



Perceived Effects of Drama-Based Strategies on Student-Teachers' English-Speaking Skills in Rwanda's Teacher Training Colleges

Baudouin Habingabwa, Anthony Kamanzi & Pravda Mfurankunda

University of Rwanda, College of Education, School of Languages and Social Sciences Education, Kigali, Rwanda

Email: bhabingabwa@gmail.com

Abstract: Although drama-based strategies have increasingly been recognised as learner-centred approaches that promote active participation and authentic language use, empirical evidence regarding their perceived effectiveness within Rwandan TTCs remains limited. Guided by Communicative Competence Theory and the Affective Filter Hypothesis, this study investigated tutors' and student-teachers' perceptions of the effects of drama-based strategies on English-speaking skills. A mixed-methods approach employing descriptive and exploratory research designs was adopted. Data were collected from 232 participants comprising student-teachers and tutors from TTC Save and TTC Nyamata through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis. The findings revealed that drama-based strategies, particularly role-plays, simulations, skits, improvisation, and dramatized dialogues, are widely used in English-speaking instruction (overall $M = 4.10$). Respondents perceived these strategies as highly effective in improving communicative confidence ($M = 4.41$), pronunciation and grammatical accuracy ($M = 4.35$), and fluency ($M = 4.34$). Institutional support ($M = 4.03$) and the availability of teaching materials ($M = 3.98$) were identified as important factors facilitating implementation, whereas large class sizes ($M = 3.78$) emerged as the main constraint. The study concludes that drama-based strategies constitute an effective, learner-centred pedagogical approach for enhancing student-teachers' English-speaking skills and recommends their systematic integration into teacher education curricula in Rwanda's Teacher Training Colleges, alongside institutional measures to address class-size constraints.

Keywords: Communicative competence, Drama-based strategies, English-speaking skills, student-teachers, Teacher Training Colleges, Rwanda.

Habingabwa, B., Kamanzi, A. & Mfurankunda, P. (2026). Perceived Effects of Drama-Based Strategies on Student-Teachers' English-Speaking Skills in Rwanda's Teacher Training Colleges. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 10(3), 1217 – 1228. <https://doi.org/10.59765/dp9>

1. Introduction

English has become the dominant language of international communication, higher education, scientific research, and professional interaction. Consequently, educational systems worldwide increasingly emphasize the development of communicative competence, particularly speaking skills, as a key outcome of language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Effective oral communication enables learners to participate actively in academic, professional, and social contexts, making speaking proficiency an essential component of English language education.

Recent studies indicate that despite increased emphasis on communicative approaches to language teaching, many learners in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as Foreign Language (EFL) contexts continue to experience difficulties in developing fluent and confident oral communication skills (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017).

Within teacher education institutions, the development of English-speaking skills is particularly crucial because student-teachers are expected to function as instructional models in their future classrooms. Teachers with strong oral proficiency are better positioned to facilitate classroom interaction, explain concepts effectively, and

promote meaningful learner engagement (Harmer, 2015). However, research has consistently shown that many pre-service teachers struggle with speaking fluently and confidently in English, especially in contexts where English is learned as a second or foreign language. These challenges are often manifested through pronunciation difficulties, limited vocabulary use, communication anxiety, and reduced participation in oral classroom activities.

To address these challenges, contemporary language pedagogy increasingly advocates learner-centred instructional approaches that provide authentic opportunities for communication (Littlewood, 2014). Among such approaches, drama-based strategies have attracted considerable attention due to their potential to promote active participation, creativity, and meaningful language use. Drama-based strategies include role-plays, simulations, improvisation, skits, and dramatized dialogues that engage learners in realistic communicative situations. According to Komul (2023), drama-based instruction creates interactive learning environments that encourage learners to use language purposefully while simultaneously developing confidence and communicative competence. Similarly, Nguyen (2023) found that drama activities significantly improve learners' oral fluency by providing opportunities for spontaneous language production and authentic interaction.

The effectiveness of drama-based pedagogy has been documented across diverse educational contexts. Studies have reported positive effects on learners' fluency, pronunciation, communicative confidence, and willingness to communicate. For example, Wijaya et al. (2025) demonstrated that learners exposed to drama-based activities showed noticeable improvement in pronunciation and oral performance, while Al-Zurfi et al. (2025) found that drama activities significantly reduced speaking anxiety and increased learners' confidence in oral communication. Through performance, collaboration, and interaction, drama provides learners with opportunities to practice language in meaningful social contexts rather than through isolated linguistic exercises.

In the African context, English serves as an important language of education, administration, and international engagement. Many countries continue to invest in teacher education programmes to strengthen teachers' communicative competence and classroom effectiveness (British Council, 2022). Nevertheless, studies across the continent indicate that many student-teachers complete their training with inadequate oral English proficiency, thereby limiting their effectiveness as classroom communicators. Recent scholarship suggests that interactive pedagogical approaches, including drama-based instruction, may play an important role in addressing these challenges by promoting learner engagement and authentic language use (Mugiraneza et al., 2024).

In Rwanda, the importance of English-speaking competence became more pronounced following the adoption of English as the medium of instruction in 2009. The policy shift aimed to facilitate Rwanda's integration into the East African Community and the global knowledge economy (Rwanda Education Board, 2023). However, the transition also created significant challenges for teachers and student-teachers, many of whom were required to teach and learn through a language in which they had limited proficiency. Research has continued to report challenges related to fluency, pronunciation, confidence, and classroom communication among student-teachers in Rwandan Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) (Mugiraneza et al., 2024).

