Encouraging Students' Involvement in Drama Performance

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Abstract - This study explores the implementation of various strategies to encourage students' involvement in drama performance. The present study employed a case study by observing the teachers' and students' process of drama preparation and performance. Teachers' and students' interview were also conducted to collect the data of their responses toward the strategies. In addition, students' journals were analyzed to support the data. The findings show that there were at least three strategies implemented in encouraging students to take part in drama performance actively: character award, collaborating classes to perform a story, and drama posters. The findings also show that the teachers and students gave various responses toward the strategies. From the responses, the benefits and shortcomings of each strategy are also revealed. Collaborating classes in regular rehearsal, for instance, encouraged the students to have a good preparation for the performance since other classes watched their performance from the beginning. Accordingly, the students competed to show a better progress. Furthermore, the findings uncover what seems to be lacking in the implemented strategies such as the absence of detailed indicators in assessing students' performance and attitude during the process of drama preparation. The results of this study imply that to get the optimal advantage of those strategies, the teachers need to have a more detailed preparation, a better time management, and consistency in their implementation.

Keywords: Drama, student's involvement, drama performance, drama preparation

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching EFL seems to be challenging as it is shown by poor participation of the students in classroom. Williams (1994) states that learning a foreign language involves far more than simply learning skills or a system of rules or a grammar. Students are hesitant to participate because of limited language. It leads them to be unmotivated learners. Regarding this, Phillips (1999) proposes drama to encourage children to speak and motivates them to communicate, even with limited language, by using non-verbal communication such as body movement and facial expression. According to Celce-Murcia (2001), it is easier for learners to be engaged in a lesson through drama than through instructions or explanations. It indicates that drama has the potential to improve oral communication skills and facilitate language that motivates student to learn actively.

However, the differences in learning preferences and personalities make some students participate more than the others. Previous studies have shown that personality of the student influences the student's participation in the process of learning, for example, students with high self-efficacy show better academic achievement and participating more in the classroom (Pajares, 1996; Schunk, 1995).Thus, if students' self-efficacy is high, it will enhance their confidence level to become more active and speak more in the classroom. The teaching objective actually is not to have every student participate in the same way. It is more to create an environment where all participants have the opportunity to learn. Therefore, teachers should create conditions that enable students of various learning preferences and personalities to engage and contribute. In this regard, student engagement is described as the tendency to be behaviorally, emotionally, and cognitively involved in academic activities (Thijs & Verkuyten, 2009). Compared to less engaged peers, engaged students demonstrate more effort, experience, more positive emotions and pay more attention in the classroom (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). In this case, students learn best when they are engaged and interested. Therefore, teacher should use the effective strategy to increase student motivation since it represents student's willingness, need, desire and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in the learning process (Bomia et al, 1997).

One of strategies to improve student's motivation is by giving rewards. It is a way for students to understand that their performance is adequate or deserving of praise. In line with this, Cameron, Pierce, Banko, and Gear (2005, p.654) state, "Giving rewards for successful achievement on an activity leads individuals to express high task interest and to be motivated to perform the activity and other similar tasks in the future". Akin-Little & Little (2004) also add that reward systems are often used by educators to enhance student academic performance and appropriate behavior. Furthermore, Zlomke & Zlomke (2003) found that negative behaviors were reduced when students earned points for displaying positive behavior and then exchanged these points for a reward.

Another strategy that is considered as having ability to improve students' motivation in learning, especially in oral skill oriented activities, is collaborative learning. The success of collaboration in increasing students' motivation to make students participate actively and facilitate passive students to be more communicative is shown by Saefurrohman (2004) in his action research. In this case, collaborating classes to rehearse and understand dialogue in drama preparation was expected to increase students' motivation and involvement

since the success of a solo show depends upon a team of people working to make a larger performance happen.

Furthermore, poster that is defined as colorful, attractive learning media which can enhance the learning environment (Osa, 2004) was utilized to motivate students to involve actively in drama preparation and performance. In this case, drama posters were used to catch the students' attention and it was hoped that this poster strategy encouraged student's active engagement in their learning process through drama.

Regarding the implementation of those strategies, previous studies were dominated by the discussion of the effectiveness and implementation of the strategies in classroom learning context, not specifically in drama preparation and performance as a learning context. To fill the gap, there is a need to discuss how those strategies are implemented as attempts to solve students' poor participation, especially passive students, in a more specific context such as drama preparation and performance. Therefore, this study attempts to reveal the implementation of various strategies such as character award, collaborating classes, and drama posters in encouraging students' participation in drama performance. It also explores teachers' and students' responses toward those strategies.

2. METHODS

This study applied a qualitative approach embodying the characteristic of a case study. The data were collected through observation, interview, and students' journal analysis. The observation was conducted once a week during drama rehearsal session (approximately 60 minutes) for four months and during the drama performance. There were eighteen classes participated in drama show which were guided by seven female teachers. Each class consisted of ten students. The students were about seven to seventeen years old collaborated in some groups to perform stories. The character award, collaborating classes, and drama posters were implemented to encourage students' involvement in drama performance. After the drama performance was finished, several students and teachers were purposively chosen to be interviewed to explore their responses on the implementation of character award, collaborating classes, and drama posters to find the benefits and shortcomings of the strategies.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 The Implementation of Various Strategies to Encourage Students' Involvement

Based on the result of observation, there were at least three strategies implemented to encourage students' participation in drama performance, those were character award, collaborating classes, and drama posters.

3.1.1 The Character Award

At the beginning of the semester, a blank bookmark was given to every student to be completed by the stickers. The teachers explained the targeted behaviors that would allow students to earn a sticker. When students demonstrated the behaviors, teachers handed out the stickers as rewards.

