Beyond the Classroom: A Comprehensive Study on Online Drama in Education for Second Language Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT The paper explores the viability and practicality of conducting drama in education (DIE) in online mode for second language (L2) learning. Using WhatsApp and Zoom, authors implemented a fifteen-day intervention program with participants studying in grades 6 and 7. This study using qualitative research methods aims to comprehend learners' and parents' perceptions regarding the online DIE workshop through semi-structured interviews. Additionally, through facilitator's observation and field notes, authors examine the adaptability and efficacy of conducting DIE sessions in virtual mode. The study confirms that the DIE can be successfully conducted online as a viable pedagogical approach for L2 instruction and has a significant impact on the learners. However, the research also highlights the challenges faced by the drama facilitator and students during the virtual session. The study holds implications for pedagogical researchers, language instructors, policymakers, and software developers, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of implementing DIE in online L2 instruction.

INTRODUCTION

Technological innovation has enabled pedagogy practitioners and researchers to experiment and bring innovation to education. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the classrooms were shifted to online learning, thereby making teachers experiment with teaching-learning strategies and adapt to the virtual world of education (González Becerra and del Río Alcalá 2022). Hence, teachers from various disciplines faced challenges differently. Likewise, drama in education (DIE) practitioners were also heavily challenged due to the complete lockdown. Drama in education stands out as a unique field that combines performance and teaching methodologies, focusing on process-oriented theatrical techniques tailored to actively involve a diverse range of learners (McAvoy and O'Connor 2022). Drama exercises and techniques rely heavily on the activities performed in the physical classrooms, but during the lock-

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down, when classes were shifted to online mode, it became imperative for the DIE practitioners to adapt to the online teaching and conduct the classes in a virtual environment. The adaptability of those techniques in virtual classrooms was a stimulating, tedious and inevitable task. Additionally, language learning becomes remarkably difficult when learners study in isolation. To overcome the ongoing challenge, educational drama practitioners attempted to understand technology-mediated language learning and found it useful in different aspects. However, the number of studies is less, making authors remark that there is a dearth of research on the same.

Researchers and practitioners started studying and implementing drama for language teaching around the 1960s, and the practice has emerged and developed significantly since then. DIE encompasses various drama techniques to make learning experiential and learner-centric, such as roleplay, mime, process drama, image theatre and forum theatre, among others. For this study, authors have used the technique of process drama. *Process Drama* is a drama form in which the participants and the teacher constitute the theatrical ensemble and engage in drama to make meaning for themselves (Bowell and Heap 2001). The scholars in L2 classrooms have used process

drama widely, discussing the different utilities of the technique (Stinson and Freebody 2006; Piazzoli 2010; Dora To et al. 2011; Hulse and Owens 2017). Baldwin and Galazka (2021) assert that process drama stands out as a technique that integrates essential 21st century skills within the classroom environment. Kao and O'Neill (1998) emphasise the importance of Process Drama in language education, highlighting teachers as integral contributors to the dramatic setting. In this role, educators assess language proficiency, aid communication, exemplify suitable conduct, stimulate critical thinking, and encourage students by expanding and challenging their responses. This dynamic approach creates an engaging and impactful learning atmosphere.

Despite these potentials and the scholars' advocacy to implement DIE in the L2 classroom, its effectiveness in a virtual medium remains a concern, making it essential to study the same. Moreover, in the realm of education in India, National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023 emphasizes the integration of art in all its forms–visual and performing–throughout the curriculum and the learning process (National Steering Committee for National Curriculum Frameworks 2023). This pedagogical approach, termed art-integrated learning, enables experiential learning and fosters enhanced comprehension, critical thinking, and creativity (Central Board of Secondary Education 2019). Notably, the National Education Policy (2020) explicitly endorses the widespread adoption of experiential learning and integrating art across disciplines as a strategic pedagogical approach. Consequently, the present study possesses significant relevance within the parameters set by the National Education Policy 2020.

Objectives of the Study

This study attempts to understand the viability and practicality of conducting drama in education sessions in virtual classrooms, especially for second language teaching and learning. This research paper addresses the following key research questions:

Q1. How did the participants perceive the impact of the drama intervention in an L2 classroom?

Q2. What are the parents' perceptions regarding the online process drama for L2 learning?

Q3. What is the pedagogical potential of conducting online process drama for L2 learning?

Q4. What issues and challenges does the facilitator face while conducting online process drama for L2 learning?

Literature Review

Conducting Drama in Education in Online Mode

Cziboly and Bethlenfalvy (2020) highlight that online platforms offer a versatile means of delving into urgent issues through the medium of drama. This aligns with the researchers' observations that drama serves as a tool for exploring urgent topics and contributes to cultivating a more conducive learning environment in online education. Furthermore, the utilisation of online drama emerges as a facilitator for learners, fostering the enhancement of their imaginative capacities and reflective abilities.

