

# Shakespeare in the English Language Classroom: Using Drama Techniques to Develop Adult Learner's L2 Speaking Skills

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## Abstract

*Speaking in L2 is the most vital skill in this modern, globalized world. Shakespeare's drama with its stage techniques can be a useful tool for developing L2 (English as a foreign/second) speaking skills. Drama skills/techniques on stage facilitate a learner's fluency, pronunciation, and confidence in oral delivery. In the present communicative language teaching (CLT) method, there is still a lack of options for developing L2 speaking skills among our learners. So L2 speaking is always difficult for them from class one to twelve. The result is visible at the advanced level also. A learner suffers from severe anxiety to deliver an oral presentation or to attend a viva-voce exam. It often hinders one to speak naturally in public to present an impromptu speech even in front of classmates. Drama skills/techniques encourage a learner to come out of this challenging situation. To test this, a case study has been made on 68 learners of the Department of English Language and Literature (DELL) at Premier University, Chattagram. As research instruments, questionnaires and one-to-one interviews have been taken in three phases. The target group (TG) of students comprises three advanced-level students. These groups have done three compulsory courses— 'Shakespeare: Tragedies and Histories', 'Shakespeare: Comedies and Sonnets' and 'The History of Theatre'. The department offers these courses in three different semesters for four and half months' each with intensive theoretical and practical classes. From the study, it comes out that the influence of staging Shakespeare's dramas on developing an L2 learner's speaking skills is phenomenal. It has significantly increased the self-confidence along with other speaking skills of the L2 learners. Shakespeare on stage comes out as more beneficial for language learners than on the pages of the books.*

**Key Words:** drama techniques, sub-drama skills, filter, monitor, organizer, speaking anxiety,

## 1.1 Introduction

This is an exploratory study on Shakespeare's drama staging and techniques and its English language (L2) learning potentials at the tertiary level in

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Bangladesh. Among all L2 skills development, speaking is somehow ignored in our syllabus and curricula, although it is the most sought-after skill of the modern globalized learner. Due to the use of the English language as the global lingua franca, stress is given immensely on the learning and teaching of communicative skills. In this age of internet and communication technology, good communication skill is the most important prerequisite to meet the local and global needs to ensure individual and community benefits (Farooqui, 2007; Khan, 2007; Bhattacharjee, 2008). As drama makes the best use of language in action, it can facilitate a learner with the best practice of it in a real life context. Drama performance on stage can help our L2 learners develop speaking skills most pragmatically. Drama uses the language of communication which is helpful for an L2 learner to learn the language in action. Drama in a language classroom works in such a way that it “liberates the human spirit in a very social and playful way. It is a refreshing and energizing approach to language learning for both students and teachers” (Whitair, 1998, p. 36). Using Shakespeare’s drama in the L2 learning/teaching classroom is not explored intensely. Also, its cognitive as well as performative potentials on L2 students are less explored. This can open new insight into learner-centered L2 classrooms for successfully learning the target language skills. In modern trends of language teaching/ learning scenarios, learner-centered classes are highlighted most replacing the concept of teacher-centered one.

## 1.2 Theoretical Perspectives

A learner learns a second language in two ways. One is an informal/ instructed way that takes place in a classroom of an institution. Another way is learning L2 naturally—from watching English movies, reading newspapers, storybooks, novels where L2 is used in real conversation, for a communicative purpose (Ellis, 1999). In Stephen Krashen’s (1982) opinion, “... when the learner is engaged in natural communication tasks, he will manifest the standard order” of language. In his natural order hypothesis, natural learning is emphasized where by using the target language (TL) a learner can learn a language easily rather than learning the discrete elements of language as grammatical elements like verbs, parts of speech, numbers, words, sentences, and other contents of L2 grammar. Halliday (1975) in his Discourse Theory emphasizes:

...that language development should be considered in terms of how the learner discovers the meaning potential of language by participating in communication.... the development of the formal linguistic devices for realizing basic language function grows out of the interpersonal uses to which language is put. (in Ellis, 1999, p. 259)

