

Using Fiction through Dramatization and Drama in Teaching Extensive Reading

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Abstract. *The article examines the role of fiction and dramatization techniques in teaching extensive reading within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. The author analyzes how the integration of drama-based tools and role-playing contributes to students' linguistic and cognitive development. The study, conducted at Fergana State University, involves quantitative and qualitative analysis of data collected from senior students. The findings confirm that the use of dramatization significantly enhances motivation, engagement, and reading comprehension, transforming reading from a passive activity into an interactive educational experience.*

Keywords: *extensive reading, fiction, dramatization, English language teaching (ELT), critical thinking, student engagement, pedagogical methods*

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Dram və dramatikləşdirmə metodları vasitəsilə geniş oxu tədrisində bədii ədəbiyyatdan istifadə

Diləfuz İbrahimova 

Xülasə. *Bu məqalədə ingilis dilinin xarici dil (EFL) kontekstində geniş oxu tədrisində bədii ədəbiyyat və dramatisasiya texnikalarının rolu araşdırılır. Müəllif dramatisasiya texnikalarının və rol oyunlarının inteqrasiyasının tələbələrin linqvistik və idrak inkişafını necə asanlaşdırdığını təhlil edir. Fərqanə Dövlət Universitetində aparılan tədqiqat yuxarı sinif şagirdlərindən toplanan məlumatların kəmiyyət və keyfiyyət təhlilini əhatə edir. Nəticələr dramatisasiya texnikalarının istifadəsinin motivasiyanı, cəlb olunmanı və anlamı əhəmiyyətli dərəcədə artırdığını, oxumağı passiv prosesdən interaktiv təhsil təcrübəsinə çevirdiyini təsdiqləyir.*

Açar sözlər: *geniş mütaliə, bədii ədəbiyyat, dramatisasiya, ingilis dilinin tədrisi, tənqidi düşüncə, şagirdlərin cəlb olunması, tədris metodları*

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Introduction

Literature review. Extensive reading has long been recognized as a critical approach to developing language proficiency, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. The integration of fiction, dramatization, and drama in teaching extensive reading has garnered scholarly attention as an effective pedagogical approach. This literature review explores various theoretical and empirical perspectives on the role of fiction in language learning, the pedagogical benefits of drama and dramatization, and the influence of technological advancements on reading practices.

Fiction has long been recognized as a powerful tool for enhancing students' linguistic and cognitive development, offering a rich and immersive context for language acquisition. Wang (2024) emphasizes that fiction exposes learners to authentic language use, allowing them to encounter vocabulary, grammatical structures, and idiomatic expressions in meaningful contexts. Unlike isolated language drills, fiction provides natural language input, reinforcing lexical and syntactic patterns in a way that mirrors real-life communication. Through engaging narratives, students are encouraged to decipher meaning from context, which strengthens their inferential skills and promotes deeper comprehension. Additionally, the imaginative nature of fiction fosters creativity, enabling students to explore language playfully and experiment with diverse linguistic expressions in both spoken and written forms. By interacting with fictional texts, learners develop not only linguistic competence but also a more intuitive understanding of language as a dynamic and expressive medium.

Beyond its linguistic benefits, fiction plays a crucial role in fostering cognitive and critical thinking skills, as it challenges students to analyze complex narratives and character motivations. Fictional texts often present moral dilemmas, conflicting perspectives, and intricate plot developments, all of which require students to engage in higher-order thinking. Wang highlights that these narrative structures encourage learners to make inferences, identify cause-and-effect relationships, and evaluate different interpretations of events. As students navigate the world of fiction, they practice forming hypotheses, predicting story outcomes, and drawing connections between textual elements – skills that are essential for academic success. Furthermore, fiction's ability to transport readers into diverse cultural and historical contexts broadens their worldview, cultivating empathy and an appreciation for different perspectives. This cognitive engagement with literature not only strengthens analytical abilities but also enhances students' ability to engage thoughtfully with complex texts across disciplines.

Extensive reading has been widely recognized as an effective approach to developing both receptive and productive language skills, as it immerses learners in authentic and meaningful language use. Rezaee, Farahian, and Mansooji (2021) emphasize that when extensive reading is integrated into multimedia-based instruction, it significantly enhances students' reading comprehension and listening abilities. This is largely because multimodal resources, such as audio-supported texts, digital storytelling, and interactive reading platforms, provide learners with multiple modes of language input. These varied forms of input reinforce vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, and syntactic structures, ultimately strengthening comprehension skills. Furthermore, extensive reading fosters an intuitive grasp of language, allowing students to encounter words and expressions in diverse contexts rather than in isolated lists. By engaging with a wide range of texts, learners become more adept at recognizing patterns in language, which contributes to their overall fluency and confidence in reading and listening comprehension.

