutes)

Objective: Calm the children down after the active drama session while practicing the target language.

Breathing exercise: Lead a simple breathing exercise using the second language. For example, “Breathe in like a big dragon... Breathe out like a little mouse.”

Goodbye song: Sing a goodbye song in the second language, incorporating the greeting words (hello, goodbye) and some of the action words they learned (e.g., “Goodbye, goodbye, let’s wave and say goodbye!”).

#### **Formative and summative evaluation:**

While observation and participation stages refer to formative evaluation, engagement stage is specifically designed for summative evaluation.

Observation: Monitor how well the children can understand and perform the action words in the second language during the activities.

Participation: Ensure that each child is actively participating in the role-playing and speaking the second language.

Engagement: Pay attention to how engaged the children are in the drama activity. Are they responding to the commands in the second language with enthusiasm?

## **Findings**

Since the proposed lesson plans were not implemented in actual classroom settings, the findings are derived from the analysis of existing preschool curriculum documents, expert evaluations of the lesson plans, and insights gained from qualitative research methods, including document analysis. These findings reflect the potential impact and feasibility of integrating drama-based activities into second language teaching in preschool education. The analysis of the preschool curriculum prepared by the Turkish Ministry of National Education revealed that the proposed drama-based lesson plans align well with the developmental and educational objectives of preschool education. The curriculum emphasises fostering creativity, collaboration, language development, and social-emotional growth in children, all supported by the proposed drama activities.

The expert evaluations provided valuable insights into the feasibility and educational value of the proposed lesson plans. The experts highlighted the following strengths: developmentally appropriate activities and engaging and interactive content. According to the experts, the activities were deemed suitable for pre-

school-aged children, with a clear progression from simple to complex tasks that matched their cognitive and linguistic abilities (Hornáčková, 2017). Imaginative scenarios, role-playing, and movement-based activities were praised for their potential to engage young learners and make language learning enjoyable. Experts also provided constructive feedback, suggesting that more explicit instructions for teachers should be included to ensure consistent implementation (Baldwin & Galazka, 2021). Activities should incorporate additional scaffolding for children with varying levels of language proficiency.

Although the lesson plans were not implemented, the literature review and expert evaluations underscored the potential benefits of using creative drama in second language teaching for preschoolers. Drama activities can provide opportunities for vocabulary building, improved listening comprehension, and the use of target language structures in meaningful contexts (Yumurtacı & Mede, 2021). Role-playing and improvisation encourage children to explore their creativity while expressing themselves in the second language. Group-based activities promote collaboration, empathy, and respect among children, aligning with preschool education's social-emotional goals. Such activities have significantly increased children's social and emotional development and are effective in creative drama in early education settings (Gao et al., 2022; Kılıç & Namdar, 2021;).

The document analysis and expert feedback also identified practical considerations for implementing these lesson plans regarding resource requirements, teacher education, and adaptability. Successful implementation would require accessible materials, such as props and visual aids, to support the drama activities. Teachers need training on creative drama techniques and strategies for managing open-ended activities in diverse classrooms (Baldwin & Galazka, 2021; Süzen, 2021). Flexibility in the lesson plans also would be essential to accommodate different classrooms' unique dynamics and needs.

Experts noted potential challenges that might arise during the implementation of drama-based activities. Managing large groups of children in dynamic activities may be easier with adequate support and experience. Additionally, time constraints in preschool schedules might limit the scope of the activities, requiring teachers to prioritise critical elements. The findings highlight the alignment of the proposed drama-based lesson plans with preschool curriculum objectives and their potential to enhance second language acquisition. While expert feedback affirmed these activities' educational value and feasibility, it also emphasised the importance of addressing practical considerations, such as resource availability and teacher education, to ensure effective implementation. These insights lay a foundation for future research involving classroom applications to validate and refine the proposed approach.

