Research Article

INTEGRATING EDUCATIONAL DRAMA IN TEACHING EFL

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ABSTRACT

There is a continuous demand for innovative foreign language teaching approaches in current education system. The article discusses Educational drama as an effective method in developing foreign language (English) learners' sociolinguistic competence. Theoretical and practical overview of the research will be presented to highlight the importance of the method.

In pedagogy, there are many advantages of the Educational drama method. Drama encourages students to acquire cognitive knowledge. As active learners, they not only receive information, but also develop creative thinking skills. Language teaching through drama creates intrinsic motivation (internal motivation) for students to learn the language. In drama classes, students learn to work with other students in collaboration, increase self-confidence, and begin to think critically listening to each other. Most importantly it enhances students' cultural understanding of the target language.

In the article the implementation of the drama approach in secondary school EFL classroom in Uzbekistan will be described together with investigation and survey results. Theoretical value of the research will be provided supported by opinions of scholars of the field. Types of Educational drama, organizing drama lessons, managing the classroom and other peculiarities of drama approach will be explained.

KEYWORDS

Competence, competence-based education, sociolinguistic competence, educational drama, pantomime, role-play, improvisation, simulation, script.

INTRODUCTION

Since the establishment of presidential decree 1875 in 2012 the reputation of English language as an international language has enhanced gradually in Uzbekistan. Language ability certificates started to be required to get salary increment at work or to be enrolled in Universities. Pupils started learning English from grade 1. So there has been a big demand for professional EFL teachers who apply modern interactive EFL teaching methods in their classes. Traditional grammar-translation method was rejected and competence-based approach has been adapted to State Educational Standards. Now EFL learners should be competent in all 4 language skills: listening, reading, writing, speaking and should be able to use the language naturally outside the classroom. In the article Educational drama method will be discussed as an invaluable method which is based on communicative approach. Before defining Educational drama we need to clarify terms like, "competence", "communicative competence", "communicative language teaching approach" and etc.

LITERATURE REVIEW

WHAT IS COMPETENCE AND COMPETENCE-BASED EDUCATION?

«Competence» is one of the most controversial terms in the field of general and applied linguistics. It is taken from Latin compete expresses "ability to do something". The term «communicative competence» is comprised of two words, the combination of which means «competence to communicate». This simple lexico-semantical analysis uncovers the fact that the central word in the syntagm «communicative competence» is the word «competence». Chomsky, Hymes, Canale and Swain, Bachman and Palmer are among the ones who defined the communicative competence and introduced their own model of communicative competence and introduced the communicative language teaching method to the world. Among Russian scholars N.Gishanova, I.Zimnyaya, V.Baidenka and others are influential scholars who investigated the communicative competence from different perspective. Communicative language teaching involves developing language proficiency through interactions embedded in meaningful contexts. This approach to teaching provides authentic opportunities for learning that go beyond repetition and memorization of grammatical patterns in isolation. A central concept of the communicative approach to language teaching is communicative competence: the learners' ability to understand and use language appropriately to communicate in authentic social and school environments. Communicative language teaching and learning approach is built on four main competences. They are linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic and strategic competences. When all four elements of communicative competence are shaped in students' understanding than the aim of communicative approach is reached.

To be linguistically competent learners should understand and use: vocabulary, language conventions (grammar, punctuation, spelling), syntax (sentence structure).

Sociolinguistic competence requires the awareness of social rules of target language (standard, substandard

English, register), non-verbal behaviors, cultural references (idioms, expressions, background knowledge).

In discourse or pragmatic competence learners should understand how ideas are connected through: patterns of organization, cohesive and transitional devices.

In strategic competence learners should be able to use techniques to overcome language gaps, plan and assess the effectiveness of communication, achieve conversational fluency, modify text for audience and purpose.

In the article we will mainly be concentrating on the sociolinguistic elements of language teaching and Educational drama technology as an effective method in shaping cultural understanding of a learning foreign language.

SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

Many definitions have been given to the term sociolinguistic competence by scholars around the world. To Lyster   sociolinguistic competence is the ability to use linguistic forms appropriately for a specific situation, or the competence required to perform specific speech acts in socially appropriate ways, "the capacity to recognise and produce socially appropriate speech in context"[10]. Richard and Schmidt stressed the importance of factors such as age, status, and gender of the participants, as well as the formality/informality of the setting when defining sociolinguistic competence.   Knowledge of the relationship between language and its non-linguistic context, knowing how to use and respond appropriately to different types of speech acts, such as requests, apologies, thanks and invitations, knowing which address forms should be used with different persons one speaks to, and in different situations are also considered in shaping sociolinguistic competence

[13]. Kramsch stated that one major source of difficulty for non-native speakers to communicate with native-speakers, is the fact that they do not share the same community's memory and knowledge [8].

The views of the researches show a real necessity for forming sociolinguistic skills of language learners in teaching a foreign language. One should be able to understand and respond to a foreigner in the way how they communicate in their community. This is possible only with highly developed sociolinguistic skills of the learners. Sociolinguistic skills include the ability to differentiate target language dialects, varieties, cultural references, speech figures, register and naturalness.

We define the sociolinguistic competence in the following way: sociolinguistic competence is the ability to use standard and substandard, verbal and non-verbal features of the target language both in written and spoken context being aware of the culture, geographical structure and accepted norms of the society in which the language is spoken.

Different methods have been offered by scholars of the field in shaping learners' sociolinguistic competence in the language classroom. Mahbouba Messerhi suggested using culture based activities [11]. Russian scholar T. Gustomyatova implemented E-mail project [5]. M.Ovchinnikova found Case Study method to be effective [12]. O. Bobrikova mentioned about using authentic materials in her article [2]. We propose implementation of Educational drama   method in forming learners' sociolinguistic understanding.

RESEARCH MATERIALS AND METHODS

DRAMA AND EDUCATIONAL DRAMA

First, we should define the difference between Drama and Educational drama. Drama is a play performed in the theatre while Educational drama is performed in
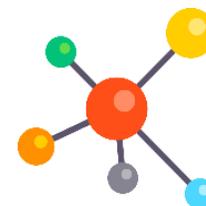
the classroom and it has certain educational aims rather than the play itself. Using this method students can develop their imaginary and creative thinking skills. While playing roles they will be able to practice active vocabulary which later leads to the naturalness of their speech. Moreover while role playing they develop communication skills and self-confidence. The most importantly learners start thinking, behaving and communicating in the target language easily as they are put into certain roles, such as, an employer, a travel agent, a sales person or a client in the restaurant.

DATA ANALYSIS

We conducted a survey to analyse the views of EFL teachers of Uzbekistan toward communicative language teaching and the role of Educational drama in shaping sociolinguistic competence of foreign language learners. 150 secondary school teachers all over Uzbekistan participated in the survey (See Figure1).
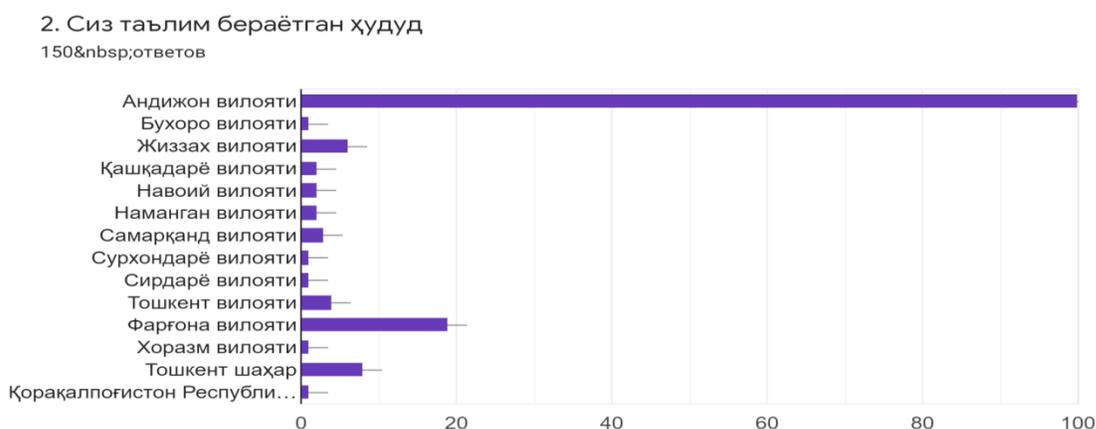

Figure 1.