Given these challenges, drama-based strategies appear particularly relevant to the Rwandan teacher education context because they align with the principles of the Competency-Based Curriculum and communicative language teaching (Rwanda Education Board, 2023). By engaging student-teachers in meaningful interaction, collaborative performance, and simulated classroom communication, drama-based instruction offers opportunities to strengthen both language competence and professional communication skills. Despite growing international evidence supporting the effectiveness of drama-based pedagogy, limited empirical research has examined its perceived effects on English-speaking skills within Rwanda's Teacher Training Colleges. This study therefore investigates the perceived effects of drama-based strategies on student-teachers' English-speaking skills in selected Teacher Training Colleges in Rwanda.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

English-speaking skills are essential for effective communication and professional practice among prospective teachers. However, many learners in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts experience difficulties in speaking English fluently and confidently due to factors such as communication anxiety, limited opportunities for practice, pronunciation challenges, and insufficient learner engagement in classroom activities. Studies have shown that learners often face difficulties in developing oral communication skills despite receiving formal English instruction (Alasmari & Ahmed, 2013; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017).

In response to these challenges, drama-based strategies have increasingly been promoted as learner-centred approaches capable of enhancing learners' participation, confidence, fluency, and communicative competence. Previous studies indicate that role-plays, simulations, improvisations, and dramatizations provide authentic contexts for language use and encourage active learner involvement in speaking activities (Abdo & Al-Awabdeh, 2017; Ganap, 2025). Despite the reported benefits of drama-based instruction, challenges related to English-speaking proficiency continue to be observed

among student-teachers in Rwanda's Teacher Training Colleges. Given that these institutions prepare future teachers who are expected to teach through English, inadequate speaking competence may negatively affect classroom instruction and learner outcomes.

Although drama-based strategies are increasingly used in language teaching, empirical evidence regarding their effectiveness within Rwanda's Teacher Training Colleges remains limited. Consequently, there is a need to investigate how tutors and student-teachers perceive the effects of these strategies on the development of English-speaking skills.

1.2 Research Gap

Existing studies have demonstrated the positive contribution of drama-based strategies to language learning in different educational contexts. For example, Abdo and Al-Awabdeh (2017) found that drama activities significantly improved learners' oral communication skills and classroom participation, while Nguyen (2023) reported that drama-based activities positively influenced learners' speaking performance and generated positive perceptions toward speaking instruction.

Similarly, several international studies have highlighted the role of drama in promoting communicative competence and reducing speaking anxiety among language learners (Bora, 2021; Rahmawati Astiandani & Mustofa, 2021).

However, most of these studies were conducted outside Rwanda and primarily focused on primary schools, secondary schools, universities, or general ESL/EFL learning environments. In the Rwandan context, previous research has largely concentrated on English language proficiency challenges, oral strategies such as debate, and language policy implementation (Baziganya et al., 2024; Mugiraneza et al., 2024) rather than specifically examining drama-based strategies in Teacher Training Colleges. Moreover, limited attention has been given to the perceptions of both tutors and student-teachers regarding the effects of drama-based strategies on English-speaking skills.

Therefore, a contextual and empirical gap exists concerning the perceived effects of drama-based strategies on English-speaking skills among student-teachers in Rwanda's Teacher Training Colleges. This study addresses that gap by investigating tutors' and student-teachers' perceptions of the effects of drama-based strategies in selected TTCs in Rwanda.

1.3 Research Objectives

The general objective of this study was to investigate tutors' and student-teachers' perceptions of the effects of drama-based strategies on improving English-speaking

skills in Teacher Training Colleges in Rwanda. Specifically, the study sought to (i) examine the extent to which drama-based strategies are used in English-speaking instruction in TTCs; (ii) assess tutors' and student-teachers' perceived effects of drama-based strategies on specific English-speaking sub-skills, namely fluency, pronunciation and grammatical accuracy, and communicative confidence; and (iii) investigate the contextual and institutional factors that influence the effectiveness of drama-based strategies in enhancing student-teachers' English-speaking skills. These three objectives structure the presentation of findings and discussion in Section 4.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Communicative Competence Theory

The present study is guided by the Communicative Competence Theory proposed by Hymes (1972). The theory emerged as a response to Chomsky's concept of linguistic competence, which primarily emphasized grammatical knowledge while overlooking the social and functional dimensions of language use. Hymes argued that effective communication requires not only knowledge of grammatical rules but also the ability to use language appropriately in different social contexts.

Communicative competence encompasses several interrelated abilities, including grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Canale and Swain (1980) operationalised these dimensions into a practical framework, arguing that effective oral communication requires learners to combine grammatical accuracy with the sociolinguistic and strategic ability to negotiate meaning in real interaction. In English language teaching, communicative competence therefore serves as a major goal because learners are expected to develop the capacity to interact meaningfully rather than merely demonstrate knowledge of grammatical structures.

Drama-based strategies align closely with the principles of Communicative Competence Theory because they provide learners with opportunities to use language in realistic situations. Through activities such as role-plays, simulations, improvisation, and dramatized dialogues, learners practice expressing ideas, negotiating meaning, and responding to communicative challenges in a socially meaningful manner. Littlewood (2014) similarly argues that communicative approaches remain central to language pedagogy because they position interaction, rather than isolated grammar instruction, as the primary vehicle for language development. Consequently, drama-based instruction creates conditions that support the development of communicative competence and enhance learners' speaking proficiency.