The findings align with global frameworks such as UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), which emphasises inclusivity, equitable learning, and promoting lifelong learning opportunities (UNESCO, 2024). Creative drama supports these goals by fostering critical skills such as communication, collaboration, and creativity in young learners. Situating the study within an international context could involve comparing the Turkish preschool curriculum with counterparts in other countries, such as the UK's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) or Australia's Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (Sumsion, 2020). Both frameworks emphasise holistic development, including language and social-emotional skills, which resonate with the drama-based lesson plans proposed in the study. For example, in the Reggio Emilia approach (Italy), child-led learning through creative expression aligns with drama-based methods (Manera, 2022). In contrast, countries like China may require modifications to accommodate more structured classroom dynamics, reflecting a culturally specific balance between teacher-led and student-centred activities (Gao, 2021).

### **Discussion and conclusion**

The study sheds light on the significance of integrating drama-based language teaching into preschool education, mainly focusing on the Preschool curriculum and the transformative potential of drama-based language teaching in preschool education, particularly in the context of second language teaching. Numerous research studies have shown that drama is beneficial for children in preschool education. Eti and Arnas (2016) found that implementing story-based creative drama activities resulted in a notable enhancement in the linguistic abilities of four-year-old children. This improvement encompassed increased usage of nouns, verbs, adverbs, and conjunctions, along with a higher total number of sentences, words, and average words per sentence. Şahin's (2023) study examined the effectiveness of body language-centred drama activities in teaching Turkish to secondary school students. The findings demonstrated that such activities significantly contributed to developing students' speaking skills, highlighting drama's efficacy as a valuable tool in Turkish language education. Similarly, Boinett et al. (2022) concluded that drama serves as a neutral platform for Early Childhood Education Center pupils to engage in exploration, self-expression, discovery, and interpretation of their surroundings. This process facilitates the acquisition of essential skills such as cooperation with peers and impulse control.

This study has highlighted the significance of integrating drama into foreign language education, particularly in preschool, to stimulate children's natural cu-

riosity and creativity while fostering language skills. By examining Peter Slade's drama approach and its application in the preschool curriculum, this research has provided valuable insights into the design and implementation of drama activities tailored to children's developmental needs and interests. The findings presented lesson plans and activities designed for themes such as "Colours and Shapes," "A Day at the Zoo," "A Journey to the Magic Forest," and "A Magical Journey to the Enchanted Castle," exemplifying how drama can be effectively integrated into language teaching in preschool settings. These activities not only facilitate language learning but also promote creativity, cooperation, and self-expression among children. In conclusion, drama-based language teaching offers a dynamic and interactive approach to language acquisition within preschool settings. By embracing drama as a pedagogical tool, educators can create engaging learning experiences that cater to young learners' diverse needs, laying a solid foundation for linguistic, social, and cognitive development. For this, teachers can design drama activities suitable for different proficiency levels, gradually introduce complexity for beginners, and include multicultural themes and multilingual elements to promote inclusion and respect for diversity. They should also use formative assessments to adapt activities to children's needs and promote equitable participation and effective language learning.

While the Turkish preschool curriculum emphasises creativity, collaboration, and social-emotional growth, these values are shared globally, though with cultural nuances. For example, in the Reggio Emilia approach (Italy), child-led learning through creative expression aligns with drama-based methods (Manera, 2022). In contrast, countries like China may require modifications to accommodate more structured classroom dynamics, reflecting a culturally specific balance between teacher-led and student-centred activities (Gao, 2021). Creative drama can address the complexities of teaching second languages in linguistically diverse classrooms in multicultural and multilingual nations such as India, Canada, and South Africa. Drama activities, like role-playing and improvisation, can provide a neutral ground for children with varied linguistic backgrounds, promoting inclusivity and equitable language exposure.

Second language teachers can improve their language teaching processes by using creative drama techniques in their classrooms. As noted by Winston and Stinson (2014), role-playing activities can be particularly effective in fostering linguistic fluency among students, as they provide opportunities for authentic language use in simulated real-life situations. Such activities also contribute to the development of students' self-confidence, enabling them to use the target language with greater ease and assurance. Additionally, these activities facilitate a deeper understanding of the cultural contexts embedded in the language, thereby allowing students to

engage more naturally in communication and better grasp the nuances of everyday interactions. Similarly, Kao and O'Neill (1998) highlight the benefits of improvisation activities, emphasising their role in promoting students' fluency and enhancing their ability to express themselves in the target language. Through creative drama, learners are not only encouraged to practice language skills in an engaging manner but also to build critical communication competencies that are essential for effective language use in diverse settings (Maley & Duff, 2011).