To the question what methods do you use in teaching English as a foreign language, 76% of those questioned replied that they use both traditional and communicative methods in teaching English. 14,7% teachers use only communicative method and 7,3% still use traditional English language teaching method. 3% of the participants rely on their own methods (See Figure 2).
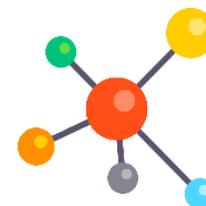
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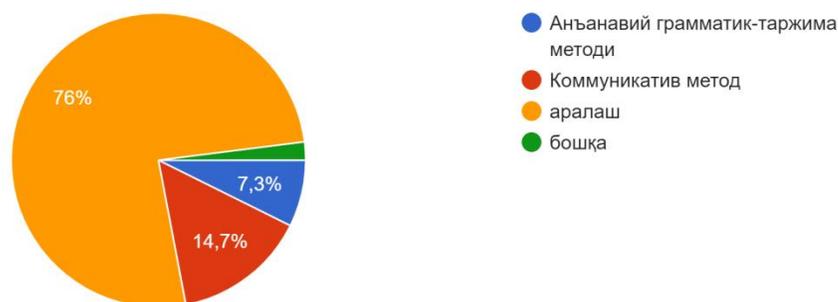
Figure 2.

To the question what are the basic elements of communicative competence majority (90%) replied correctly. The elements of communicative competence are linguistic, pragmatic, sociolinguistic and strategic competences (See Figure 3).

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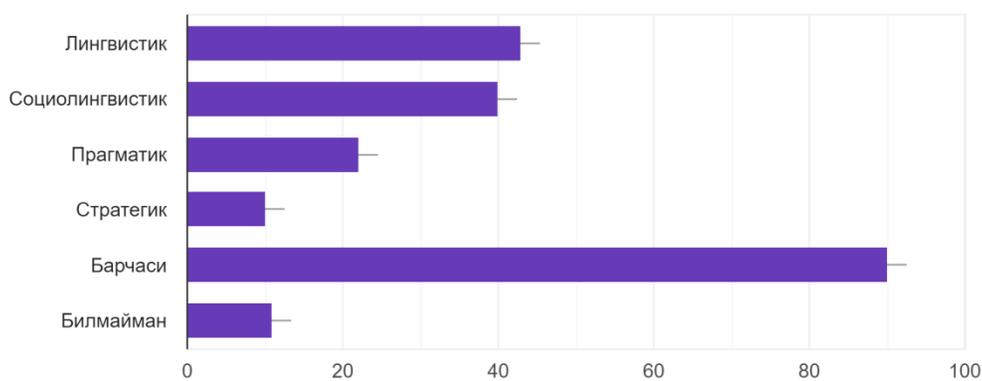
Figure 3.

In most foreign language classrooms EFL teachers form students' cultural understanding through demonstrating short films, singing songs in the target language or by reading authentic materials. We were interested to know which of these activities teachers in Uzbekistan use in the classroom. The survey results show that 52 % of the teachers use English movies or cartoons in the lessons. 51, 9 % teachers sing songs with learners. 51% out of 100% teach using culture

related topics. 16, 2 % teachers involve learners in role playing activities using dramas.   2, 6 % don't use any activities mentioned. 8, 4 % teachers use other forms of activities in shaping learners cultural understanding.

9. Инглиз тили дарсларида социолингвистик компетенцияни ривожлантирувчи қайси машғулот туридан кўпроқ фойдаланасиз?

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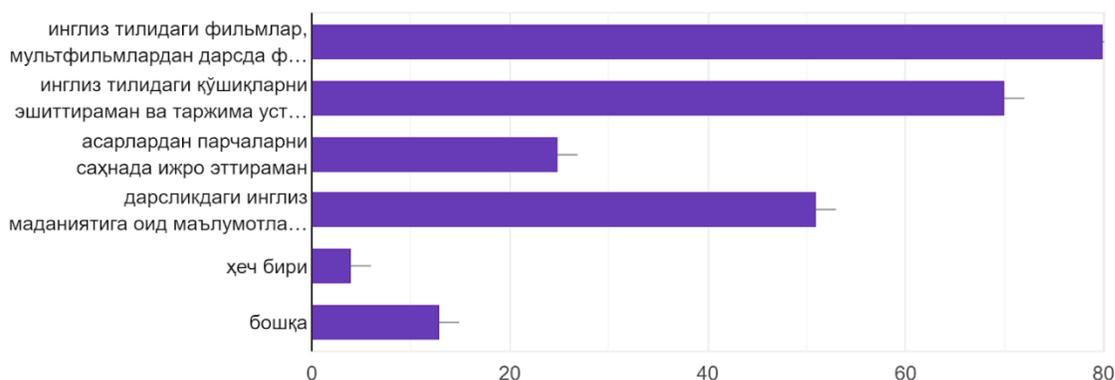
Figure 4.