Examining the shift from an offline to an online format for an English as a foreign language course, Puskas (2021) explores the challenges and transformations involved. The study attempts to understand the issues related to implementation and investigates shifts in learners' attitudes and performance by analysing attendance, engagement in activities, and test outcomes. The findings indicate that certain activities, such as mingling and sculpting, posed challenges in the online mode. However, activities like mirroring, miming, teacher narrative, role play, hot-seating, and improvisation seamlessly adapted to the online context, demonstrating effectiveness with participants. Notably, the study observes that the shift to online learning did not result in a significant drop in attendance.

Göksel and Abraham (2022) offer a reflective account of using drama online and seek to advocate for the creative potential and the pressing necessity of incorporating drama into online teaching. Their argument revolves around the idea that fostering drama in digital spaces plays a vital role in maintaining the relevance of the arts. They contend that this connection between technological advancements and creativity opens up

novel and engaging avenues for artistic expression. Additionally, they have also claimed that in some instances, the conduction of drama in online mode proves to be more beneficial than in offline mode, such as giving autonomy to learners to rearrange their own space and allowing participants from different parts of the world to participate.

González Becerra and del Río Alcalá (2022) highlight how adopting a theatre-based activity to an online format fostered competence development in learners. Despite the absence of physical presence, learners enhanced communicative competence through orality practices, genre exploration, and multimodal strategies. Exploring pandemic experiences and cultural representation developed intercultural competence while reframing meaning in the target language honed symbolic competence. Creating a secure online space allowed playful engagement, fostering humour, peer interaction, and role assumption in a shared dramatic fiction. Furthermore, the developments in virtual worlds, artificial intelligence, graphics, and simulation have positively impacted the virtual process drama simulations (El-Nasr et al. 2008).

Process Drama for Second Language Teaching

Kao and O'Neill (1998) published a seminal book on the application of process drama in second language teaching where they provide the key elements of process drama to develop an L2 learning drama session. Building on that, researchers in the 21ˢᵗ century work on the various aspects of language learning. Stinson and Freebody (2006) investigate the impact of process drama on oral communication. They observe that the intervention group consistently performed better, and confidence among learners and their relationship with each other improved. Piazzoli (2010) examines the role of process drama in developing intercultural awareness in an L2 classroom. She claims that the students get a chance through process drama to develop intercultural awareness by maintaining the distancing yet empathising with the characters and by getting a chance to reflect and negotiate meaning.

Dunn et al. (2012) opine that drama work utilises various technologies that enable it to perform seven key functions, including language functions. Utilising technology also creates possibilities for the learners to take ownership of their learning. Participants also got the opportunity to form collective experiences with peers and the instructor. Hulse and Owens (2017) attempt to understand teachers' attitudes towards the process drama and claim that teachers showed a willingness to employ it in an L2 classroom.

Kalogirou et al. (2017) study the efficacy of process drama in developing listening skills. The finding shows an increase in listening capacity and taking turns during a conversation. Process drama also helps build learners' self-esteem and confidence. It also develops drama ethics like sharing, playing, and imagining for the educational context, like L2 learning and extra-curricular objectives. Mahant et al. (2023) investigate the role of process drama in developing parts of speech, and they find a significant improvement in learners studying through process drama in the understanding of the concept and use of different parts of speech.

METHODOLOGY

The study has been conducted using qualitative research methods. For the data collection procedure, authors employed semi-structured interviews with the participants. Moreover, facilitator-cum-researcher recorded observation and field notes to understand the pedagogical potential of conducting online drama in education for L2 teaching and challenges associated with it.

Participants and Context of the Study

This workshop was conducted in September 2020 when the pandemic was ongoing and schools were being shifted to online mode. Authors circulated a Google Form through WhatsApp and Facebook with a brief text about the workshop. From 38 entries, they selected six participants that belonged to targeted grades. Demographic details of the participants are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic details of the participants

Respondent	Gender	Class	Location
Learner 1 (LR1)	M	VI	Kerala
Learner 2 (LR2)	F	VII	Delhi
Learner 3 (LR3)	M	VII	Kerala
Learner 4 (LR4)	F	VI	Kerala
Learner 5 (LR5)	F	VII	Uttar Pradesh
Learner 6 (LR6)	F	VI	Kerala

In this study, authors collected feedback from the parents of participating students. Recognising that the learning sessions occurred in a virtual setting from the students' homes, they felt it essential to capture the parent's viewpoint post the workshop. Table 2 presents the demographic details of the parents.

Procedure of the Study

The intervention program commenced with an introductory session, prioritising student interaction and familiarity with the pedagogical approach and terminologies associated with drama in education (DIE) sessions. Subsequently, from the second day onward, authors' focus shifted to the primary objective of language teaching. The researcher cum facilitator kept recording the observation and field notes each day in his reflective journal. Upon the completion of the workshop, authors gathered feedback from students through semi-structured interviews. The study also attempts to examine the general understanding of drama in education for L2 learning. Therefore, authors also collected feedback from the parents. They conducted both feedback sessions through Zoom video calls. The semi-structured interview schedule employed for data collection is given below.