The findings and recommendations of this study may only be universally applicable to some preschool settings, particularly those with different cultural contexts, educational systems, or linguistic backgrounds. The effectiveness of drama-based language teaching may vary based on student demographics. For example, concerning cultural adaptation of themes and activities, the themes used in drama-based activities, such as "Colours and Shapes" or "A Day at the Zoo," can be adapted to reflect cultural relevance in different countries. For instance, a lesson plan in Kenya might focus on "A Safari Adventure," while in Japan, it could involve "A Day at the Cherry Blossom Festival." Adapting cultural elements ensures that activities resonate with children's experiences and cultural identities.

Additionally, the effectiveness of drama-based language teaching also may vary based on teachers. Teachers in diverse contexts may need more prior experience with drama techniques or strategies for managing participatory activities. Professional development programmes that integrate creative drama into language teaching could be designed. Workshops could include hands-on activities to build teachers' confidence and skills in using drama techniques. The study focused on designing and implementing drama activities within the preschool curriculum framework, limiting the research scope to a specific educational context. The sample size of experts consulted and the number of activities designed may only partially represent the diversity of perspectives and approaches to drama-based language teaching in preschool education.

Preschool curricula in some countries may be rigid, leaving little room for creative approaches like drama-based activities. Drama activities could be integrated into existing curricular goals by aligning them with mandatory learning objectives, such as vocabulary acquisition or social-emotional skills. Shortened or simplified activities could be developed to fit within limited time frames. The activities in the study focus on vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, and developing confidence in a second language. These goals align with the needs of multilingual learners who often need strategies to develop proficiency in multiple languages. While qualitative research methods and document analysis were employed, methodological constraints such as potential researcher bias, subjectivity in data interpretation, and the inability to capture real-time classroom dynamics may have in-

fluenced the reliability and validity of the findings. Practical considerations related to time constraints, curriculum demands, and competing pedagogical approaches were not extensively explored.

The study primarily focused on designing and describing drama activities without incorporating comprehensive assessment measures to evaluate their efficacy in achieving specific learning outcomes. Therefore, future research could incorporate quantitative measures or standardised assessments to provide a more robust evaluation of the impact of drama-based language teaching on children's linguistic and socio-emotional development. The study did not explicitly explore variations in children's initial language proficiency levels or prior exposure to drama-based pedagogies. The effects of drama activities on children with different language backgrounds or abilities can be evaluated. Additionally, incorporating participant observation or interviews with teachers who implement these activities might provide richer data on their classroom impact. For example, detailed observation checklists can be utilised to systematically document participants' engagement, active involvement in role-play, and the use of target vocabulary during drama sessions. It also aligns with the current observational methods outlined in the study. Implementing structured feedback from educators or peers during activities would provide immediate, constructive guidance, promoting continuous language use and participation improvement. Collecting artefacts such as children's drawings, written reflections, or recorded performances related to drama activities can be a longitudinal record of individual progress.

Designing age-appropriate pre-and post-assessments to evaluate improvements in vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, and social-emotional skills would provide quantitative data to complement qualitative findings. Structured performance tasks, such as dramatisations or role-plays, could be assessed using rubrics that measure linguistic accuracy, creativity, and collaboration. Surveys or interviews with parents and educators can provide additional perspectives on the perceived impact of drama-based interventions on children's linguistic and socio-emotional development. Incorporating quantitative assessment tools, such as standardised vocabulary tests or developmental scales, would strengthen the reliability and validity of the findings. Digital tools, including video recordings of sessions, could also be analysed to assess engagement and linguistic outcomes objectively. By integrating these assessment strategies, the study would achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of drama-based language teaching in preschool education. This approach not only addresses potential methodological limitations but also aligns with best practices in evaluating pedagogical interventions, thereby contributing to the robustness and generalisability of the research findings.

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