Abstract

We examined the use of dramatic/theater presentation for teaching oral skills to 37 Taiwanese EFL undergraduate students, with the main goal being to determine whether such strategies and performance experiences positively support oral skills in terms of motivation and achievement. Data were collected via performance evaluations, observations, a seminar, individual interviews, and a questionnaire. Results indicate significant increases in learner motivation and oral English achievement. Students were actively engaged and willing to put significant time and effort into the project. However, the process strongly affected some students in terms of performance-related stress.

Keywords: drama-based strategies, theater performance, English oral skills, university EFL students, Taiwan.

Introduction

The use of theater performance for English oral training was primarily inspired by Heathcote's (1991) drama in education theory. Her work has triggered many efforts to apply drama to various content areas (cf., e.g., Hesten, 1994; Johnson, 1994; Kanita, 1995; Kato, 1993; Rouse, 1992; Shillingford, 1994). In her comprehensive review of research on the link between drama and language arts, Wagner (1998) asserts that "drama is powerful because its unique balance of thought and feeling makes learning exciting, challenging, relevant to real life concerns, and enjoyable" (p. 9). Evidence supporting the use of drama techniques for language