Question for Students

1. How was your overall experience of the workshop?
2. What did you like the most in the workshop?

Question for Parents

1. How was your experience observing your child taking part in the workshop?

2. Our main focus was to teach a second language, including grammar skills. Did you see any language growth in your child?
3. What do you want to say about our teaching style?

It is noteworthy to mention that the active participants in the workshop were exclusively students. Parents were allowed to observe their child's learning process, however, their active participation during the intervention sessions was precluded. This strategy was designed to get the views of parents acting solely as observers. Subsequently, the collection of feedback from parents, framed within the context of their role as observers, became a crucial part of the research design.

The decision to forbid parents from actively participating in the intervention sessions was made with the intention of keeping the emphasis on the children's hands-on involvement in the workshop exercises. This role-drawing made it evident how the experiences of the parents, who played the role of observers, and the students, who were fully engaged in the learning process, differed.

Framework for Using Key Features of Applications to Conduct Online Process Drama for L2 Learning

Authors developed the framework to make online process drama possible. One of the facilitators had experience of working in an online mode. After in-depth discussion, they decided to develop a framework integrating WhatsApp and Zoom applications for conducting the classes. WhatsApp was mainly used for assignment submission, discussions and chats, and information and material sharing, whereas Zoom was mainly used for conducting the session activities. Gen-

Table 2: Demographic details of the participants' parents

Respondent	Gender	Educational background	Location
Parent 1 (PT1)	F	Pursuing PhD in Hindi	Kerala
Parent 2 (PT2)	F	Homemaker (Graduate)	Delhi
Parent 3 (PT3)	F	Homemaker (Graduate)	Kerala
Parent 4 (PT4)	F	Pursuing PhD in Sociology	Kerala
Parent 5 (PT5)	F	Government Employee in Academics	Uttar Pradesh
Parent 6 (PT6)	F	Government Employee in Administration	Kerala

erally, Zoom is used during a session and WhatsApp is used pre- and post-session. However, sometimes WhatsApp can be used during the Zoom session as well (Fig.1).

Drama in Education Session Structure for L2 Learning

Authors started their sessions with any one of the starter activities. These activities were mainly done to warm up or to bring students' attention to the classroom. After the starter activities, they used to make students do some drama exercises. Drama exercise plays an important role in their session because students are not trained actors, so these exercises will help students to equip themselves to perform the activities where the story unfolds and make-believe process starts happening. All the starter activities and drama exercises were selected based on the theme of the lesson plan. After the drama exercises, authors started unfolding the stories using different drama conventions focused on their learning objective, that is, introducing present indefinite tense, teaching the function of past indefinite

tense, etc. During the enactment of different drama conventions, they kept the space to do out of role activities. Discussion on the concept of language was mainly done during this phase. In the end, the lesson plans consisted of a reflective activity so that students could reflect and recapitulate the lessons learnt that day. The reflection focused on the linguistic and cross-curricular learnings from the sessions. The structure of their drama sessions is presented in Figure 2.

A fifteen day intervention program consisted of lesson plans on different skills related to the English language. The workshop schedule with learning objectives and lesson plans was developed before the intervention program and it was sent to two drama in education experts and two language experts working as professors in Linguistics in India for their validation. The details of the workshop schedule are presented in Table 3.

Data Analysis Procedure

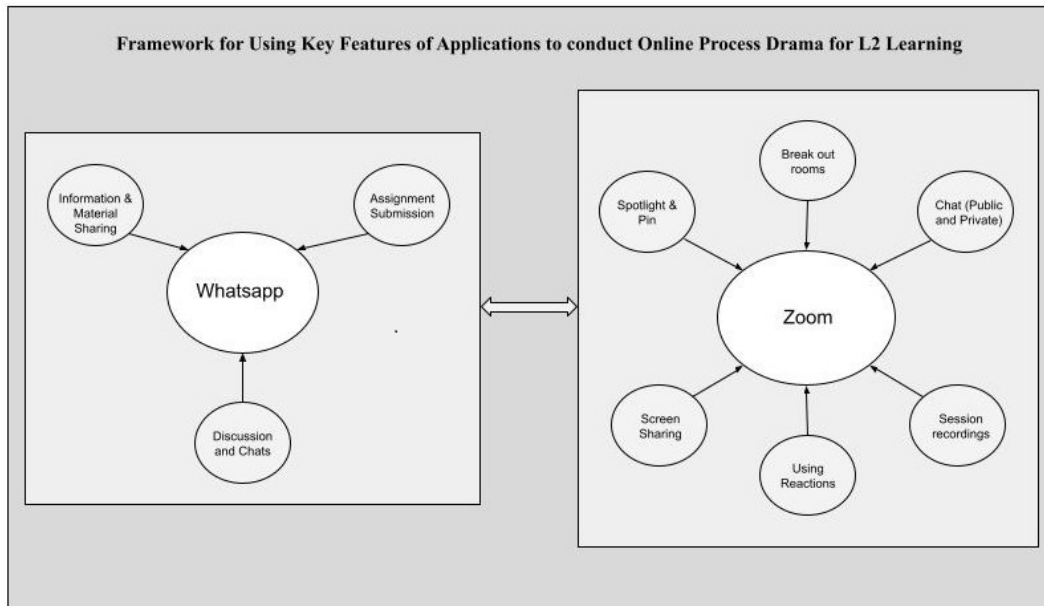Authors analysed the interview data using QDA Miner Lite. Individually, they labelled sen-