The relevance of this theory to the present study lies in its emphasis on language use as an interactive and social process. Since the study investigates the perceived effects of drama-based strategies on English-speaking skills, Communicative Competence Theory offers an appropriate framework for understanding how participation in dramatic activities may contribute to improved oral communication among student-teachers in Rwanda's Teacher Training Colleges.

2.1.2 Affective Filter Hypothesis

The study is further informed by Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis. According to this theory, language acquisition is influenced not only by cognitive factors but also by affective variables such as motivation, confidence, attitudes, and anxiety. Krashen argues that learners acquire language more effectively when they experience low levels of anxiety and high levels of confidence and motivation.

The theory maintains that a high affective filter can prevent learners from fully processing language input, thereby limiting language acquisition. In contrast, a low affective filter facilitates language learning by creating favourable conditions for meaningful communication and active learner participation. Consequently, language teaching approaches that reduce fear and encourage confidence are likely to promote greater language development.

Drama-based strategies directly support the assumptions of the Affective Filter Hypothesis. Through collaborative and engaging activities, learners are encouraged to interact freely, take risks in communication, and express themselves creatively. Piazzoli (2018) extends this argument by showing that embodied, drama-based pedagogy is particularly effective at lowering the affective filter because learners communicate through assumed roles rather than as themselves, which reduces the personal risk associated with error. However, Swain (2005) cautions that affective readiness alone is insufficient for language development, since learners must also be pushed to produce comprehensible output through interaction; the Affective Filter Hypothesis is therefore best understood as complementary to, rather than a substitute for interaction-based accounts of language acquisition. The theory remains relevant to this study because it helps explain how participation in drama activities may contribute to improved speaking skills among student-teachers, provided that affective gains are reinforced by genuine communicative practice.

2.2 Empirical Review

This section reviews empirical literature relevant to the study's three specific objectives: the extent of use of drama-based strategies, their perceived effects on English-speaking sub-skills, and the contextual factors that shape their effectiveness. The review synthesises findings across international, African, and Rwandan

contexts to critically establish the empirical basis for the present study and to identify the specific knowledge gaps it addresses.

2.2.1 Extent of Use of Drama-Based Strategies in English Language Instruction

Empirical literature indicates that drama-based strategies constitute a broad category of interactive teaching approaches designed to promote oral communication through experiential and performative learning. Commonly used strategies include role-play, simulations, improvisation, scripted performances, skits, dramatized dialogues, and expressive reading (Komul, 2023; Yudiarta et al., 2025). Role-play is consistently reported as the most frequently used technique because of its flexibility and adaptability across proficiency levels; Nguyen (2023) found that structured role-play activities encouraged sustained oral interaction and promoted the use of functional language such as requesting, explaining, and persuading, while Ganap (2025) reports that simulations and role cards enhance learner engagement by providing clear communicative purposes.

In teacher-education contexts specifically, drama-based strategies are often integrated through micro-teaching performances, peer dramatization, and classroom simulations. Dewi and Hayati (2025) observed that English-education students exposed to drama-based instruction demonstrated greater classroom interaction and willingness to speak, particularly when drama activities were linked to pedagogical reflection, suggesting that such strategies simultaneously build language competence and professional teaching skill. However, Yudiarta et al. (2025) note that the frequency and range of drama-based strategies used in practice often depend on tutors' pedagogical competence, institutional culture, and curriculum demands, with many tutors relying on short, low-risk activities such as brief role-plays because of time and assessment pressures.

Within the Rwandan context, related studies have examined interactive oral strategies such as debate and drama in secondary education (Baziganya et al., 2024; Mugiraneza et al., 2024), but these studies were conducted outside the teacher-education sector. Most international evidence, meanwhile, derives from primary, secondary, or general university EFL settings (Nguyen, 2023; Dewi & Hayati, 2025). Consequently, empirical evidence on which drama-based strategies are used, and how extensively, within Teacher Training Colleges in Rwanda remains scarce. This gap justifies the present study's first objective of establishing the extent of use of drama-based strategies specifically within Rwandan TTCs.

2.2.2 Perceived Effects of Drama-Based Strategies on English-Speaking Skills

A substantial body of empirical research demonstrates that drama-based strategies positively influence learners' English-speaking skills, with experimental, quasi-experimental, and mixed-methods studies consistently reporting improvements in fluency, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, and communicative confidence among learners exposed to drama-based instruction (Nguyen, 2023; Wijaya et al., 2025).

Regarding fluency, drama-based activities encourage extended speech production and spontaneous language use. Nguyen (2023) found that learners participating in improvisational drama tasks produced longer utterances with fewer pauses than learners taught through traditional methods, while Wijaya et al. (2025) observed notable gains in speech rate and coherence among learners engaged in dramatized dialogues. With respect to pronunciation, repeated rehearsal and performance have been shown to heighten learners' awareness of stress, intonation, and rhythm; Wijaya et al. (2025) report that learners exposed to drama-based pronunciation practice demonstrated improved intelligibility and greater confidence in oral delivery, a pattern consistent with Canale and Swain's (1980) view that communicative competence integrates linguistic accuracy with the ability to communicate meaning.

Beyond the technical aspects of speaking, several studies highlight the influence of drama-based strategies on confidence and willingness to communicate. Al-Zurfi et al. (2025) found that role-play significantly reduced speaking anxiety among EFL learners because participants felt less personal risk when speaking through fictional characters, while Bora (2021) similarly reports that scripted drama and play-based approaches create authentic, low-pressure opportunities for spontaneous speaking. Rahmawati Astiandani and Mustofa (2021), reviewing multiple studies on drama in speaking instruction, likewise conclude that the primary benefit of drama-based approaches lies in the psychological space they create for learners to take communicative risks, although the same review cautions that gains in linguistic accuracy may require more sustained practice than gains in confidence.