In his study of his own child's language acquisition, Halliday has opined that the best learning of a language takes place through communicating in that target language. In line with him, Krashen also describes language acquisition as a mental process of a learner along with some social and 'affective factors'. Krashen also talks about these factors responsible for learning a second language: age, exposure to the language, various social contexts, and environment, anxiety, self-confidence, motivation, aptitude, the personality of the learner. L2 learning takes place by the learner's performing three processes as 'filter'—a learner screens while processing his/her L2, 'organizer'—the arrangements of L2 words in a sentence, 'monitor' – the learner acts as the editor of the target language. To organize the target language (L2) for meaningful communication, one needs to maintain the proper order/sequence of the words. As English, being a foreign language (FL) in Bangladesh, is less used outside the classroom in a natural/ informal way and mostly used for exam/ class interaction purposes inside the formal classroom, a learner faces a lack of exposure to prepare him/herself to be vocally sound. Therefore one needs to be more watchful and monitoring to present the oral delivery in front of any audience. Krashen opines about the self-monitoring of the learner that helps him/her develop that skill of communication by internalizing the bits that he claims as the building blocks of the (TL) by getting it in action in the form of dialogue throwing, role-playing as drama techniques. This exposure to the target language creates comprehensible inputs which are accelerating for L2 performance as well as for developing L2 communication skills of a learner. Researchers (Stern, 2006) found that drama boosts the operation of certain psychological factors inside the participant that facilitate communication, self-esteem, spontaneity to lower the fear / anxiety of rejection. Drama and language learning support each other since both need a learner's psychological and social participation.

In Vygotskyan (1896-1934) analysis of language learning, he emphasized that this is a social process. Mostly popular in modern SLA research, Vygotsky discusses five constructs-- cognition, interaction, grammar, learning, and sense of self – all these connected with language learning are socially grounded:

Ineluctably, to understand L2 learning from a radically social perspective, one must focus on an experience that is lived, made sense of, negotiated, contested, and claimed by learners in their physical, interpersonal, social, cultural, and historical context. In other words, nothing can be known if it is not known in a given social context—and out of the social, nothing can be known. (in Ortega, 2011, p.218)

Language learning, understanding, use, interaction, meaning-making, thinking, processing of the language of the learner – all are socially constructed. A learner learns everything of a language from its social interaction, as parents teach him/her, and then transform that in his/her way of understanding. Language is learned as it is experienced, tested by the learner in a given social situation. So language experience is not fully predictable, 'it is always contingent on the situated context of human relational activity' (Ortega, 2011). Drama techniques help a learner manage successfully 'unpredictable' events of real-life to make meaningful communication with the interlocutors.

All these theoretical grounds of second language learning easily connect Shakespeare's drama staging as a useful tool to an L2 classroom. Because he has made the world the stage where everyone irrespective of class, color, profession has got entry with vibrant dialogues and interpersonal exchanges. The drama takes a social context on stage, tension, and solution of the situation of those common people. A learner by participating in the drama staging learns how to face and handle these emotions, actions, and expressions. This gives chances to communicate as a team, doing as teamwork through social interaction in a context. The language used here is in the mode of making communications among actors on particular social issues with various opinions and judgments. Drama staging helps a learner become creative and critical about the activities held on stage. In the book, *Drama Techniques in Language Learning*, Maley and Duff (1982) relate drama to "the naughty child who climbs the high walls and ignores the 'No Trespassing sign'" (p.15). Drama techniques involve the learner using the language by involving him/her in the action. Sometimes s/he has to ignore the real identity to produce the shifted one on the stage in a creative way. Shakespeare's drama and its staging are more engaging for a learner than others on the stage.

### **1.3 Why Shakespeare's drama**

*The Teaching of English in England*, the title of the Newbolt Report published in 1921, gave importance to two texts, The Bible and the works of Shakespeare. Almost one hundred years later, during the tenure of the Coalition govt. of 2010-2015 in England, these two books were again prescribed in the country's education institutes with the RSC's toolkit for teaching Shakespeare. This report for the first time addressed the issue of learner-centered learning. It focused on the need of making language learning enjoyable for the learners with the universal values which were and still are available in great literature



like that in Shakespeare. The report also scrutinized whether Shakespeare's 'archaic language' was suitable for learners. In a discussion, it was said that it is not necessary to make 'too much translation of unfamiliar language'. Instead, one was required to enjoy the pleasure of music and his drama. Crystal (2008) in an essay 'The language of Shakespeare' argues:

People who argue that Shakespeare is unintelligible and inaccessible tend to quote the difficult bits and ignore the easier ones. We should always read the whole of a speech before worrying about the difficulties found in a part of it. Shakespeare's 'thou' and 'you' reflect the familiarity and intimacy between the characters. 'Thou' is for emotional attachment of the relationship, the mood and attitude toward it. But when the matter of distrust, betrayal between them, 'you' takes the address between the characters. Thus the characters' moods to 'thou' and the negative ones are transcribed as 'you' (Crystal, 2016).