The teachers were also asked if they were familiar with the Educational drama approach in a foreign language teaching methodology. The results were astonishing. Almost one third of the total replied that they heard about Educational drama approach. 36, 4% admitted not knowing about Educational drama. 27, 9% heard about the approach but still don't know how it is implemented in the classroom (See Figure 5).


12. Таълимий драма ҳақида эшитганмисиз?

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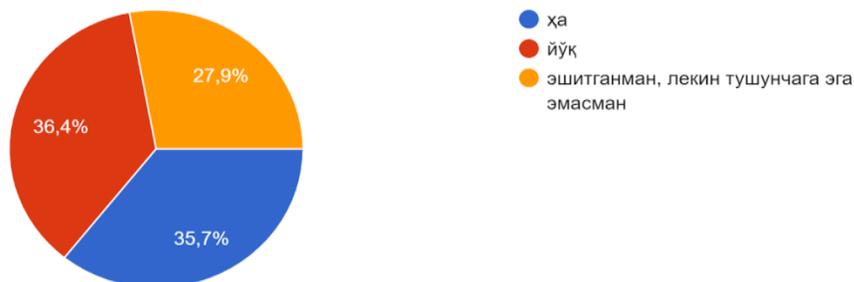
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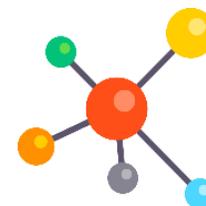
The results show that this approach is almost new to many EFL teachers in Uzbekistan. The implementation of drama in the foreign language classes will bring refreshment both for teachers and learners. They will be more involved in action activities rather than boring tasks. Moreover, it gives them more chance to practice their language skills.

If we look back to the roots of drama it first evolved in England with the works of Harriett Finlay-Johnson and Henry Caldwell Cook. They first introduced Educational drama to the public. Later at the beginning of 1950s drama became famous with the influence of Dorothy Heathcote [7]. Her interest in the art of drama led her to bring drama into the field of education. Heathcote's famous roles have led to much research in this area. She encouraged teachers to use drama in lessons. From the beginning, research in the field has been about the effectiveness of drama in education. Then drama and education were synchronized. Eventually drama entered the language system. In the "Mantle of the Expert" by Heathcote drama in education is a central element. According to her theory learner is at the center of the learning. Learning grows around the learner such as a mantle, and teachers should create this condition; starting from the needs and interests of the learner, new approaches to learning are to be found. "Dramatic role taking permits the exploration of multiple viewpoints by giving students the opportunity to "walk in the shoes" of people other than themselves" [16].

Widely used forms of drama are pantomime, role-playing, simulation, improvisation and script. All these drama forms lead learners to action activities which will stimulate lazy students to be more active in the lesson. Besides this, they learn the language in collaboration working with other peers; it gives them more fun and enthusiasm. The most important aspect of drama activities is that they will enable learners to practice their speaking skills in artificially created English atmosphere.

Pantomime is the use of facial expressions and gestures to express words without speaking, through which the audience or spectators must understand who they are, what they are doing, and how they feel. With the method of pantomime lexical units can be taught to students easily, quickly, and with pleasure. This method can be used effectively in all three stages of teaching lexical units (introduction, reinforcement, activation) and in any classroom. Pantomime can be used in 3 different forms: word pantomime, speech pantomime, and story pantomime (in higher-grade classes).

In a word pantomime, students should perform a given word and imitate it without speaking or using sound effects until the audience have said the exact word. This is especially useful for idiomatic expressions such as adjectives, action verbs, and body part words.

Sentence pantomime is also played in a form similar to word pantomime, but in this case the reader has to show the full sentence through gestures, facial expressions and body movements. For example, a student tries to explain to his peers by saying, "I am having lunch at home now". Sentences for pantomime can be prepared by the teacher or taken from a textbook or exercise.