In teacher-education contexts, drama-based strategies are perceived as valuable for developing both communicative competence and pedagogical readiness. Dewi and Hayati (2025) report that student-teachers perceived drama activities as effective in improving classroom participation and preparing them for real teaching situations. However, few studies have explicitly examined how tutors and student-teachers simultaneously perceive the influence of drama-based strategies across multiple speaking sub-skills — fluency, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, and confidence — within a single study, and fewer still have done so in Teacher Training Colleges in sub-Saharan Africa. This gap is particularly evident in Rwanda, where student-teachers' oral proficiency has direct implications for the quality of English-medium instruction, and constitutes

the empirical basis for the present study's second objective.

2.2.3 Contextual and Institutional Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Drama-Based Strategies

Although drama-based strategies offer well-documented benefits, empirical evidence shows that their effectiveness is shaped by contextual and institutional conditions. Limited professional preparation in drama pedagogy is one of the most frequently reported constraints: tutors who lack formal training in drama-based instructional techniques often report low pedagogical confidence and difficulty designing, facilitating, and assessing speaking-oriented drama activities (Yudiarta et al., 2025). Structural and organisational constraints also matter; large class sizes limit instructional time and individualised feedback, and examination-oriented curricula have been identified as barriers to the consistent integration of interactive methodologies such as drama (Ganap, 2025). Rahmawati Astiandani and Mustofa (2021) similarly identify time constraints and rigid curricula as recurring barriers across the drama-in-language-teaching literature.

Conversely, empirical evidence highlights enabling conditions. Supportive institutional leadership, flexible curricula, collaborative classroom cultures, and access to instructional resources have been shown to enhance the pedagogical value of drama-based approaches (Komul, 2023). In teacher-education settings specifically, drama-based strategies provide dual benefits, improving student-teachers' communicative competence while modelling interactive pedagogical techniques they can later apply in their own classrooms (Dewi & Hayati, 2025).

Despite this evidence, limited empirical research has examined the specific contextual and institutional factors influencing the effectiveness of drama-based strategies within Teacher Training Colleges in Rwanda. Existing Rwandan studies on oral English pedagogy have focused on secondary schools rather than teacher-education institutions (Baziganya et al., 2024; Mugiraneza et al., 2024), leaving open the question of how institutional support, instructional resources, and class size interact to shape drama-based instruction in TTCs. This gap constitutes the empirical basis for the present study's third objective.

2.3 Summary of the Literature Review and Research Gap

The reviewed literature demonstrates that drama-based strategies can contribute positively to the development of English-speaking skills by promoting communicative competence, learner participation, confidence, fluency, and authentic language use, and that Communicative Competence Theory and the Affective Filter Hypothesis provide a coherent theoretical basis for this relationship.

However, three specific gaps emerge from the review. First, most evidence on the extent and range of drama-based strategies used in practice comes from general EFL classrooms rather than teacher-education institutions (Objective 1). Second, few studies examine tutors' and student-teachers' perceptions of drama-based strategies across multiple speaking sub-skills simultaneously, and almost none do so in an African teacher-education setting (Objective 2). Third, the contextual and institutional factors that shape the effectiveness of drama-based instruction have rarely been investigated within Rwandan TTCs specifically, even though related Rwandan studies exist for secondary education (Objective 3). By addressing these three gaps concurrently, using a mixed-methods design that combines the perspectives of both tutors and student-teachers, this study extends the empirical literature on drama-based pedagogy to a previously under-researched teacher-education context and generates evidence that can directly inform pedagogical practice and policy in Rwanda's TTCs.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach to investigate tutors' and student-teachers' perceptions of the effects of drama-based strategies on the development of English-speaking skills in Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) in Rwanda. The mixed-methods approach was considered appropriate because it enabled the collection and integration of both quantitative and qualitative data, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Quantitative data were used to determine the extent of respondents' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of drama-based strategies, while qualitative data provided deeper insights into participants' experiences and views concerning the implementation of these strategies.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted descriptive and exploratory research designs. The descriptive design enabled the researcher to describe participants' perceptions regarding the use and effects of drama-based strategies in English language teaching. The exploratory design was employed to gain a deeper understanding of how drama-based strategies contribute to the development of speaking skills among student-teachers and the contextual factors that influence their effectiveness.

The combination of these designs allowed the researcher to generate both numerical and explanatory evidence concerning the perceived contribution of drama-based strategies to English-speaking skills development.

3.3 Study Area

The study was conducted in two Teacher Training Colleges in Rwanda, namely TTC Save and TTC Nyamata. These institutions were selected because they offer teacher education programmes and actively engage student-teachers in English language learning activities. Furthermore, the two colleges provided a suitable environment for examining the implementation of drama-based instructional strategies and their perceived effects on learners' speaking skills.

3.4 Target Population

The target population comprised tutors and student-teachers from TTC Save and TTC Nyamata. Specifically, the study targeted English language tutors and student-teachers enrolled in teacher education programmes within the selected institutions. The total target population consisted of 236 participants, including 225 student-teachers and 11 tutors. These participants were considered relevant because they directly engage in the teaching and learning processes through which drama-based strategies are implemented.