#### **1.4 Magical Effects of Shakespeare's Language on Human Mind and Brain**

Shakespeare's language has a special effect on the human brain. The effects of Shakespeare's use of functional shift (technique of using a noun to serve as a verb)—this linguistic issue of Shakespeare's writing has a cognitive effect on the human brain. In his research, Davis (2006), from the Liverpool University's School of English, said:

The brain reacts to reading a phrase such as 'he godded me' from the tragedy of Coriolanus, in a similar way to putting a jigsaw puzzle together. If it is easy to see which pieces slot together you become bored of the game, but if the pieces don't appear to fit, when we know they should, the brain becomes excited. By throwing odd words into seemingly normal sentences, Shakespeare surprises the brain and catches it off guard in a manner that produces a sudden burst of activity - a sense of drama created out of the simplest of things.

In his research on the effects of Shakespeare's language on the human brain, he has done collaborative work with cognitive scientists. The result is the encouragement of letting young minds have exposure to the language of Shakespeare. His language, as Davis says, helps the young mind develop creative and independent thoughts. Shakespeare's dramas provide a full package of education for young minds to become energetic and lively (Davis, 2006).

A K Hudson's *Shakespeare and the Classroom* for 'The Society for Teachers of English' gave importance to the 'active approaches' to make Shakespeare accessible to all. He writes:

The present book recognizes frankly the difficulties which the modern pupil finds in dealing with Shakespeare. It has been written in the belief that the plays can be made intelligible and interesting only if the teaching remains stage-centered (1954, p.8).

Shakespeare's dominance in language education throughout his country and the world is for the reason that 'Shakespeare was a genius is as close to fact as we are ever likely to get in aesthetics'. And also that he wrote 'universal truths' about human nature, existence on earth in his/her way. Studying or reading him can just make anyone a better person. His dramas, as his contemporaries found him as the 'star of poets', are more than mere entertainment. The worth of Shakespeare's drama texts has been proved through performance (Bate, 1997; Taylor, 1989, cited in Irish, 2016). They opine that 'it was to Shakespeare's advantage that his plays fell to the more energetic and innovative manager' (p. 15). The Shakespeare 'brand' always gave moral guidance to the audience. 'Shakespeare became associated, very literally, with a gold standard of literacy' (Olives, 2015, p. 18).

In the program of 'Shakespeare in Schools' in British academic curriculum in 1986, Gibson reflected on research at some aspects of students' encounter with Shakespeare:

In total, our research reveals an encouraging picture. Teachers increasingly report success as they employ a variety of methods, at the heart of which is social, collaborative, imaginative, re-creative activities. Such methods deepen and enhance students' informed personal responses (1990, p. 1).

Cox (1989) validates: 'Shakespeare's plays are so rich that in every age they can produce fresh meanings and even those who deny his universality agree on his cultural importance' (1989, 7.160). Shakespeare enlightens every age, every society. Continuous attention to Shakespeare at every age, in every country, has made him authentic and an essential integration in the English language educational context.

### **1.5 Shakespeare in L2 Classroom**

Why Shakespeare in L2 classroom? Johnson (1765), in his 'Preface to Shakespeare', reflects that Shakespeare instructs through his writings, "The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing." Shakespeare does not preach; he likes to please. The innovations Shakespeare

has given to English literature and language are worthy to discover by the learners, he does not belong to one age but all ages.

‘Whoever reads Shakespeare can be wise in every sense’ – Alam (2019) says while reflecting on the English language and Shakespeare in Bangladesh scenario. Having Shakespeare in the L2 classroom is that Shakespeare is the most taught, read, and acted dramatist in Bangladeshi universities’ English literature classroom. Any tertiary-level English literature classroom is impossible without his presence in the syllabus. Shakespeare’s acceptance as a dramatist throughout the centuries has made him a must to explore in a new way. Through colonialism in India Shakespeare has entered the academic scenario. The Education Act of 1835 by Thomas Babington Macaulay enforced the compulsory reading of Shakespeare. This was prescribed for a class of elite Indians. This practice with Shakespeare has, however, been changed. He became an iconic author and open to everybody who wants to explore him. From then on Shakespeare has become an important part of English language education here.

## **2. Review of Literature**

The potential of drama for developing L2 speaking skills is a recent phenomenon in SLA research (Ulas, 2008,) although drama as a language learning/teaching tool has been a tradition for hundreds of years. Several researchers (Dougill, 1987; Livingstone, 1985; Maley and Duff, 1982; Phillips, 2003) have dedicated their works to the benefits of using dramatic techniques in a language classroom for oral skills development. Maley and Duff (1982) argue that “these activities draw on the natural ability of every person to imitate, mimic and express himself or herself through gesture” (p. 6).