Fig. 1. Framework for using key features of applications to conduct online process drama for L2 learning
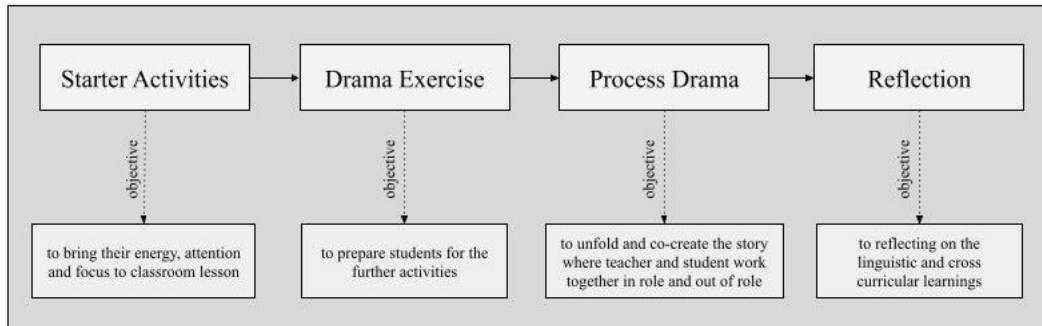*Source:* Authors

Fig. 2. Drama in education session structure for second language learning
Source: Authors

Table 3: Workshop schedule

S. No.	Topic	Learning objectives	Key drama techniques
1	Introduction	To make students familiar with the teaching-learning practice of process drama, to make them acquainted with each other and to set the clear expectation from the workshop	Narration, mime and roleplay
2	Conversation	To make them adapt to communicating and doing group and individual exercises in online set-up	Role on the wall, mime, and improvisation
3	Speaking	To understand the utility of DIE in developing speaking skills	Unfinished material, roleplay, and mantle of the expert
4	Listening	To understand the utility of DIE in developing listening skills	Announcement, teacher in role, improvisation, and soliloquy
5	Reading	To understand the utility of DIE in developing reading skills	Narration, storytelling, and tongue twister games
6	Writing	To understand the utility of DIE in developing writing skills	Teacher in role, roleplay, and writing in role
7	Vocabulary	To understand the utility of DIE in developing vocabulary	Video-stimulated brainstorming, teacher in role, and mantle of the expert
8	Accuracy	To understand the utility of DIE in developing accuracy	Audio-narration, imitation, teacher in role, and monologue
9	Parts of speech	To introduce students with different concepts of Parts of Speech	Auto-image, sculpting, and roleplay
10	Parts of speech	To make students understand the different functions on Noun and Pronoun	Role in the bag, teacher in role, improvisation, and single dialogue
11	Parts of speech	To make students understand the different functions on Verb and Adverb	Circle of life, drawing, and mantle of the expert
12	Tense	To introduce students with the concept and role of tense	Meeting, still image, teacher in role, and improvisation
13	Tense	To introduce students with the concepts of present tense, past tense and future tense	Sculpting, monologue, and roleplay
14	Tense	To introduce students to different types of present tense, past tense and future tense	Role on the wall, narration, improvisation, and mantle of the expert
15	Revision	To recapitulate the key learnings from the workshop	Single dialogue with action, alter ego, and improvisation

tences with different codes. Subsequently, they discussed and reached a mutual understanding to finalise common codings. First-order codes revealed common themes, and they established these themes through mutual agreement. Charmaz (2006) emphasises the importance of research-

ers in the coding process, stressing its iterative and reflective nature. Creswell and Creswell (2017) stress the involvement of researchers in coding as part of the qualitative research process.

Regarding the data obtained through observation and field notes, the facilitator cum research-

er employed the reflection and interpretation technique of analysis. In qualitative research, reflection and interpretation play a vital role because they offer depth, context, and theoretical frameworks that facilitate the comprehension of subjectivity, complexity and creating rich, legitimate, and practically applicable insights (Denzin and Lincoln 2011; Van Manen 2023). Another researcher conducted member checking on the facilitator cum researchers' reflection and interpretation. Member checking as a means of validation becomes important in qualitative studies to analyse the observation and field notes because it ensures trustworthiness (Shenton 2004; Birt et al. 2016). These data analysis procedures provided a comprehensive analysis, shaping the content presented in the results and analysis section.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Analysis of the Learners' Feedback

The drama in education, grounded in pedagogy for experiential learning, immerses learners in diverse situations, facilitating their comprehension of the language inherent in these scenarios. Consequently, it becomes essential to understand their perspectives on the intervention program. The insights obtained from learners' feedback data provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of online drama in education. The subsequent subsections systematically present and analyse the viewpoints of the learners.