3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

A sample of 232 respondents was selected from the target population. The sample comprised student-teachers and tutors from the two selected Teacher Training Colleges.

Different sampling techniques were employed to ensure appropriate representation of participants. Student-teachers were selected using a probability sampling technique to provide equal chances of participation, while tutors were purposively selected because of their direct involvement in English language instruction and their familiarity with drama-based teaching strategies.

The use of both probability and non-probability sampling techniques enabled the researcher to obtain data from participants who possessed relevant knowledge and experiences related to the study objectives.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected using three complementary instruments:

3.6.1 Questionnaire

Structured questionnaires were administered to student-teachers to collect quantitative data regarding their perceptions of drama-based strategies and their effects on English-speaking skills. The questionnaire consisted mainly of closed-ended items measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

3.6.2 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with tutors to obtain detailed information concerning their experiences and perceptions regarding the implementation of drama-based strategies in English language teaching. The interviews provided valuable qualitative insights that complemented the quantitative findings.

3.6.3 Classroom Observation

Classroom observations were conducted to examine the actual implementation of drama-based strategies during English language lessons. Observation data helped verify information obtained through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions while providing direct evidence of classroom practices.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

Before data collection, the researcher obtained the necessary authorization from relevant institutional authorities. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their voluntary involvement in the research process. Questionnaires were administered to student-teachers, while interviews were conducted with tutors according to mutually agreed schedules. Focus group discussions were organized with selected student-teachers, and classroom observations were carried out during English language lessons involving drama-based activities.

The use of multiple data collection methods facilitated triangulation and enhanced the credibility of the findings.

3.8 Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques were employed.

Quantitative Data Analysis: Data collected through questionnaires were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were computed to describe respondents' perceptions regarding the effects of drama-based strategies on English-speaking skills.

Qualitative Data Analysis: Data obtained from interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations were analyzed thematically. Responses were organized into themes based on the study objectives. The thematic analysis enabled the researcher to identify recurring patterns, perceptions, experiences, and contextual factors related to the implementation of drama-based strategies.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings facilitated a comprehensive interpretation of the study results.

3.9 Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity of the research instruments, the questionnaire, interview guide, and observation checklist were reviewed by research experts and supervisors for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. Suggestions provided during the review process were incorporated into the final instruments.

Reliability was ensured through pilot testing of the questionnaire before the main data collection exercise. Feedback from the pilot study was used to refine ambiguous items and improve the consistency of the instruments.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical principles throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and the information collected was used solely for academic purposes. Furthermore, respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences.

By observing these ethical principles, the study ensured respect for participants and maintained the integrity of the research process.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the study findings systematically according to the three specific objectives, structured around the independent variable (drama-based strategies), the dependent variable (English-speaking skills, comprising fluency, pronunciation, and grammatical accuracy, and communicative confidence), and the moderating contextual and institutional variables (institutional support, teaching materials, and class size) identified in the study's conceptual framework.

4.1 Extent of Use of Drama-Based Strategies in English Language Instruction

The study first sought to establish the extent to which drama-based strategies are utilized during English language teaching and learning activities in Teacher Training Colleges. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement regarding the use of various drama-based instructional strategies.

Table 1: Respondents' Perceptions of the Use of Drama-Based Strategies in English Language Teaching

Drama-Based Strategy	Mean	Interpretation
Role-plays	4.10	High
Simulations and Skits	4.11	High
Improvisation Activities	4.11	High
Dramatized Dialogues	4.09	High
Group Performance Activities	4.08	High

Overall Mean = 4.10

The findings indicate that drama-based strategies are commonly integrated into English language instruction in the selected Teacher Training Colleges. Simulations, skits, and improvisation activities recorded the highest mean scores ($M = 4.11$), suggesting that these approaches are frequently employed by tutors to facilitate student-teachers' participation in speaking activities. Role-plays also showed a high mean score ($M = 4.10$), indicating that student-teachers are regularly exposed to opportunities to practice English in realistic communicative situations.

The classroom observations further confirmed that drama-based activities were incorporated into English lessons through group presentations, dramatization of dialogues, role enactment, and simulated classroom scenarios. Tutors reported that such activities encourage learner participation and provide opportunities for

practical language use beyond traditional classroom discussions.

These findings suggest that drama-based strategies have become important instructional tools for promoting learner-centred teaching and active engagement in English language learning within Teacher Training Colleges.

4.2 Perceived Effects of Drama-Based Strategies on English-Speaking Skills

The second objective of the study was to assess tutors' and student-teachers' perceived effects of drama-based strategies on specific English-speaking sub-skills. Respondents evaluated the extent to which drama-based activities contribute to fluency, pronunciation and grammatical accuracy, and communicative confidence.

Table 2: Perceived Effects of Drama-Based Strategies on English-Speaking Skills

Speaking Skill Dimension	Mean	Interpretation
Fluency	4.34	Very High
Pronunciation and Grammatical Accuracy	4.35	Very High
Confidence in Speaking English	4.41	Very High

Overall Mean = 4.37

The results indicate that respondents perceived drama-based strategies as highly effective in improving student-teachers' English-speaking skills. Among the dimensions assessed, confidence in speaking English obtained the highest mean score ($M = 4.41$). This finding suggests that participation in drama-based activities enables learners to communicate more confidently and reduces the fear associated with speaking English in front of others.

Pronunciation and grammatical accuracy recorded a mean score of 4.35, indicating that respondents believed drama-based activities contribute substantially to correct language use. Through repeated practice and interaction during role-plays, simulations, and dramatized performances, learners are exposed to opportunities for refining pronunciation and applying grammatical structures in meaningful contexts.