In a study, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) argued that ‘speaking is the most anxiety-provoking activity in second language acquisition’. They reported on building self-confidence among learners as the most important part to develop L2 speaking skills. Horwitz (1986) gave focus on classroom-related anxiety of the L2 learners who get less chance to use the language outside the classroom, a situation similar to our country. Through her research, she found that while speaking or producing the L2 a learner’s psychological states and beliefs are important factors to make him/her anxious. In the same way, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) worked on the social and behavioral correlates of L2 speaking anxiety in communication. When learners in the classroom laugh at others’

performance, the performer loses confidence and makes mistakes. Park and Lee (2005) stated the 'low self-confidence or high anxiety levels affect students' oral performance negatively'. Giving an oral presentation and performing in front of classmates are the two most challenging parts of adult L2 classes (Ohata, 2005; Woodrow, 2006).

This speaking anxiety/ discomfort to speak is caused by several reasons:

- lack of L2 vocabulary
- not sounding as standard as the natives or pronunciation mistake
- lack of preparation or unpreparedness
- lack of grammar knowledge,
- lack of the power of apprehension from others' delivery
- shyness
- fear of being laughed at
- attitude of the teacher to mistakes
- low self-confidence
- worrying to be misunderstood
- lack of power to control ideas

To overcome these, drama techniques can be a strong tool for learners in the L2 classroom/syllabus. Drama makes a classroom interesting and full of fun. When learning is blended with fun, that learning is the best one. In drama classes 'affective filters'—anxiety, screening, etc., are lowered, so a learner feels motivated to learn (Heldenbrand, 2003). While speaking a learner does not only utter the words with proper sound and grammar but also shares the feelings, understandings, likings, and dislikings. Drama makes the mood of the learners light. At the same time, it makes the learner enlightened, controlling the emotion and removing the stereotypes. Drama gives a learner freedom to express him/herself in his/her way by choosing the role in a play. Drama helps a learner know his/her creative power and understanding. Maley and Duff (1982, p. 14) opine, "every student needs periods in which to practice what he or she knows without restraints, without fear of being wrong." Drama techniques give a learner chances to open up without any fear of being laughed at or criticized. These enhance the communication skills of the L2 learners.

In our country, the communicative approach to L2 learning/teaching is practiced for many years. But strangely enough, in communicating with others

in L2 outside/inside classroom a learner still struggles a lot. Experts opine that this is due to the traditional lesson system which is mostly teacher-centered. In this system, learners get little chance to use the target language. So the matter of gaining fluency in a class hour remains unaddressed. Also, the overpopulated classes do not get exposure to spoken English in/ beyond the class hours. A possible solution can be using (Trivedi, 2013) dramatic techniques in the L2 classroom. These create a 'meaningful communicative context for listening and speaking', stimulate a learner to use his/her L2 skills of communication.

In a study on Korean learners' conversational skills, Heldenbrand (2003) says, like many Asian country students these learners also get less scope in their classroom to speak in L2. He also says that a large number of Korean students lack confidence in speaking also because of the existing cultural practices of zero tolerance to a learner's mistake in L2. He quotes Gill (1996):

Many Asian students, because of social factors like culture and 'face', and barriers to communication like affective filters and monitors, initially lacked the confidence to participate. . However, once their affective filters had been lowered and they had overcome the temptation to monitor their language output at every turn, they found that it was possible to have fun and still learn.

The use of drama in a language classroom can help a learner overcome this situation. On stage, a learner gets involved with various activities and develops his/her outlook on the language. This is how the speaking confidence increases.

Drama skills improve both verbal and non-verbal communication. By providing the chances to use the L2 conceptually and contextually (Trivedi, 2013) drama techniques force a learner to get involved in the action. Active participation in the whole process of drama makes a learner interactive. A learner's involvement in the activities makes him/her motivated to use the foreign language (Trivedi, 2013). In a communicative language learning/teaching classroom, a lot of importance is given nowadays to arrange situations in the classroom where students can use language in a meaningful way (Dougill, 1987). Language is treated now as "a means of communication, not an abstract body of knowledge to be learnt" (Dougill, 1987, p. 5). Dramatic techniques provide a framework in which students have a "real need to communicate" (Dougill, 1987, p. 5).

In this regard, Shakespeare is the best option. “Shakespeare depicted human nature, although in an often overdramatic form, but human nature nonetheless (Collins, 2018, cited in Leavesley, 2019). Shakespeare exploited the familiar themes that his audience could relate to. Almost all his characters are bound to their emotions, a modern man can even relate to it with love, hatred, betrayal, loyalty, hate, friendship, death, lies, corruption (Crystal, 2016). Shakespeare’s dramas have gone beyond centuries, cultures, classes. It is strongly evident that he is still fascinating and teachers have the scopes to ‘harness this fascination’. Teachers can engage learners by using different strategies to make them understand Shakespeare through his dramas.