Learners' Experience with Pedagogy

The learners exhibited a favourable disposition toward the pedagogical approach, with five out of six participants expressing a positive attitude. Engaging in various activities as part of the language learning tasks likely fostered a sense of active participation among the students. Below is what the learners had to say about this.

"*…in this workshop, we used to move and do some exercise and drama. It was kind of refreshing for me.*" (LR6, Female, Class VI, Kerala)

"*In school, the English teacher only taught things like Adjectives and Prepositions but, you teacher, teach us through activities. I wish we get a chance to have classes like this in our school.*" (LR2, Female, Class VI, Delhi)

Both feedbacks highlight that learning through activities fosters increased enthusiasm among students, maximising their opportunities to enhance language skills. Notably, one participant articulated a sense of ownership within the class.

"*I felt that I am contributing to the activities. It was a nice feeling for me.*" (LR5, Female, Class VII, Uttar Pradesh)

Three learners conveyed a sense of joy in their language learning experiences with L2 through drama techniques. Feedback such as, "*…I didn't feel that how sixteen days has passed*", offers insights into how students perceived the joyful aspect of language learning facilitated by the drama in education.

Growth in Learners' Linguistic Skills

Two out of six learners mentioned that they were able to learn language, specifically grammar concepts through the workshop. It is worth noting that while the workshop focused on second language acquisition, the feedback related to language growth appears relatively limited. Considering that students were likely encountering the DIE for the first time, their feedback predominantly centred around the teaching style rather than explicit language learning. Additionally, there was no explicit test to measure language growth.

Growth in Learners' Skill Related to Affective Domain

In a conventional classroom setting, students typically engage in individual tasks with limited opportunities for interaction during these tasks. Their interactions are generally motivated by personal comfort, leading them to communicate only with peers they find familiar. This problem gets even worse when the classes are conducted online. However, in the online drama in education class, observations suggest that students quickly integrated and started expressing their opinions as the workshop unfolded.

"*When we first came, I was a little bit shy. Now there is no problem.*" (LR1, Male, Class VI, Kerala)

"*First, I was hesitant to speak. I could only speak if anybody asked me. Then after 2-3 days, I started speaking well in the activities.*" (LR5, Female, Class VII, Uttar Pradesh)

Their feedback suggests that the DIE helped students enhance their confidence in the L2 classroom. They mentioned experiencing a sense of ownership, which led them to actively contribute to the progress of the lesson. Moreover, their motivation to participate in the activities increased as the workshop progressed.

Analysis of the Parents' Feedback

Learners participated in the workshop from their home, therefore the parents had the opportunity to observe their child engaging in meaningful activities. Parents reported that learners discussed the activities performed during the workshop with them. Therefore insights derived from parents' feedback provide valuable perspective. The following subsections thematically present parents' perception on the applicability and efficacy of the practice in an online space.

Parents Perception on Pedagogy

The parents exhibited a positive attitude towards pedagogy, regarding the dynamic nature of the DIE for L2 teaching as effective and desirable. Additionally, they perceived the practice compatible with the learners' behaviour.

"*She gained so much. Earlier I had sent her to some spoken class and in some other classes too but she just learnt grammar and nothing else. In this class, on this platform it was done in a way that you don't teach Grammar but through activities, stories and rhymes. Whatever was taught she understood everything and whatever conversation was happening it was very useful for her.*" (PT2, New Delhi)

While comparing with the regular method followed in her child's school, the parent highlights the utility of the DIE in teaching second language effectively, specifically putting emphasis on use of the task-oriented activities. In an another feedback, one parent shares her perspective taking the pandemic situation into the account:

"*And about teaching methods, yeah…it's interesting. Different. Good. I will recommend this workshop to other kids too. Because it is interesting as well as it is good for them. In this period often they don't get the opportunity to speak. They don't see their friends. They are taking only lessons and one-way method of teaching is go-*

ing on. So it is better they get something like this in between." (PT1, Kerala)

In this context, the parent underscores the static nature of the traditional pedagogy when translated into an online mode. She stresses the use of drama strategies over the traditional method particularly due to its dynamic nature. Due to the lockdown caused by the pandemic, the interaction between the students was reduced. In the aforementioned feedback, the parents highlight the efficacy of the drama strategies in creating opportunities for interaction in the adverse times.

Skills Related to Affective Domain

In this context, parents primarily addressed the improvement in their children's motivation and confidence. Researchers widely discuss the importance of these two in the improvement of language, thereby making them essential elements in second language classrooms. Noticeably, five out of six cases reported a noticeable enhancement in motivation.

"*He is very interested, especially at 4 o' clock. Amma, now the time starts. Haha… Today he was playing and he came back. Amma, time is 4 o' clock.*" (PT3, Kerala)

The provided feedback highlights the parents' observation on the motivation levels of learners attending the second language class through drama pedagogy. During this feedback, the parents share a light-hearted moment, laughing a bit, as they find it amusing to witness the significant change in their child. Noticeably, there was a pleasant satisfaction expressed by the parent who observes her child's self-motivation to attend the class.