Beyond its impact on receptive skills, extensive reading also plays a crucial role in the development of productive language abilities, particularly in writing and speaking. Exposure to well-structured texts enables students to internalize grammatical conventions, discourse markers, and stylistic variations, which they can later apply in their own written and spoken communication. The study by

Rezaee, Farahian, and Mansooji further suggests that extensive reading allows students to process language input at a natural pace, reducing cognitive overload and enabling more spontaneous language production. As students read extensively, they begin to incorporate new vocabulary and complex sentence structures into their writing, leading to improved coherence and organization. Additionally, extensive reading provides learners with diverse models of communication, helping them develop their own voice and style in both formal and informal contexts. By regularly engaging with extensive reading materials, students not only refine their linguistic accuracy but also enhance their ability to express ideas more fluently and persuasively.

Dramatization in EFL classrooms has been widely studied as a means of improving students' reading engagement and comprehension. Pardede (2021) emphasizes the role of short stories in EFL instruction, noting that dramatization allows students to experience literature interactively. The performative aspect of dramatization not only aids comprehension but also enhances retention by associating textual elements with embodied experience. Moreover, the integration of drama activities encourages students to engage in collaborative learning, fostering communicative competence.

Recent research has underscored the cognitive benefits of role-play as an instructional strategy, particularly in enhancing students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Kong et al. (2023) introduce the concept of zero-shot reasoning through role-play prompting, demonstrating how students can engage in complex cognitive processes without prior exposure to specific scenarios. This approach encourages learners to analyze and respond to new situations dynamically, fostering adaptability and deeper comprehension of textual content. By assuming different perspectives within a narrative, students develop the ability to evaluate multiple viewpoints, predict character motivations, and construct well-reasoned arguments. Such cognitive engagement aligns with broader pedagogical goals in extensive reading, where learners are encouraged to interpret and interact with literary texts beyond passive consumption. Role-play serves as a bridge between abstract literary analysis and active participation, transforming reading into an immersive, thought-provoking experience that strengthens students' reasoning skills.

Beyond its impact on cognitive development, role-play has been shown to enhance students' language acquisition and communicative competence. Shanahan, McDonell, and Reynolds (2023) emphasize that role-play facilitates meaningful language interactions, allowing students to practice authentic communication in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts. When students embody characters, they are required to use language in socially and contextually appropriate ways, reinforcing their pragmatic competence. Unlike traditional classroom discussions, role-play provides a simulated yet natural setting where learners must negotiate meaning, express emotions, and adapt their speech based on situational demands. This not only strengthens their vocabulary and grammatical accuracy but also builds confidence in verbal expression. Furthermore, the unpredictability of role-play scenarios challenges students to think on their feet, making their language use more flexible and spontaneous – an essential skill for real-world communication in academic and professional settings.

Incorporating role-play into extensive reading programs thus offers a dual advantage: it deepens students' engagement with literary texts while simultaneously refining their linguistic abilities. By merging cognitive reasoning with meaningful language practice, role-play creates a dynamic learning environment that encourages both analytical and expressive skills. Educators can maximize its benefits by designing role-play activities that align with literary themes, character arcs, and narrative conflicts, allowing students to explore texts beyond passive reading. Additionally, role-play can be enriched through interdisciplinary approaches, such as integrating elements of drama, debate, or digital storytelling to enhance immersion. As research continues to highlight the effectiveness of role-play in education, it is crucial for instructors to leverage its potential thoughtfully, ensuring that

activities are structured to promote critical engagement, language development, and interactive learning experiences.

The relationship between play-based learning and language acquisition has been examined by Thunder et al., (2023) who argue that structured play activities enhance cognitive and social development in educational settings. Their research suggests that integrating play into reading instruction – through dramatization and theatrical performances – helps learners internalize linguistic structures more effectively. By engaging in fictional scenarios, students develop higher levels of engagement, making the reading process more dynamic and interactive.

The integration of game-based learning strategies with fiction reading has been explored by Schabas (2023), who identifies challenges teachers face when implementing game-based approaches in the classroom. While digital games and interactive fiction can increase students' motivation, the study finds that traditional pedagogical approaches remain crucial in maintaining a balance between entertainment and educational objectives. Thus, dramatization can serve as a bridge between structured language learning and playful engagement with literature.