By letting students repeat this line of his from *The Taming of the Shrew*, happily, harshly, sadly—a teacher can help the modern student break the language barriers. Such as these lines are entertaining also for the learners (Swayer & Watson, 2010):

### **3.1 Methodology**

#### **3.1.1 Research questions**

1. How does staging Shakespeare affect developing an adult learner’s L2 speaking skills?
2. Does drama performance help an L2 adult learner lower his/her speaking anxiety?
3. Is performing Shakespeare more beneficial than reading?

#### **3.1.2 Participants, Materials, and Procedures**

This study was conducted on 68 students. Among them 40 were female and 28 were male learners of a private university in Chattagram. Their age limit was between 22-25. The students were from different urban, semi-urban areas. Before coming to the university, they belonged to mostly Bangla medium schools and colleges. These participants were from the 7th and 8th semesters of the undergraduate level and a group of them was from MA (Major in ELT). They had earlier completed the courses like, “Shakespeare: Tragedies and Histories,” “Shakespeare: Comedies and Sonnets.” The 8th and MA batches had done the course along with the aforementioned “The History of Theatre”. The 7th semester is now going to finish the theatre course in this session. Each session consists of four and a half months. All these courses offer staging of selected scenes from Shakespeare’s dramas. The Dpartment (DELL, PUC)



emphasizes the study because here drama performance, historical, theoretical, and practical aspects of drama—all these issues are emphasized as must-do courses throughout several undergrad semesters. Here SLA (second language acquisition) is also a core course for the learners. As continuous research on the effects of drama in developing L2 communication skills, the researcher gets scopes to gather first-hand experience and the changes regarding dropping shyness, gaining the confidence of some exposed learners who lack that and other communication soft skills--these the learners have acquired after finishing the drama course.

Here students have to arrange everything on stage by themselves—stage, props, lighting, background sound/ music, direction. While reading and staging Shakespeare in the first two courses, students mostly depend on their understanding of the drama, depending on youtube videos and their understanding of those dramas and the characters. Students this time do not maintain any hard and fast rules for staging. Their reading and understanding of Shakespeare allow them to imagine everything as performance on stage while they actually do not perform. But while doing the theater course, students know how to stage a drama with its grammar and application. In this course, they come to know different drama skills to be used on stage. They prepare reports on the drama along with arranging the costume, validating their selection of the actors, sounds, props and so on. That is, overall arrangements of the drama have to be done by the student-performers. As a team member, one has to do several jobs on and back of the stage. From budget preparation to acting, from planning to implementation—everything is done by the team members. Everybody reports about his/her action, role, limitations, and scopes of the role to the assigned teacher. Every team reflects on other teams and their performances. During this phase, these students are being assessed.

Selecting characters, props, stage, language games, role play, using humor, characterization, the costume of Shakespeare's time and props like a dagger, sword, and crown, simulation, dialogue, light, special effects, background sound, using promoter and prompter, using Shakespeare's language, imitation, mimicry, using gesture, scripts, improvisation—all these are used as drama and sub drama techniques/skills while playing drama roles by the learners. Also writing reports and oral reflections by every team on these issues were taken into consideration as support for the development of L2 speaking skills.

To help me complete this study, the participants willingly joined my interview and questionnaire sessions. Those were 8 open and 2 close-ended questions.

### 3.2 Findings and Analysis

#### 3. 2.1 Interview Questions and Sample Answers:

- a) In which way do you think Shakespeare's drama staging sessions help you?
- b) Did you face any problem to act on stage?

*Sample answer: I performed the Duke Senior role in As You Like It, I found it a problem when my team leader told me to do the role. I never acted and I never spoke in front of anybody before. My role was about an elderly man but I am young. Giving expression to the role was difficult at first. But my director helped me. This helped me with fluency, good pronunciation, and it removed my fear. I can now speak in front of others. I feel now less shy. I had to memorize difficult words. It was a great experience for me. (Student 7)*

This student, recommended by his classmates, was the shyest in their class. After acting in the drama, he became less shy and more active in the class. He thinks having this type of performative course would help students develop fluency, improve pronunciation and reduce shyness.

- Question, 2: a) How do you feel when you act in Shakespeare's drama?  
b) Which role did you play?