The story pantomime is primarily intended for students with a higher level of knowledge, in which the student must be able to articulate the story read by the teacher through actions. Observer students check how well the performance fits into the story being read and discuss it at the end of the performance. Since the story is read in a foreign language studied by the teacher, the student performing the pantomime must first understand the content of the sentences in the story
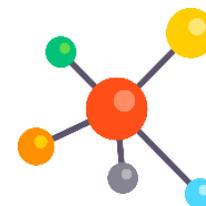
and then perform it based on his or her creative skills. Apparently, pantomime not only encourages students to learn language units, but also encourages them to develop their creative skills.

The role-play involves activities that encourage the use of language in real-life situations as a communicative approach, through which language learners can significantly improve their communicative competencies by developing the ability to use communication strategies or face-to-face communication problem-solving strategies. Within this pedagogical framework and methodology, small groups of students create characters based on different intercultural situations, develop stories, write dialogues, and perform extended role-plays. This will not only develop students 'free and fluent speaking skills, but also stimulate their creativity and public self-management skills. Words, phrases, grammatical forms and pronunciation memorized during language learning become automated in students' minds while preparing for performance, as well as during performance, and as a result students can easily put their knowledge of how to behave and say in real life into practice.

Simulation is a type of Educational drama that involves imitating some real thing, situation, or process. It gives students the task of working in small groups and how to behave in a given situation. Unlike role-playing, in the simulation, students participate by their own personality, while in role-playing, a role is played in the image of some person (waiter, driver, customer, salesperson, doctor, etc. roles). In simulation sessions, students are given a specific task in which they will have to get out of the situation accepting it as real. This type of exercise, like other forms of drama, encourages creativity and the active use of speech activity types.

According to Davis Improvisation is an activity that can be done without preparation. Students who learn English as a foreign language do most of the speech in their classes with preparation. In improvisation, however, students must create a scene, speak, act, react, and act without preparation. Decisions on what to say and what to do are made immediately. In improvisation, students do not have to know what will happen next. The scene is created and realized in its own way, without a plan. Participants need to pay attention to their partners in order for the performance to be successful. This forces them to listen carefully, speak clearly, and use language naturally. Improvisation prepares students to develop the ability to use language fluently in an extracurricular environment, she says [4]. R. Landy describes improvisation as a set of unwritten, unrepeatable, spontaneous actions in response to a teacher's minimal instructions. The main focus is to enter the image of the protagonist through imagination and fantasy [9].

Script is a story written for actors to perform, mainly for stage performance. The script is an authentic material and can be a living basis in the development of students' sociolinguistic competence. Teachers use scenarios developed by the foreign language communicators being studied during the lesson and staging the scenario in the classroom to help students get into the spirit of the foreign language culture being studied. Through this, students memorize linguistically and culturally correct words and phrases in a given situation (asking, asking permission, apologizing, giving orders, making suggestions, inviting, offering, thanking, etc.). The difference of the script from other types of Educational drama is that it serves the students to master the phrases used in daily life by the speakers of the language in any way. In role-playing, improvisation and simulation, students try to activate
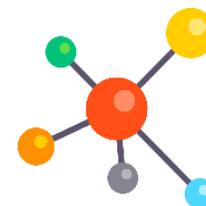
the lexical units they learned before the performance by performing. But in some cases, they can make mistakes, use certain words and phrases in the wrong context. However, no lexical or grammatical error is observed in the execution of a ready-made script. However, mistakes in pronunciation, intonation, and stress may occur. Such shortcomings will be corrected during the rehearsal before the performance, and the remaining shortcomings will be explained and analyzed by the teacher after the performance.

Before implementing drama activity to the lesson a teacher should be well-prepared for this beforehand. He\she should set the lesson goals and make sure that the chosen material is appropriate to the level and age of the pupils. Drama activity evaluation criteria should be explained to the pupils, so that they know what they are expected to do. After a careful planning the drama lesson can be held.