"*She keeps on talking about the activities even after the session is over. Also, she was talking about language. Usually she does not talk about language, even though she is good at English. This was new for me to have a conversation with her about language.*" (PT6, Kerala)

At certain instances, parents reported the enhancement in confidence of the learners. A parent from Uttar Pradesh mentions about the instrumental role of drama, stating, "*The workshop has given her the confidence to speak up.*" Another parent from Kerala expresses, "*Now he is comfortable talking in English with other people and he is very comfortable speaking with*

other people". This feedback demonstrates the utility of the practice in developing confidence among L2 learners.

Growth in Social Skills

Drama offers various advantages in the classroom, with the development of social skills being one of its key benefits. Scholars have extensively studied the acquisition of social skills in language classrooms. In two out of six cases, feedback indicates that learners were able to develop their socialisation skill through the incorporation of drama in L2 classroom.

"*The best thing is…he was a very shy type. Now he is feeling comfortable talking to other people.*" (PT3, Kerala)

This feedback exhibits how drama served as a positive force, empowering a shy learner to feel at ease while interacting with other learners. This underscores the utility of drama in accommodating learners with diverse behavioural traits. Similarly, feedback from a parent of a child who was curious in his behaviour also aligns with this observation.

"*Also I think she was interested to interact with the children from the other states. It was my first time interacting with children from other states.*" (PT4, Kerala)

Based on feedback from her parents, it appears that LR4, a naturally interested kid, benefitted from drama techniques in the L2 classroom. Drama allowed her inquisitive nature to be accommodated and made it easier for her to interact socially with other students.

Growth in Linguistic Skills

Given the limited exposure of students to this instructional method and the brief 15-day workshop duration, parents did not explicitly mention the growth in their English language proficiency in the feedback. However, the parents did highlight that the students had the opportunity to learn and practise their language lessons.

"*I don't find any improvement in him in his English like that. It is not possible to do, umm, better English in fifteen days. But even he is trying to speak in English with you people. He is trying to speak. He is not using his mother tongue at least for these two hours. That's good.*" (PT1, Kerala)

Here, the parents seem happy about the fact that he got the opportunity to speak in English,

and he is motivated to speak, which is ultimately beneficial for his language growth. In another case, authors observe a parent mentioning the prospect of growth due to the opportunities she got to speak English.

"*Actually for 1.5 hour-2 hours it was fully in English, so I think it would help to improve her language and also she started to interact in English and also it has improved the listening capacity also.*" (PT4, Kerala)

In this instance, the parent highlights how drama can help children develop their vocal abilities and improve their listening comprehension. Additionally, the parents communicated that continued use of this approach may result in gains in language skills.

Teachers' Observation on Conducting Process Drama in Online Mode for Language Teaching

Drama and Language Exercises Using Zoom

The participants demonstrated a profound engagement with the process drama, which blurred the distinction between online and offline DIE sessions for the facilitator. Within separate Zoom rooms, they skilfully executed group improvisations, capitalising on the private chat feature for tactful communication during pair work, which improved subsequent performances.

The screen-sharing feature within Zoom emerged as a valuable tool for facilitators, fostering creative participation among attendees. Zoom proved to be a versatile platform supporting various elements of the process, such as pre-recorded audio narration, audio-visual narration, music integration, role on the wall, and report writing. The software's highlight feature strategically directed attention to individual participants, which contributed to a focused and dynamic learning environment.

The dynamic utilisation of Zoom sustained students' interest and provided a flexible platform for diverse activities, including recording sessions. This recording feature served as a valuable resource for facilitators, facilitating post-session reflection and assessment, which enhanced the overall effectiveness of the instructional approach.

Nature of Teacher-student Interaction

Teacher-student interaction in the online setting occurred through diverse methods. The brea-

kout room feature facilitated one-to-one engagement, enabling private conversations between the teacher and individual students. Additionally, the teacher could communicate with all group members in the regular mode. The online DIE classroom presented distinct dynamics in teacher-student conversations compared to traditional DIE classrooms. Challenges such as network connectivity issues and suboptimal audio quality from students' devices prompted an increase in written communication. Additionally, the facilitator had to adjust the speech pace for effective communication with students.

Nature of Student-student Interaction

Despite the absence of physical presence, students had diverse communication channels. The private chat feature allowed careful conversations between students, ensuring privacy. Additionally, interactions flowed smoothly during rehearsals for in-role activities and out-of-role discussions. Expressive reactions such as raising hands, applause and using emojis like claps and hearts facilitated organised and engaging discussions. Students' interaction remained focused and energetic throughout the intervention program.