*Sample answer: I got a Shakespeare drama course several times in different semesters. I feel easy to act and I like his drama. I played the role of Polonius in Hamlet. I memorized the dialogues but I made changes in my tone—up and down. I got developed my oral skills and I learned to make speeches in front of others, especially in front of my classmates. I was afraid of it before, now I feel excited to speak (Student, 11).*

Another student, who was the director of a team suffered a lot when one of her actors could not memorize dialogue and on the day of the performance he could not come out of amnesia. She told that she had to play the role to manage. As the team leader, she had to manage everything from staging of a selected scene of *Othello* to performing and managing everything on and before the day of its show (S-2).

Few students told that they did not think of the language learning matter from the drama staging. They were unaware of learning language from drama. They thought that they could learn a language only from grammar books. They also

were unsure whether memorizing dialogues could make any change in their vocabulary development. Because in dialogue delivery they need to produce only memorized chunks. But when the matter of speaking something of their own comes, they feel trouble. (S -36, 49, 52)

The majority of students told about the increase of fluency, self-confidence, better pronunciation, clear delivery, and lowering of speaking anxiety—the benefits they got from staging Shakespeare. It helped them develop readiness to speak which was absent in them earlier. From the sessions, some of the students could develop their leadership and management skills also. Becoming the director or the team leader of a team helped them develop this skill.

### 3.2.2 Effects of Roleplaying Shakespeare’s characters in developing L2 Communication skills

Role-playing is one of many drama techniques/skills on a drama performance stage. Wearing the monarch’s vest can make a performer-learner aware of his/her use of language to the receiver. But in Shakespeare’s case, his kings and monarchs have used the spoken register of the common human beings and thus it helps today’s role players to easily follow him. He has not given the superfluous unnatural language and image to a king. He holds the mirror of true human nature with the common language and axioms (Johnson, 1765) that even a modern reader and role player can easily manage. Among Shakespeare’s numerous unique drama techniques offered, role-playing is essentially an important one to learn, internalize the language and develop proficiency in the use of TL of the Bangladeshi learners.

### 3.2.3 Questionnaire Response

In the questionnaire, participants supported the use of drama techniques in an L2 classroom. Made in three-like art scale, ‘strongly agree’, ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘neutral’-- this session also gave enthusiastic feedback from the students. The following table might clarify the situation:

**Table: 1. Perceptions of learners on the L2 speaking skills development through staging Shakespeare at tertiary level (in % and numbers)**

Questions	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Neutral
1. Drama helps pronounce properly	93%	5%	2%
2. Drama boosts memorization	88%	3%	9%

3. Drama helps learn vocabulary	89%	2%	9%
4. drama helps overcome speaking stress	92%	3%	5%
5. I am now confident to speak	97%	0%	2%
6. I was afraid to talk before having this session	97%	2%	1%
7. I am no more shy to talk	90%	5%	5%
8. I learned a lot from Shakespeare's drama staging sessions	98%	1%	1%

In answer to the question about the effects of staging Shakespeare in developing their speaking skills, 93% of students opine that the drama sessions had influenced them in a very positive way. They got a chance to improve their pronunciation. About 88%--89% of students believed that these sessions had improved their memorization power as well as vocabulary stock. Between 92%--98% of students believe that speaking-related mental state had been boosted positively while they had huge interaction with their teammates. Table 1 shows that very few students out of unawareness or misunderstanding commented otherwise. The majority of them showed a positive response to the questions. Since the data were taken several times in different meetings, students gave an authentic picture of their understanding. The data (both quantitative and qualitative) were collected through interviews, questionnaires, and teachers' reflections. These qualitative data were analyzed by using the content analysis (transcribing) technique.

### 3.3 Teacher's Reflection and role in/outside L2 classroom

Before-sessions and performance and after-sessions have given me the impression that drama staging can be a helpful tool for a foreign language classroom. Drama staging and performance helped the students develop not only their speaking skills but also helped them discover their strengths, creativity, power of imagination, power of managing a situation (they had to manage on stage when any player has forgotten his/her dialogue). They could overcome fear, nervousness, uneasiness, and the fear of being laughed at by others. Students who were unwilling to communicate earlier, after having these drama sessions came forward to join every program of the department as a volunteer or as an anchor or as a performer for other cultural/academic sessions. Above all, they did not show fear anymore to speak in front of/her classmates. Giving a presentation was no weirder. Drama staging has increased

their confidence. The teacher's role in this regard is helping the students continue learning and knowledge generation inside and outside the classroom. S/He can make a learner understand the target character, its dress-up, dialogue throwing, stage movement, light and sound use, pitches of the dialogues, and many others related to the enactment of the drama on stage. Through classroom teaching the teacher can support a learner develop the target communicative skills in L2 by letting him/her read and role play of the characters.