Similarly, fluency recorded a mean score of 4.34, demonstrating that respondents perceived drama-based strategies as effective in promoting smooth and spontaneous communication. Frequent participation in dramatic activities encourages learners to express ideas

continuously without excessive reliance on memorization or hesitation.

The findings imply that drama-based strategies provide authentic opportunities for language practice, thereby supporting the development of essential speaking competencies among student-teachers.

Qualitative Findings on Speaking Development

Interview and focus group discussion findings support the quantitative results. One tutor stated: "Drama activities encourage students to speak freely and confidently because they interact naturally with their peers rather than merely responding to teacher questions."

Another respondent observed that: "When students participate in role-plays and simulations, they become more comfortable using English and gradually improve their pronunciation and fluency."

Student-teachers also reported that drama activities made English lessons more engaging and provided opportunities to practice speaking in realistic situations.

Many participants indicated that they were less afraid of making mistakes when involved in group dramatization activities than during formal speaking exercises.

The study further examined factors that influence the successful implementation of drama-based strategies in Teacher Training Colleges.

4.3 Contextual Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Drama-Based Strategies

Table 3: Contextual Factors Influencing Drama-Based Instruction

Factor	Mean	Interpretation
Institutional Support	4.03	High
Availability of Teaching Materials	3.98	High
Class Size	3.78	Moderate

Overall Mean = 3.93

The findings reveal that institutional support is an important factor influencing the effectiveness of drama-based strategies ($M = 4.03$). Respondents indicated that supportive administration, encouragement from college management, and availability of opportunities for innovative teaching practices contribute positively to the implementation of drama-based instruction.

The availability of teaching materials also emerged as a significant factor ($M = 3.98$). Participants noted that access to instructional resources facilitates the organization of role-plays, simulations, and other dramatic activities.

However, class size was identified as a challenge, with a mean score of 3.78. Several respondents reported that large classes make it difficult to involve all learners actively in drama activities and limit opportunities for individual participation and feedback.

Interview findings further revealed that time allocation and classroom space occasionally affect the implementation of drama-based instruction. Nonetheless, most respondents agreed that the benefits of drama-based activities outweigh these challenges.

4.4 Discussion

This section discusses the study's findings in relation to the three specific objectives, situating them within the theoretical framework and the empirical literature reviewed in Section 2.2, and clarifies where the findings support, extend, or diverge from previous studies.

4.4.1 Extent of Use of Drama-Based Strategies

The finding that role-plays ($M = 4.10$), simulations/skits ($M = 4.11$), and improvisation/dialogues ($M = 4.11$) are widely and consistently used in the selected TTCs supports Komul (2023), who found role-play to be among the most frequently employed drama techniques because it is easy to organise and effectively promotes learner participation, and Yudiarta et al. (2025), who similarly found simulations and skits to be favoured by language teachers for their adaptability across classroom contexts. The results also extend Nguyen's (2023)

argument that structured role-play places learners in realistic situations requiring spontaneous negotiation of meaning: qualitative data in the present study showed that tutors deliberately used group presentations, dramatized dialogues, and simulated classroom scenarios to create such opportunities, indicating that the widespread use observed here reflects deliberate pedagogical choice rather than incidental practice.

At the same time, the findings partially diverge from Dewi and Hayati (2025), who reported broader integration of extended improvisation and performance-based drama within teacher-education programmes elsewhere. In the present study, tutors and student-teachers described drama as being used primarily as short, structured speaking activities rather than as sustained theatrical projects, a pattern more consistent with Yudiarta et al.'s (2025) observation that time constraints and assessment pressures often lead tutors to limit drama to manageable, low-risk formats. This suggests that while drama-based pedagogy is well established in Rwandan TTCs, there remains room to expand its range beyond short role-plays toward more elaborate forms such as process drama or storytelling.

4.4.2 Perceived Effects on Speaking Sub-Skills

Communicative confidence recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.41$), followed by pronunciation and grammatical accuracy ($M = 4.35$) and fluency ($M = 4.34$). The prominence of confidence directly supports Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis: participants described drama-based activities as less intimidating than conventional speaking tasks precisely because they could express themselves through an assumed role rather than as themselves, a mechanism also identified by Al-Zurfi et al. (2025) and Piazzoli (2018), both of whom found that role-play lowers the affective filter and increases willingness to communicate. The finding is consistent with, and extends, Bora's (2021) argument that scripted and play-based drama approaches generate authentic and low-pressure speaking opportunities, by showing that this effect holds not only for general EFL learners but also for pre-service teachers who must eventually model confident spoken English for their own pupils.

The perceived gains in fluency ($M = 4.34$) support Nguyen (2023) and Wijaya et al. (2025), who found that drama-based activities increase opportunities for extended, spontaneous language production; respondents in the present study similarly reported that repeated participation in role-plays and improvisation helped them sustain conversation with fewer hesitations. Perceived gains in pronunciation and grammatical accuracy ($M = 4.35$) likewise corroborate Wijaya et al. (2025) and are consistent with Canale and Swain's (1980) view that communicative competence develops through meaningful use of language rather than isolated drilling.