The integration of fiction, dramatization, and drama in extensive reading instruction has been well-supported by research across multiple disciplines. Studies indicate that these methods enhance language acquisition, foster critical thinking, and promote engagement in EFL learning. Future research should continue to explore the intersection of traditional dramatization techniques with emerging technologies, ensuring that extensive reading remains a dynamic and effective approach in language education.

Fleer (2021) delves into the significance of imagination in the learning process, particularly through play, and highlights how conceptual play worlds create immersive and meaningful educational experiences. This idea resonates strongly with the dramatization of fiction in extensive reading programs, where students engage in imaginary scenarios that deepen their comprehension and analytical abilities. By stepping into the roles of literary characters and enacting various situations from texts, learners develop a more profound cognitive engagement with the material. This method not only enhances their understanding of the storyline and themes but also fosters an emotional connection to the text, making the reading experience more impactful. When students actively participate in dramatized storytelling, they move beyond passive consumption of content and instead become co-creators of meaning, reinforcing their interpretative skills and creative thinking.

The research conducted by Babayeva and Jumasheva (2022) centers on strategies for fostering an early interest in books among preschool-aged children, yet the principles they discuss are highly applicable to older students in extensive reading programs. Their findings suggest that incorporating drama-based techniques, such as role-playing and interactive storytelling, significantly enhances a child's curiosity and motivation to engage with texts. Although their study focuses on younger learners, its core implications extend to students at various educational levels. When teachers integrate drama into literature lessons, they create an active, dynamic learning environment that encourages students to view reading as more than just a solitary, passive activity. Instead, literature becomes a shared, participatory experience that allows students to immerse themselves in narratives, facilitating deeper understanding and appreciation of the material.

By using drama and role-playing as central tools in literature education, educators can transform reading into an interactive and enjoyable process that sustains long-term engagement with literary works. Extensive reading programs benefit from this approach, as dramatization not only captures students' attention but also enhances their retention and interpretation of texts. Encouraging students to embody characters and reenact significant moments in a story helps develop their communication

skills, empathy, and ability to analyze complex ideas. Furthermore, the emotional involvement fostered by dramatization makes literary exploration more meaningful, motivating students to continue reading independently (Ibragimova, 2025; Ibragimova & Muzaffarxonov, 2023; Ibragimova, 2021). Thus, integrating imaginative and performative elements into reading instruction aligns with both cognitive and emotional learning processes, reinforcing literature as an engaging and transformative educational tool.

Methods

The main hypothesis of this research is that using fiction through dramatization and drama in teaching extensive reading improves students' reading comprehension, engagement, and motivation in learning English. This hypothesis is based on the premise that interactive and performance-based learning methods create a deeper connection between students and the text, making the reading experience more engaging and effective.

Participants demographic. The data represents the age and gender distribution of 14 respondents. The majority (12 out of 14) are female, while only 2 respondents are male, indicating a significant gender imbalance in favor of female participants as in Table 1. In terms of age, most respondents (8 out of 14) are 22 years old, followed by equal numbers of 21-year-olds and 23-year-olds (3 each). Among the 21-year-olds, 2 are female and 1 is male. Among the 22-year-olds, there is a larger female majority (7 females, 1 male). At age 23, all 3 respondents are female, with no male representation.

This data suggests that female students are more represented in the study, particularly at age 22. The small number of male participants may indicate either a lower enrollment of males in the relevant field or a lower response rate from them in the survey.

Data analysis. To examine the impact of dramatization and drama on teaching extensive reading, a structured online questionnaire was developed. The survey was designed using Google Forms and was distributed anonymously to ensure honest and unbiased responses. The questionnaire contained 14 questions, consisting of both multiple-choice and open-ended formats, to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The multiple-choice questions provided measurable insights into students' preferences and experiences, while the open-ended questions allowed respondents to elaborate on their thoughts and suggestions.

The primary aim of the research design was to validate the hypothesis that dramatization enhances students' reading comprehension, engagement, and motivation in learning English. The survey was carefully structured to investigate students' reading habits, their perceptions of drama-based activities, the challenges they face in extensive reading, and the potential benefits of integrating dramatization techniques into reading lessons.

Data collection. The survey was distributed among students of Fergana State University, specifically among peers and groupmates majoring in English Language and Literature. Since the questionnaire was shared online, respondents were able to participate at their convenience, ensuring higher response rates and accurate reflections of their experiences. A total of 14 students participated in the survey, providing a balanced representation of senior students. The online format allowed for efficient data gathering and organization, reducing potential biases that might occur in face-to-face surveys. The diverse responses collected provided valuable insights into how drama-based reading activities influence students' engagement and comprehension.