### **3.4 Drama performance and reading**

Drama in a language and literature program plays a very key role to make a learner learn a language through literature. Learning/Teaching a language is not just to produce or reproduce its structural facts. Rather developing its communicative and functional aspects nowadays are getting serious attention all over the world. As for reading, a drama gets a visualization through a reader's imaginative expertise. But through real staging, understanding of it thus gets greater accuracy and perfection. So reading and staging both play key roles for a learner to develop multiple skills to make the TL functionally portable between and among the interlocutors. Since audio-visualization requires full length engagement/involvement of a learner in drama staging, it benefits the student-performer's psycho-somatic development as well in the whole process to develop numerous cognitive and performance skills (Stern, 2006). The researcher's viewpoint in this regard is to empower a learner by letting them read and perform the drama as a support to each other not only for analyzing the aesthetic phenomena but also for making critical insights to make themselves vocal and confident.

### **4. Discussion**

The pre-post sessions of the study have made the matter clear that Shakespeare's drama staging has been a great tool to develop the speaking skills of the students. The students who were not at all interested to speak or afraid of speaking in front of any audience became more enthusiastic to deliver an oral presentation comfortably. They found that drama staging was more engaging and interesting to them. The concern about the wrong pronunciation of L2 words and other related fear was gone. It is like echoing 'We learn speaking by speaking' of Swain (1985). The result has come out that the more one gets exposure to speak, s/he can develop that faculty in a natural and anxiety-free way.

While speaking, s/he negotiates the meaning, ideas, with the interlocutors. This skill, as a conversational/communication skill by another name, depends on a learner's getting scopes to learning in the classroom. But the traditional setup of the classroom gives less exposure to this skill to be developed. The interactional opportunity a learner gets (through using drama techniques) can help him handle the conversation inside/outside the classroom (Halliday and Hasan, 1985, cited in Nunan, 1991):

In second language learning the basic assumption has been... that one first learns how to manipulate the structure, that one gradually builds up a repertoire of structures and then somehow, learns to put these structures to use in discourse. We would like to consider the possibility that just the reverse happens. One learns how to do conversation, one learns how to interact verbally, and out of this interaction syntactic structures are developed (Hatch, 1978:404, in Nunan, 1991, p. 46).

Ellis finds this reverse type of L2 learning setup is feasible for developing the conversational skills of the learners. To develop this a learner imitates another speaker's utterance, then s/he makes her own, as unanalyzed 'chunks' of language as a formula. After then s/he makes own production with his/her constituent elements of the TL. Although performing drama requires memorizing of the dialogues, still it possesses a very helpful part for a learner to make creative speeches by him/herself later. A learner's exposure to L2 happens through learning some routine chunks (like, 'Can I have a\_\_\_\_\_?' How do you do? etc.) taught by teachers/parents (Ellis, 2984c) which helps them make creative delivery out of those practices. Ellis (1985) treats them as 'formulaic speech' which at the beginning of every language learning a learner learns and uses as a routine. These help a learner initiate a conversation. And thus a learner tries to develop the second most important language skill -- speaking after having listened to it first. Among all human activities, the majority interaction lies in talking. Human beings talk more than anything else in/her full lifetime (Rahman, 2006). But regarding speech deliveries, a talkative can be dumb for the anxiety one suffers with. Hatch (1978) opines to change the strategies of teaching/learning L2. It can be reverse of the existing practices. Drama skills can be a strong resource in a language learning/teaching classroom.

Using drama activities helps to bring the (written) materials to life, by infusing the lifeless print with feeling, imagination, and thought for the learner, who becomes an active participant in the learning process (Wessels, 1987, cited in Heldenbrand, 2003)



Staging Shakespeare's drama engages a learner in real L2 communication. This has both cognitive and performative value for a learner. It also develops the emotional intelligence of a learner. Playing a role on stage ensures a learner's both physical and psychological involvement.

Epistemologically speaking, the word 'drama' is derived from the Greek word 'dran' meaning 'to do, to act'. In her book, *Drama* Charlyn Wessels defines drama as 'drama is doing' (1987, p. 7). Doing/action is the most important part of drama staging. It accelerates learning a language by experiencing it in action. Learning by doing is the best one rather than merely listening, reading, and remembering.

