

IMPROVING ENGLISH INTONATION THROUGH DRAMA-BASED ACTIVITIES

Jamolova Zebiniso

Uzbekistan State World Languages University,

2nd-year student of the Foreign Language and Literature: English program

Abstract: *English intonation plays a crucial role in effective communication, conveying not just meaning but also attitude and emotion. However, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners struggle with mastering natural intonation patterns. This study explores the use of drama-based activities—such as role-plays, skits, and expressive reading—as a tool for improving intonation in EFL learners. The results show that learners exposed to regular drama sessions displayed significant improvement in pitch variation, stress, and rhythm, contributing to overall oral fluency and communicative competence.*

Keywords: *English intonation, drama activities, EFL, pronunciation, prosody, speaking fluency, communicative competence*

In spoken English, intonation refers to the variation in pitch while speaking. It plays a key role in expressing attitudes, emotions, emphasis, and grammatical functions such as questions, statements, and commands. Despite its importance, intonation is often overlooked in traditional EFL instruction, which tends to focus more on vocabulary and grammar.

Intonation directly affects comprehensibility and listener perception, and incorrect intonation can lead to misunderstandings, even when grammar and vocabulary are correct. For EFL learners, particularly those from syllable-timed language backgrounds, mastering the stress-timed rhythm and pitch movement of English can be challenging.

Drama-based pedagogy offers a dynamic and contextualized way to practice intonation, as it requires learners to perform with expressive speech, varying pitch and rhythm in authentic ways. Through characters, emotions, and dialogue, learners can naturally develop their prosodic features without mechanical drills.

This paper investigates the impact of drama-based classroom activities on the development of intonation among intermediate-level EFL learners.

The study was conducted over six weeks with two groups of intermediate-level EFL learners (N = 36, aged 17–19) at a language center in Tashkent.

- Group A (Drama Group): Participated in weekly drama-based activities, including role-plays, short skits, and script reading.
- Group B (Control Group): Followed a traditional curriculum with standard pronunciation drills and textbook-based speaking practice.

Data collection included:

- Pre- and post-tests measuring intonation accuracy using read-aloud and spontaneous speech tasks.

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- Audio recordings evaluated by native-speaking teachers using an intonation rating rubric.
- Student feedback forms on engagement and speaking confidence.

Assessment Category	Control Group (B)	Drama Group (A)
Pitch variation improvement (%)	+6%	+21%
Sentence stress accuracy (%)	+8%	+25%
Rhythm and pause control	Moderate	High
Speaking confidence (1–5 scale)	3.2	4.6

Key observations:

- The drama group showed significantly higher gains in all prosodic categories.
- Learners became more expressive and less monotonic in both prepared and spontaneous speech.
- Students reported that drama helped them “feel” the language, not just recite it.

The findings strongly support the use of drama-based activities as a tool for intonation training. By involving learners in meaningful, emotional, and interactive speech, drama provides an ideal platform for practicing the melody and rhythm of English naturally.

Unlike traditional drills, drama encourages authentic usage, where learners intuitively adjust their pitch and stress according to the dialogue and emotion. This aligns with communicative language teaching (CLT) and experiential learning, both of which emphasize learning through real-life use and emotional involvement.

Drama also promotes kinaesthetic and affective engagement, which contributes to better retention of prosodic patterns. Furthermore, the group format of drama enhances peer learning and confidence building, two essential factors in oral language development.

However, successful implementation requires careful lesson planning, appropriate text selection, and teacher facilitation. Teachers need to guide students on how to express emotion through voice, not just words, and provide feedback on rhythm and stress during performance.

With the rise of digital tools, drama-based activities can be integrated into blended learning platforms through recorded video skits, voice-over projects, and even AI-based pronunciation analysis.

Drama-based activities offer a powerful, interactive, and effective means of improving English intonation for EFL learners. Through performance, learners gain control over pitch, stress, and rhythm—critical components of comprehensible and expressive communication.

Educators are encouraged to incorporate regular drama tasks into their language programs to enrich pronunciation instruction and enhance overall speaking fluency. This

method not only improves linguistic competence but also nurtures creativity, emotional intelligence, and learner confidence.

References

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