Data analysis. The collected data was analyzed using statistical tools and applications to create tables and graphics, which provided a clear visualization of the quantitative responses. Percentages and

frequency distributions were calculated to identify trends and preferences regarding drama-based learning in extensive reading. The responses to multiple-choice questions were examined to determine the most preferred methods of learning, engagement levels, and challenges students face while reading fiction in English.

For the open-ended questions, the data was manually analyzed by the researcher to identify recurring themes and patterns. Responses were categorized into key areas such as improved comprehension, enhanced engagement, vocabulary retention, and confidence in speaking English. This qualitative analysis allowed for a deeper understanding of students' perceptions of dramatization in extensive reading and how it benefits their learning experience. The findings from both qualitative and quantitative analyses strongly support the hypothesis that dramatization plays a significant role in enhancing students' reading skills, comprehension, and motivation.

Results

The data shows that the majority of respondents (57.14%) read fiction in English a few times a week, indicating a consistent but not daily engagement with extensive reading as in Table 1. Meanwhile, 21.43% of participants read fiction daily, demonstrating a strong reading habit among a smaller group. Another 21.43% read occasionally, suggesting that while they engage with fiction in English, it is not a regular practice.

Table 1
Frequency of reading fiction in English

How often do you read fiction in English?	Frequency	%	Valid %
b) A few times a week	8	57.14%	57.14%
c) Occasionally	3	21.43%	21.43%
a) Daily	3	21.43%	21.43%
Total	14	100%	100%
Invalid	0	0%	
Total	14	100%	

The results suggest that most students have an active reading habit, but daily reading is less common. Encouraging more frequent engagement, possibly through structured reading activities or dramatization techniques, could help increase daily reading habits. The lack of invalid responses ensures the reliability of the data.

The data reveals a strong preference for acting out scenes (dramatization), with 71.43% (10 out of 14) of respondents favoring this method. This indicates that most students find drama-based activities highly effective in enhancing their engagement and comprehension when learning English through fiction (see Table 2). Group discussions are the second most preferred method, chosen by 21.43% (3 respondents), suggesting that some learners value collaborative verbal exchanges. However, silent reading is the least favored, with only 7.14% (1 respondent) selecting it, implying that passive reading is not as engaging or effective for most students.

Table 2
Preferred methods for learning English through fiction

Which method do you prefer for learning English through fiction?	Frequency	%	Valid %
b) Group discussions	3	21.43%	21.43%
c) Acting out scenes (dramatization)	10	71.43%	71.43%
a) Silent reading	1	7.14%	7.14%
Total	14	100%	100%
Invalid	0	0%	
Total	14	100%	

The overwhelming preference for dramatization supports the idea that interactive and performance-based learning enhances understanding and retention of fiction. This finding aligns with research emphasizing the benefits of experiential learning in language acquisition. Incorporating more drama-based activities into English learning programs could significantly improve student engagement and comprehension.

The data indicates that the vast majority of students (71.43% or 10 out of 14) have frequently participated in drama or role-playing activities in their English classes, suggesting that such methods are already widely used and appreciated (Table 2). Additionally, 21.43% (3 students) have engaged in these activities occasionally, while only 7.14% (1 student) reports rarely taking part.

This strong engagement in drama-based learning highlights its relevance and effectiveness in English language education. The high participation rate suggests that students are accustomed to and likely benefit from interactive learning techniques. Given this, further integrating dramatization into extensive reading activities could enhance comprehension and engagement.

The data compares observed participation in drama or role-playing activities in English classes with expected probabilities. 71.43% (10 out of 14) of students reported frequent participation, which is slightly lower than the expected 80%, indicating that while drama is widely used, there may be some inconsistency in its application. The percentage of students who participated sometimes (21.43%) closely matches the expected probability (20%), suggesting that occasional engagement aligns with expectations. Meanwhile, 7.14% (1 student) reported rarely participating, though no expected probability is provided for this category (see Figure 1).