However, the findings also add a note of caution that is not always foregrounded in the literature. Consistent with Rahmawati Astiandani and Mustofa's (2021) observation that confidence-related gains tend to be more pronounced than accuracy-related gains, respondents in this study spoke more spontaneously and extensively about improvements in confidence and fluency than about specific grammatical or phonological corrections. This suggests that, while drama-based strategies are highly effective at lowering affective barriers and increasing willingness to communicate, they may need to be complemented by more explicit, form-focused instruction to maximise gains in grammatical and phonological accuracy — a nuance that extends rather than contradicts the broadly positive findings reported by Wijaya et al. (2025) and Dewi and Hayati (2025).

4.4.3 Contextual and Institutional Factors

Institutional support ($M = 4.03$) and the availability of teaching materials ($M = 3.98$) emerged as important enabling conditions, supporting Komul (2023), who identified supportive institutional leadership and access to instructional resources as critical to the successful implementation of drama-based pedagogy, and Dewi and Hayati (2025), who similarly emphasised the enabling role of institutional context in teacher-education settings. Class size, by contrast, recorded the lowest mean score and the greatest variability ($M = 3.78$), and both tutors and student-teachers explained that large classes reduce opportunities for individual participation and feedback. This finding directly corroborates Ganap (2025), who identified large class sizes and organisational constraints as significant barriers to interactive teaching methods, and Rahmawati Astiandani and Mustofa (2021), who similarly report time and class-size constraints as recurring obstacles across the drama-in-language-teaching literature.

The findings also extend the empirical literature in one respect: whereas most reviewed studies (e.g., Ganap, 2025; Yudiarta et al., 2025) treat institutional and class-size factors separately, the present study's triangulated quantitative and qualitative data show that these factors interact — tutors operating in classes with both strong institutional support and manageable class sizes reported the most consistent use of extended drama activities,

whereas institutional support alone appeared insufficient to offset the constraints of overcrowded classrooms. This interaction is not explicitly documented in the reviewed literature and represents a contribution of the present study to the empirical understanding of contextual moderators of drama-based instruction.

4.4.4 Integration with the Theoretical Framework

Taken together, the findings provide strong support for both theoretical strands underpinning this study. Consistent with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, drama-based activities were associated with reduced anxiety and increased confidence, corroborating Piazzoli (2018) and Al-Zurfi et al. (2025). Consistent with Communicative Competence Theory (Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1980), student-teachers reported using drama-based activities to negotiate meaning, manage discourse, and apply language purposefully in simulated communicative situations, echoing Littlewood's (2014) argument that communicative activities position interaction as the primary vehicle for language development. The convergence of quantitative and qualitative evidence around both theoretical strands strengthens confidence in the study's conceptual framework and confirms that drama-based instruction operates through two complementary mechanisms: it lowers affective barriers to speaking, and it creates authentic opportunities for communicative language use. By extending this evidence to student-teachers in Rwandan TTCs, the study contributes context-specific empirical support to a theoretical relationship that has previously been documented mainly in general EFL and secondary-school settings.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study investigated tutors' and student-teachers' perceptions of the effects of drama-based strategies on the development of English-speaking skills in selected Teacher Training Colleges in Rwanda, guided by three specific objectives. Regarding the first objective, the findings revealed that drama-based instructional strategies, particularly role-plays, simulations, improvisation, dramatized dialogues, and skits, are widely and deliberately utilized in English language teaching and learning activities.

Regarding the second objective, the study established that drama-based strategies are perceived as effective in enhancing key components of speaking proficiency, including fluency, pronunciation and grammatical accuracy, and communicative confidence. Among these, confidence emerged as the most significant perceived benefit, suggesting that drama-based activities provide supportive learning environments in which student-teachers can practice English with reduced anxiety and increased willingness to communicate, although gains in

linguistic accuracy appear to require more sustained, form-focused reinforcement.

Regarding the third objective, the findings demonstrated that the effectiveness of drama-based instruction is influenced by contextual and institutional factors. Institutional support and the availability of teaching materials facilitate the successful implementation of drama activities, whereas large class sizes constrain participation and limit opportunities for individualized feedback.

Overall, the study concludes that drama-based strategies constitute an effective learner-centred pedagogical approach for enhancing English-speaking skills among student-teachers in Rwanda's Teacher Training Colleges, and that their effects are best explained by the joint operation of the Affective Filter Hypothesis and Communicative Competence Theory. By promoting active participation, authentic communication, and learner confidence, these strategies contribute significantly to the development of communicative competence required for future professional practice, while their full pedagogical potential depends on adequate institutional support and manageable class sizes.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made for the stakeholders involved in English language teacher education in Rwanda.

1. English language tutors should integrate drama-based strategies more systematically and deliberately into classroom instruction, given that respondents identified role-plays, simulations, improvisation, and dramatized dialogues as the strategies that most consistently improved fluency, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, and speaking confidence; tutors should also expand beyond short, low-risk role-plays toward more sustained forms such as process drama and storytelling, and should pair these activities with constructive, form-focused feedback to address the finding that gains in confidence and fluency tend to outpace gains in grammatical and phonological accuracy.
2. Teacher Training Colleges should strengthen institutional support for drama-based and other interactive pedagogies, since institutional encouragement was found to be a key enabler of implementation; this can be achieved through professional development programmes and workshops that build tutors' pedagogical competence and confidence in facilitating drama-based lessons, as well as through the provision of adequate instructional materials such as scripts and dialogue guides, which

respondents identified as necessary for organising effective drama activities. Because large class sizes emerged as the most significant constraint on effective implementation, TTC management should also explore practical measures such as smaller group formations within large classes, rotational participation schedules, and additional classroom space or time allocation to ensure that drama-based activities remain inclusive and manageable regardless of class size.