Online Process Drama Can Become Truly Intercultural

The online platform offers opportunities for collaboration with learners globally. In the intervention, participants hailed from diverse regions in India including Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and Kerala, each with distinct cultural backgrounds. Engaging in interactions and co-creating activities provided a platform for understanding and appreciating each other's cultures. This approach can be extended to attract learners worldwide, enabling the creation of studies that support cross-cultural learning opportunities.

Issues and Challenges

Lack of Physical Presence Made the Make-Believe Process More Challenging

In a physical drama session, participants experience fewer barriers to interaction in comparison to online sessions. However, in the intervention program, where communication and activities were conducted virtually, the potential for

misunderstanding and misinterpretation increased. As a result, the make-believe process became increasingly challenging. Nevertheless, facilitator's effective communication encouraged student engagement in activities, which made it easier for them to immerse themselves in the make-believe process. Conversely, students capitalised on the advantage of being at home, using available artefacts and materials resourcefully to enhance the believability of the pretend scenarios.

Network Connectivity Breaks the Flow

A significant challenge emerged from disparities in participants' network connections, leading to inconsistent audio experiences characterised by delayed voices. Additionally, network connectivity issues necessitated joining and rejoining the Zoom meeting. Moreover, internet speed variations among participants further resulted in mismatches during synchronous activities, such as those involving rhythm, clapping, and sound harmony. Given the smaller number of students in the workshop, the impact was manageable, but scalability might present more difficulties with more participants.

Facilitator's Adaptability Was Challenged

The facilitator, accustomed to working with students physically, encountered challenges adapting or creating new drama activities suitable for online education. A trial-and-error method was required to achieve the intended results. Students occasionally improvised in the virtual environment, changing how activities were supposed to be carried out. Therefore, providing instructions in a virtual setting presented difficulties and raised the possibility of misunderstandings. As a result, the facilitator's plans frequently needed to be modified, requiring a delicate balance between intervention to move the conversation in the right direction and adaptability to account for last-minute changes.

Students' Lack of Virtual Resource Was the Biggest Hurdle

Since all the students could not have the same level of technical resources, the process became difficult to implement effectively. For instance,

differences in devices with some students using smartphones, impacted the activities' effectiveness. Users of mobile phones could only see four people at a time, while users of computers could see a larger group. Even with efforts to modify exercises for smaller groups, some required the entire group to be significantly effective. There were also audio connectivity issues, especially when students moved away from their computers during an activity. Due to this movement, voice quality and volume were reduced. Some students could manage this through wireless headsets, but the researchers could not guarantee that every participant had one.

DISCUSSION

The qualitative study's findings explain how the learners and their parents perceived the pedagogical application of drama in education in online mode for teaching English Language and enhancing social and cognitive skills. The findings indicate that Zoom and WhatsApp-mediated drama strategies helped learners, successfully, co-create activities even in online spaces. The intervention program also enhanced students' confidence, social skills, motivation and linguistic ability of the learners. These findings from the study aligns with Maor et al.'s (2023) study which indicate that compared to traditional in-person classrooms, online sessions demonstrated greater creativity in terms of fluency and flexibility. However Maor et al.'s study also highlight the lack of originality while conducting the classes online, contradicting the present study's findings suggesting the planning and practice demanded greater originality while conducting the L2 classes online.

The results corroborate the findings of Radhika and Bhuvaneshwari (2023), emphasizing that technology-enabled learning fosters interactive communication between instructors and students, boosting students' confidence in engaging with their peers. This alignment is consistent with the findings of Cziboly and Bethlenfalvy (2020), which highlight that online platforms offer a versatile means of delving into urgent issues through the medium of drama. The pandemic was a big concern, and the students were isolated. Therefore, the urgent need of the language learners was to interact with the other learners.

The online process drama helped them interact with each other and co-create their learnings together.

The findings extend the study by Göksel and Abraham (2022), which claim that the conduction of drama in online mode proves to be more beneficial than in offline mode in certain cases, like giving autonomy to learners to rearrange their own space, also allowing participants from different parts of the world to participate. In this study, authors could easily connect with the learners from three different parts of India. If the study were conducted on a large scale, it would not have a big task connecting the learners from different parts of the world. Also, students at home could rearrange their own space at their convenience. Also, bringing different artefacts to the session was more accessible for the students. The findings from this study contradict the views by the participants in Eljack et al.'s (2023) study, mentioning distraction as a factor in descreasing the productivity of online classes, none of the students mentioned technical difficulties in using Zoom and WhatsApp applications for their study purpose. However, the participants in Eljack et al.'s study were adult learners. This contradiction provides us an understanding of how young learners are more technological friendly in using the digital medium for their learning.

The findings from the present study asupport the outcomes from the González Becerra and del Río Alcalá (2022), which report that despite the absence of physical presence, learners enhanced communicative competence through orality practices, genre exploration, and multimodal strategies.