As any other task in language learning has its own evaluation criteria drama activity also should have its own method of assessment. Evaluating grammar or vocabulary activities is not difficult as students get points for each correct answer but evaluating a drama performance usually brings difficulty to the language instructors. Stage performance is a creative work which is more about subjective judgment than objective. One of the biggest challenges identified by Harris is that 'creativity' is not easily defined and therefore difficult to assess. Assessment in aesthetic domains also utilises personal responses to stimuli, which can be unfamiliar to those more accustomed to assessment tasks with previously defined answers [6]. Tomlinson argues for a healthy balance between subjective and objective judgments in order to create informed judgments on performance assessment that provide the most [15]. We agree with the views of Tomlinson and support the idea that stage performance assessment shouldn't be fully subjective

but certain evaluation criteria should be created to make it more objective, so to make the learners aware of the points to consider while preparing for their stage role. Summarizing all these views we can say that demonstrating a certain role on the stage is not only for the entertainment purposes of the learners, there should be exact educational aims that lie behind the stage.

Every teacher who is going to implement performance-based activities into language learning classrooms and evaluate students' learning process through this should be aware of its organizational moments. Airasian believes that the benefits of performance-based assessments are well documented [1]. However, some teachers are hesitant to implement them in their classrooms. Commonly, this is because these teachers feel they don't know enough about how to fairly assess a student's performance. Another reason for reluctance in using performance-based assessments may be previous experiences with them when the execution was unsuccessful or the results were inconclusive. Considering the opinions of the scholars we can say that teachers' attitudes and the responsibility they take play a significant role in implementing the performance-based evaluation into the classroom. The first thing that drama instructors should do is to define the purpose of the stage performance assessment. To do so they should ask several questions from themselves, like, what skill I am going to check, what level they should be, what my students should know and etc. After defining purposes a teacher should choose appropriate activities that suits to the needs, necessities of the students and classroom conditions. The activity needs to be evaluation criteria- based by the help of assessment rubrics. A rubric is a rating system with the help of which teachers identify the proficiency level of students. When using rubrics one need to be certain

that the rubrics are fair and simple. Clark states that well-constructed assessment criteria provides a way for student performances to be evaluated easily and equitably, without compromising on the divergent qualities of individual creative processes that arise in student responses to Drama assessment tasks [3]. Rose suggests that the key qualities of assessment criteria should address the links between the generation, realisation and response to Drama, using methods that allow the use of multiple intelligences [14]. Like other activities in language teaching and learning, drama also can be assessed through formative and summative assessment. Assessing a creative work can bring some challenges.

The first challenge that teachers face is the teacher's role in the classroom, they are both organizers and facilitators of the drama activity and at the same time they are assessors. They need to concentrate on both tasks at a time.

The next challenge is reluctant students who are unwilling to be involved in role-play activity. The teacher takes time to motivate them to engage them into the task.

Another difficulty can be seen in the diversity levels of the learners in the classroom. Some students may have poor English skills which can slow down the preparation process of the work.

Lack of creativity in students can also cause problem to the teacher in evaluation process as this is one of the essential sides of the drama approach in language teaching.

Classroom size and the eligibility of necessary equipments also play a role in the efficiency of the performance prepared by students, so teachers also need to take into consideration these factors while evaluating.

We have counted only a few challenges that teachers may come across while using staging activity in the classroom. Below we will try to suggest several solutions.

In order to ease the teacher's job as a facilitator and assessor at the same time we can offer an evaluation rubric in different forms, like, checklist(the teacher only indicates whether or not certain elements are present in the performance), rating scale approach (the teacher indicate to what degree the standards were met), memory approach (the teacher observes the students performing the tasks without taking any notes) and peer feedback approach (peers analyze each other's' mistakes and discuss them in groups and then they vote for the best performance.

The students who lack interest in role-playing or have limited language skills can be involved in stage preparation and organization process or can get a role in background stage.

The students with lack of creativity can be shown recordings of previous stage performances prepared by other students. This can awake their interest and even creativity to take further action.

Teachers can negotiate with their colleagues and exchange their rooms for bigger ones with necessary equipments for the performance day. Or they can organize it outside the classroom if possible.

We also need to indicate several factors that should be considered in the creation of evaluation rubrics:

- Time limit should be set for the performance
- Teacher expectations and presentation goals should be explained
- Oral presentation should be highly rewarded than note reading
- Acting skills, gestures, turn-taking should be considered
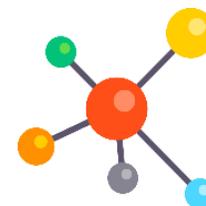
- Pronunciation skills (tone, intonation, stress) should be highly considered
- Grammar and vocabulary mistakes must be indicated and corrected soon after the performance finishes.
- Target language fluency should be highly appreciated and evaluated

As Clark mentions, well-constructed assessment criteria provides a way for student performances to be evaluated easily and equitably, without compromising on the divergent qualities of individual creative processes that arise in student responses to Drama assessment tasks [3].