3. Educational policymakers, including the Ministry of Education and the Rwanda Basic Education Board, should formally recognise and encourage the integration of drama-based pedagogical approaches within teacher education curricula and professional standards, given that the study's findings demonstrate clear alignment between drama-based instruction and the communicative, learner-centred goals of Rwanda's Competency-Based Curriculum. Curriculum developers should ensure that pre-service teacher training explicitly builds tutors' competence in designing and facilitating drama-based speaking activities, and that policies addressing class size and resource allocation in TTCs consider their implications for interactive, speaking-focused pedagogy.
4. Finally, given that this study relied on a descriptive and exploratory design involving two Teacher Training Colleges, future researchers should extend this line of inquiry to other TTCs and higher-learning institutions in Rwanda to establish the broader generalisability of these findings, and should consider experimental and longitudinal designs capable of establishing causal relationships between drama-based instruction and specific speaking outcomes, including the extent to which drama-based approaches need to be complemented by explicit, form-focused instruction to maximise gains in grammatical and phonological accuracy.

References

- Abdo, I. B., & Al-Awabdeh, A.-H. (2017). Animated videos prove to be beneficial in teaching English grammar as EFL: A neurological study of how students learn and retain English grammar. *Creative Education*, 8(9), 1415–1423. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2017.89099>
- Alasmari, A., & Ahmed, S. S. (2013). Using debate in EFL classes. *English Language Teaching*, 6(1), 147–152. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v6n1p147>

- Al-Zurfi, A., Abdel Hadi, B., & Salman, T. (2025). Role-play as a drama technique: Assessing its effects on Iraqi EFL students' speaking anxiety and speaking ability. *European Journal of Language and Humanities Studies*, 2(5), 347–363. <https://doi.org/10.61796/ejlhss.v2i5.1314>
- Baziganya, D., Mitari, M., Uwamariya, J., & Ngoboka, J. P. (2024). Investigating teachers and students' views on debate activities as a tool to improve English speaking skills: A case of Rulindo District, Rwanda. *African Journal of Empirical Research*, 5(2), 869–880. <https://doi.org/10.51867/ajernet.5.2.77>
- Bora, S. F. (2021). Curtain up! Enhancing L2 spontaneous and authentic speaking opportunities through play scripts and drama-based approaches. *RELC Journal*, 52(3), 458–473. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688219887536>
- British Council. (2022). *English language teaching and teacher education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policy, practice and challenges*. British Council.
- Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 1–47.
- Dewi, R. S., & Hayati, N. (2025). Drama-based instruction and speaking performance of English education students. *Journal of English Language Education*, 10(1), 45–58. <https://doi.org/10.30870/jele.v10i1.1023>
- Ganap, J. (2025). Drama-based learning in EFL classrooms: A systematic review. *Kalaos Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 2(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.69754/kalaos.v2i1.56>
- Harmer, J. (2015). *How to teach English* (2nd ed.). Longman.
- Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics* (pp. 269–293). Penguin Books.
- Komul, M. (2023). The impact of drama-based instruction on language skills development in EFL contexts. *Huele: Journal of Applied Linguistics, Literature and Culture*, 3(1), 9–17. <https://doi.org/10.30598/huele.v3.i1.p09-17>
- Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Pergamon Press.
- Leong, L.-M., & Ahmadi, S. M. (2017). An analysis of factors influencing learners' English speaking skill. *International Journal of Research in English Education*, 2(1), 34–41. <https://doi.org/10.18869/acadpub.ijree.2.1.34>
- Littlewood, W. (2014). Communication-oriented language teaching: Where are we now? Where do we go from here? *Language Teaching*, 47(3), 349–362. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026144481400013X>
- Mugiraneza, E., Habintwali, A., Kanyambo, J. D., & Niyibizi, E. (2024). How drama enhances English-speaking skills: The role of drama in teaching English-speaking skills in selected secondary schools in Kigali City, Rwanda. *African Journal of Empirical Research*, 5(2), 764–772. <https://doi.org/10.51867/ajernet.5.2.66>
- Nguyen, T. T. M. (2023). The effects of drama-based activities on EFL learners' speaking performance. *International Journal of Instruction*, 16(3), 411–426. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2023.16353a>
- Piazzoli, E. (2018). Embodying language in action: Drama-based pedagogy for second language learning. *Applied Theatre Research*, 6(1), 71–87. https://doi.org/10.1386/atr.6.1.71_1
- Rahmawati Astiandani, F., & Mustofa, A. (2021). Drama in fostering students' speaking skills: A systematic review on benefits and problems. *Vivid: Journal of Language and Literature*, 10(1), 18–22. <https://doi.org/10.25077/vj.10.1.18-22.2021>
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Rwanda Education Board. (2023). *Competency-based curriculum implementation guidelines*. Rwanda Education Board.
- Swain, M. (2005). The output hypothesis: Theory and research. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning* (pp. 471–483). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Wijaya, K. A. K., Suwastini, N. K. A., & Mahayanti, N. W. S. (2025). The use of drama-based pedagogy in promoting students' pronunciation: Classroom action research. *Journal of Educational Study*, 5(1), 11–22. <https://doi.org/10.36663/joes.v5i1.962>
- Yudiarta, G. R. S., Suwastini, N. K. A., & Mahayanti, N. W. S. (2025). Drama-based pedagogy to improving students' fluency: Classroom action research. *Journal of Educational Study*, 5(1), 54–61. <https://doi.org/10.36663/joes.v5i1.970>