The findings from the analysis of the observation and field note further the results of Eljack et al. (2023), indicating that the utilization of Zoom facilitates English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in establishing meaningful connections with both their mentors and peers, thereby enhancing their overall productivity. While comparing the results to the use of drama in education in physical mode, this study supports the finding of Stinson and Freebody (2006), who reported that the relationship among learners was improved. Also, their observation on intercultural awareness corroborates the findings of Piazzoli (2010), who concluded that the students get a chance through process drama to develop inter-

cultural awareness by maintaining the distancing yet empathising with the characters and getting a chance to reflect and negotiate meaning.

The reflective observations and field notes from the facilitator in this study diverge from the conclusions drawn by Aggarwal and Elembilassery (2023). The latter state that, in online settings, course content was contracted by narrowing the scope of the course coverage. In contrast, the present study demonstrates that roleplay was performed effectively and could easily be connected with other activities to develop the process and provide deeper experience to the learners. Moreover, the facilitator was able to exercise and reflect the cross curricular learnings with students, extending the course coverage. Furthermore, the findings from this study contrast with the results of Ponnusamy et al. (2023), who indicated that a majority of school teachers experienced mental and physical discomforts during the transition from face-to-face teaching to online teaching. In contrast, the current study showcased a positive and enthusiastic facilitator who conducted classes cheerfully, maintaining physical comfort within their own space while effectively connecting with students in the virtual environment.

The observations regarding the difficulties in aligning with curricular goals originally formulated for physical classrooms are consistent with Namboodiri's (2022) findings. Namboodiri emphasizes the critical challenge of adapting an online learning mode to a curriculum that was designed for traditional classroom settings. Therefore, online learning in higher education must distinguish itself through innovative pedagogical practices that encourage student connection, engagement, and transformation, finally producing positive outcomes for all stakeholders involved.

Researchers faced several limitations while conducting the study. One noticeable limitation is the relatively small number of participating students, which limits the generalisability of the outcomes. Ideally, it would have been better if the study was conducted with a more extensive participant pool, representative of a full classroom strength, to understand whether the schools could include online drama. Also, the study does not consider socioeconomics and gender distribution, as it would have given a different perspective if authors had looked at it from these perspectives. The socioeconomic perspective also plays a vital role because the resources and the space to perform activities differ in different households. Also, performing activities at home might be perceived differently by different genders. On the other hand, the group lacked homogeneity as three of the students belonged to grade 6 and three of the students belonged to grade 7. Conduction of intervention would have been convenient if the students belonged to the same class.

Furthermore, online platforms such as WhatsApp and Zoom are not designed to conduct drama classes. They have been mainly designed for meetings and chats. The result might have been more positive if authors could use an online space designed explicitly to conduct drama in education sessions. Also, they could conduct the study for fifteen days only, and this intervention program was the authors' first case study for L2 learning. Therefore, they did have a chance to correct their errors. Therefore, the study remains exploratory-adequate. If they had conducted a longitudinal study, then the results would have given in-depth results with a clearer picture of the implementation and utility of the process drama method in an online space.

CONCLUSION

In this study, authors explored the possibility of conducting drama in education in online mode, especially for L2 teaching and learning. To achieve their goal, authors developed a framework to use online platforms WhatsApp and Zoom to conduct the DIE classes and also developed lesson plans to conduct fifteen sessions. By analysing the feedback received by the learners and their parents, as well as through observation and field notes, they found that the DIE method positively impacted students' linguistic, social and affective skills. The process drama technique in online space helped learners enhance their language competence, motivation and confidence. Additionally, it helped learners to develop a healthier relationship with each other and also with the facilitator. This investigation augments the extant literature on language learning through drama-based methods, reaffirming prior findings regarding the efficacy of the DIE method in advancing language skills. Furthermore, the study sheds light on integrating technology-mediated

performative teaching practices. However, there is a need for further longitudinal research to deepen comprehension of the application and constraints of the DIE method in online modes for L2 teaching and learning. Overall, this study underscores the potential of employing the DIE method in virtual spaces as a practical and effective approach to L2 instruction. Incorporating online DIE into language education enables educators to establish immersive and interactive learning environments, fostering enhanced language proficiency and social and affective skills among students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Future research should aim to conduct the experiment with a substantial number of participants, ideally representing a standard classroom strength, which will improve the generalisability of findings in online drama education. Additionally, studies should explore socioeconomic and gender perspectives to understand how these factors impact the reception and effectiveness of online drama-based language teaching. Moreover, further research can inquire into the process drama's applicability in multicultural settings, nurturing intercultural awareness. It will contribute to a profound understanding of its effectiveness across diverse cultural contexts.

Undertaking longitudinal research will comprehensively analyse the long-term effects and sustainability of process drama-based language instruction in virtual environments. In addition, comparative studies between offline and online drama sessions might be conducted to identify strengths and limitations associated with each mode, which would provide a better understanding of online adaptations.

Investigating technological modifications aimed at optimising online platforms for language teaching through drama, possibly through collaborations with software developers, may contribute to enhancing tools to suit the process drama's particular requirements. Furthermore, future research should address limitations and challenges in implementing educational policies related to art integration in educational settings and explore how technology-mediated drama pedagogy can contribute to successfully implementing the National Education Policy 2020.

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