Even though stage performance assessment is a time-consuming process with certain nuances, it leads to the noticeable development of language learning students by enriching their imagination and creative thinking skills. Moreover drama approach puts students into real world situations where they practice playing numerous roles.

THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

Summarizing all the above considerations, the following educational objectives of the drama method have been identified:

1. Drama technique helps to develop language and speech skills all at the same type;
2. Allows all students in the class to be active;
3. Increases student motivation;
4. Encourages creative thinking;
5. Develops cooperation;
6. Increases self-confidence and develops public speaking skills.

Educational drama method has been experimented in 6 schools of 3 regions of Uzbekistan (Andijan, Fergana, Namangan). 1761 pupils from 5-6-7-8-9-grades were involved in the experiment. Selected classes were divided into Control groups and Experimental groups. Experiment lasted for 3 months. At the beginning of the experiment diagnostic questionnaire was taken from all selected students to analyze gaps in the study process. According to the results of the questionnaire the forms of drama were implemented to the EFL classes of Experimental groups. Control groups had their normal every day classes. When the experiment finished both Control group and Experimental group students were tested and assessed to check their progress in the study process within 3 month time. Results of the experiment are given in the bar graph below (see Figure 6):
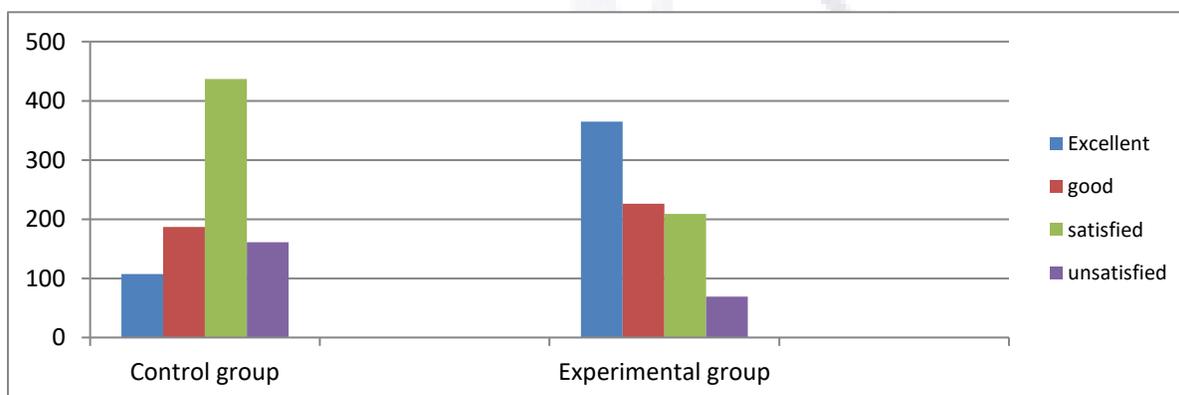
Based on the data shown in Figure 6 we can conclude that experiment was successfully completed and

Educational drama method has been proved to be effective in integrating in secondary school EFL classes in Uzbekistan.

VI. CONCLUSION

Competence Based Education has been in use in many developed countries and proved to be effective method in teaching EFL by many scholars and methodologists worldwide many years ago, and as a result it was adapted to the State Educational Standards of Uzbekistan in 2012. Educational drama which is based on communicative approach is a new trend in teaching EFL in Uzbekistan which hasn't been theoretically researched and practically applied in EFL classrooms before the author. According to the investigation results, findings and practical analyses of the research drama-based education develops not only linguistic skills of language learners but also enhances cultural awareness of students which make learners correctly interpret the language in certain context and enables them to use the language naturally. Moreover, learning EFL through drama makes lessons more fun and full of emotions. Students learn the subject enthusiastically by improving their creativity, interpersonal skills and self-confidence. No one is left behind in drama classes as every individual is given a certain task to be busy with.

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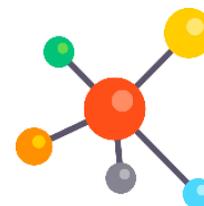
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