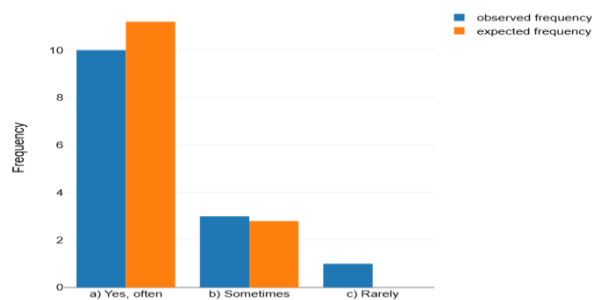


Figure 1
 Expected vs. observed participation in drama activities

These findings confirm that dramatization is an effective method for both linguistic and cognitive development in extensive reading. By actively engaging with fictional texts, students enhance their language proficiency while deepening their comprehension of narratives. Given these results, integrating more drama-based activities into English learning could further improve both language skills and literary understanding.

Students perceive dramatization as a powerful tool for enhancing speaking skills, particularly pronunciation, intonation, and fluency. By engaging in role-playing and performing dialogues, learners practice speaking naturally, which improves their confidence in oral communication. Unlike traditional reading exercises, drama encourages active vocal expression, helping students refine their pronunciation and develop a more authentic speech rhythm. This suggests that integrating dramatization into English learning can bridge the gap between theoretical language knowledge and practical language use, making speaking skills more intuitive and spontaneous.

Another major advantage highlighted by students is the role of dramatization in improving comprehension and memory retention. Acting out scenes turns abstract concepts into concrete experiences, making literature more vivid and easier to recall. Several students note that physically engaging with texts reinforces vocabulary and expressions, as they associate words with actions and emotions. Additionally, dramatization enhances literary appreciation, making stories more engaging and relatable. This indicates that experiential learning methods not only boost linguistic retention but also deepen students' understanding of literary themes and characters.

Beyond language acquisition, students recognize that drama fosters important life skills such as teamwork, communication, and confidence. Collaborative dramatization requires cooperation, adaptability, and expressive skills, which are crucial for future careers in fields like teaching, translation, and public speaking. Moreover, drama transforms learning into an interactive and enjoyable experience, increasing motivation and participation. Instead of passively consuming texts, students become active participants in storytelling, which creates a more dynamic and engaging classroom environment. Overall, these insights suggest that dramatization can significantly enhance both language proficiency and essential soft skills, making English learning more effective and meaningful.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study confirm that using fiction through dramatization and drama in teaching extensive reading significantly enhances students' comprehension, engagement, and motivation in learning English. The research supports the hypothesis that interactive and performance-based methods foster deeper connections with texts, making literature more accessible and meaningful for learners. By analyzing students' perceptions and experiences, this study highlights the effectiveness of dramatization as an alternative approach to traditional extensive reading techniques.

Firstly, the study reveals that a majority of students (71.43%) prefer acting out scenes as their primary method for learning English through fiction. This preference aligns with theories of experiential learning, which suggest that students retain information better when actively involved in the learning process. Dramatization allows learners to embody characters, visualize scenarios, and internalize dialogues, leading to a more profound understanding of the text's themes and structures. For example, students who performed scenes from "Hamlet" reported a better grasp of Shakespearean language compared to those who relied solely on reading.

Secondly, the study identifies key challenges students face in extensive reading, including complex vocabulary, figurative language, and maintaining engagement in long texts. Dramatization helps

overcome these barriers by transforming abstract literary concepts into tangible experiences. By acting out figurative expressions or complex dialogues, students gain a practical understanding of idiomatic phrases and rhetorical devices, making the text more accessible. For instance, breaking down a novel like "To Kill a Mockingbird" into performative segments enabled students to comprehend its historical and social context more effectively.

Another significant finding is the impact of dramatization on vocabulary retention and speaking skills. Over 57% of students indicated that acting out scenes improved their pronunciation, fluency, and confidence in speaking English. Performance-based activities require learners to focus on articulation, intonation, and expressive delivery, which naturally enhances their spoken language abilities. Additionally, rehearsing and memorizing dialogues lead to repeated exposure to new vocabulary, reinforcing retention and application in real-life communication.

The social benefits of drama-based learning also emerged as a key theme in the study. Students who engaged in collaborative role-playing activities demonstrated higher levels of teamwork, problem-solving, and communication skills. Group performances of "The Great Gatsby" party scenes, for example, required negotiation of roles, coordination, and creative interpretation, fostering a more interactive and cooperative learning environment. This supports Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of observational learning and peer interaction in skill development.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that dramatization is a transformative tool for teaching extensive reading, addressing linguistic, cognitive, and affective dimensions of learning. By fostering active engagement, collaboration, and emotional resonance, drama not only improves comprehension but also cultivates a lifelong appreciation for literature. Future research could explore its long-term impact on language proficiency and critical thinking, further solidifying its role in modern language education.

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