A Chinese proverb goes like this, "Tell me and I will forget; teach me and I will remember; involve me and I will learn". While dramatizing a scene, a learner as a group member makes both physical and mental shifting on the stage from the real who s/he is. S/He makes life full of movement, gestures, dialogues on the stage. Recreating a character by molding and correcting every time makes a learner involved in the process in such a way that s/he feels developing body language and a clear understanding of using the language for real life. As acting needs creativity on the part of the performer, a learner feels motivated to do the role and it keeps a learner continuously in the learning process (Miccoli, 2003; Gorjian, Moosavinia, & Jabripur, 2010).

#### **4.1 Rationale of the study**

This study highlights the use of drama skills to develop L2 learners' speaking skills. Teachers, according to their pedagogical needs, need to expose Shakespeare to students. To attain particular skills like speaking, teachers can take strategies to make learners personally involve with the text. Using different strategies that involve an understanding of Shakespeare's language through insult, puns, humor can insert a willingness to use drama skills for L2 classroom. Shakespeare's drama skills, i.e. props, gestures, dialogues help students internalize that his dramas are about them, for them although Shakespeare had written four centuries back. By teaching the drama skills of Shakespeare, a teacher can help a learner open a new horizon for him/her to be engaged in the process of discovering the self.

#### **5. Conclusion**

In the 2010 National Education Policy, English is "recognized as an essential tool to building knowledge-based society". It has emphasized "on English

writing and speaking from the very beginning of primary education as the compulsory subject" which to continue to be studied in secondary, higher secondary, and also in tertiary levels in Bangladesh. For the reason of global demands, the English language is an undeniable fact in the country's development of "human capital." To develop human resources in a country developing communication skills is a must.

Preparing the young generation for the professional world is the prime focus of any education policymaker of a country. Education makes a holistic development of mankind. That development includes the mental, physical, social and cultural dimensions of a learner. Our current trends in the education system rarely pay attention to 'non-academic' matters like developing creativity, imaginative power, adapting to changes of the learners. But in the professional field employers like their employees to have 'adaptability and creativity' (IBM survey, 2012, in Irish, 2016) as the topmost skills in the professional world. Having success in exams can not be a real success, but developing creativity and emotional intelligence among learners is very important:

Success is no longer just learning facts; it's about more human skills like empathy, self-regulation, consciousness, and critical thinking, skills that will give children a platform to build a successful, happy life (Steve Hilton, 2015).

Shakespeare's drama skills can help develop these faculties naturally among learners. "Drama helps micro-teaching/learning, drama makes psychosomatic changes among learners" – on the reflection of the use of Shakespeare's drama and their techniques in the L2 speaking classroom, eminent ELT professor Golam Sarwar Chowdhury has commented this way\*. Through staging dramas, he says, "a learner undergoes several physical and psychological changes that help him/her understand his capacity and worth as a speaker of those mental developments. The drama involves a learner both physically and mentally. A learner here gets the best chance to prove his/her imaginative selves in the most possible creative way."

Drama staging and its techniques help a learner learn L2 in an anxiety-free way. Teachers can take the initiative to change the traditional classroom into an interactional one. And they can give scopes to the learners to use L2 in a stress-free way. As speaking is a relatively marginalized skill in our education system, we need to make more options for our students to make more speeches

by themselves. School syllabuses do need to keep options to practice speaking in L2 classes for the students (Khan, 2007, a; Bhattacharjee, 2008). So a huge number of confident students can get enrolled at tertiary level with a good capability of speaking. It is not necessary to follow others' varieties. We can develop the 'Bangladeshi style' of English influenced by its national characteristics.

From the study, it comes out that in the L2 classroom a teacher's role is huge. S/He can encourage a learner to talk in L2 in a fearless way. Fear of mistake and for that losing marks and face is always a haunting matter for a learner in an L2 classroom. Teachers need to avoid negative feelings about learners' mistakes, since there is no mistake there is no learning. The use of Shakespeare's drama techniques makes a positive attitude of the learners to speak in L2. And it is likely that learners will continue this way to learn the language by involving in it.

\*Transcribed as professor Chowdhury reflected on this article

\*Students' interview sessions are also transcribed by the researcher

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Minute by the Hon'ble T. B. Macaulay dated the 2nd February 1835. Shakespeare in India

### Appendix 1.

1. Playing the role of Shakespeare's drama is interesting
2. I liked the dialogues of my character very much
3. Using props like candles was not easy on stage
4. Managing dresses of Shakespeare's time was easy
5. Staging drama helped me be active and think of my role
6. I did not talk too much before doing my role on stage
7. By acting, I learned to speak confidently
8. I like the performance of Shakespeare's dramas more than reading
9. What things have I learned from staging Shakespeare?
10. How could I define the previous 'I' and this 'I'?