The rules applied for this character award was almost similar with description from Zlomke & Zlomke (2003) that students earned points for displaying positive behavior and then exchanged these points for a reward. In this case, the teachers observed the students' involvement in drama preparation based on the criteria on the bookmark and put a sticker of a positive attitude when the students showed the targeted positive attitudes during drama preparation.

In the show time, some students were chosen to get a character award based on the result of teachers' observation and the number of stickers that the students got on their bookmark. The pictures below are the pictures of the stickers and the bookmark:

Figure 1. The stickers and the bookmark

3.1.2 Collaborating Classes

In implementing class collaboration, the teachers mixed eighteen classes into seven groups. Every two or three classes performed a story. The young learner classes were blended with teenagers' class so that they could learn from their seniors. The students were involved in the process of staging, costuming, scripting, and makeup of their drama performance. The stories took various themes such as horror story, traditional legend, detective story, fairytale and adapted stories from movies such as 'Brave'. The students collaborated to present their performance from drama preparation for about four months to the show time.

Figure 2. The drama performance

3.1.3 The Drama Posters

The drama posters were designed to attract students' interest and boost the students' excitement in welcoming the awaited event. They also functioned as gentle reminders that the date was getting closer and that the students had to be well prepared. The students also could figure how they would look like when they were performing the drama since the poster showed some pictures of drama characters.
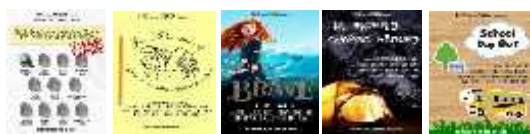

Figure 3. The drama posters

The observation shows that the students were excited since their names were printed on the posters which were attached everywhere around the building of the course. In addition, the posters informed the parents who came to the course about their children's performance so the parents could get involved in motivating students' involvement in drama preparation and performance.

3.2 The Teachers' and Students' Responses towards Strategies

The result of observation, interview and journal analysis shows that teachers and students gave various responses toward the strategies. Students' interview, for example, reveals that the character award encouraged the students to perform better in every classroom activity since they knew they were rewarded based on their performance in the class. The students looked more enthusiastic and motivated. For example, they came forward or answered questions from their teacher without being asked to. In addition, the teachers believed that implementing the reward systems helped with student participation and classroom management which gave positive impacts to the academic achievement. Moreover, awards put up positive feeling so students felt proud of their accomplishments and became more confident, as shown in the student's journal below:
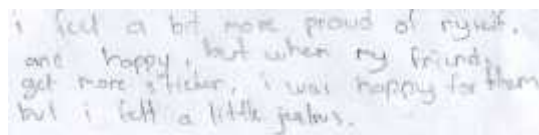

Figure 4. Student's self-confidence and competitive feeling

However, some teachers stated that character award seemed to work only with some groups but not with others. Some students were excited, while the other showed the opposite. Those who took the award seriously showed positive responses as expressed in excitement, enthusiasm in doing required tasks. On the other hand, those who were not interested in the award showed indifference. The character award also sometimes made students felt bad when they did not get many stickers.

Since this award system was applied for four months so the students had to keep their bookmarks during the implementation of the program. Some students reported they lost their bookmarks that had function as award charts. It led to less excitement and enthusiasm of the students. Another problem arose when the teacher could not assess the students objectively due to the absence of detailed indicators to assess students' performance and attitude during the process of drama preparation.

Regarding class collaboration, it is revealed that this strategy facilitated students' learning of tolerating since they met many individuals with different characters. The class situations sometimes were hectic since some students were very active. In collaborating classes, the students were involved in dialogue about staging, costuming, scripting, and makeup. The interaction between them looked more intense when they tried to give positive feedbacks for their friends' performance during the rehearsal. Furthermore, the result of the interview uncovers that working together as a group is essential that each of the students felt accepted and worked well with others. This collaboration allowed students to find and understand different characters, different roles to express who they were. It encouraged them to show compassion and tolerance for others.
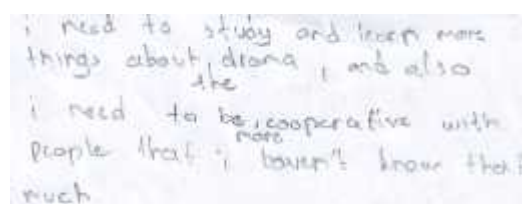

Figure 5. Student's social skill

Collaborating classes also stimulated students to share creative ideas and abilities for the best result. This required all students to take part to engage in discussions, feedback, rehearsing, and the performance. All creative ideas were welcomed so that every student felt positive about his or her contribution, as shown below:
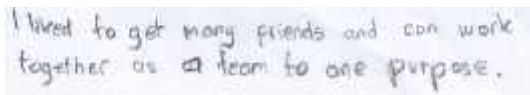
Figure 6. Student's engagement

On the subject of drama posters to stimulate students to be more interested in drama, this strategy was responded positively. It was because they were well designed, well organized, and attractive. Even when the drama performance had finished, the students still had positive feeling about it. The posters reminded them about how they had tried hard to give the best performance in the drama. The picture below is one of the students' responses when he was asked about his opinion about the drama posters:
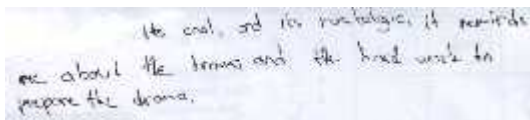

Figure 7. Student's involvement in drama

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of character award, collaborating classes, and drama posters are beneficial to encourage students to take part actively in drama performance. Those strategies have motivated students to perform better, both in preparation process and in the real performance. However, various responses from teachers and students show that some improvements should be made such as presenting more detailed indicators in assessing the students for character award. Furthermore, this study implies that the teachers play a crucial role in the success of the implementation of various strategies to encourage students' involvement in drama performance.

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