

DRAMA: A STRATEGY FACILITATING EQUAL ACCESS AND ENABLEMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT IN AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**EWA, J. A., OLAYI, J. E., ASHI, M. M. AND AGBA, J. U.**

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ABSTRACT: *It is important to note that students with hearing impairment mostly rely on visual cues for getting information and learning. When practically involved in lessons, with pictures displayed, memory remains fresh and recall of information is facilitated, thereby enhancing effective learning in an inclusive classroom environment. This study was designed to ascertain the effectiveness of the use of drama as a teaching and learning strategy for the hearing impaired students. Three research hypotheses were formulated to test the cognitive, socialization process and personality development of the hearing impaired students through the use of drama as a method of instruction. Experimental research design was adopted. 12 hearing impaired subjects were used for the study drawn from inclusive and segregated educational settings. Six hearing impaired drawn from inclusive education setting constituted the experimental group exposed to the use of drama method while the other six drawn from the segregated setting was the control group. Teacher made test in English language as well as observation technique were used to collect data and analyzed using the t-test statistics. The result revealed that hearing impaired students exposed to the use of drama and picture method perform better with higher mean scores than their counterparts in the control group. Some recommendations were made advocating the use of drama and picture method as a strategy for teaching students with hearing impairment at nursery, primary and secondary education levels to ensure mastery of subject's lessons.*

INTRODUCTION

The global trend in the provision of education services to special needs children today is inclusion. It is the ideal way of making education accessible to special needs children. The aim is to achieve better academic and social integration than the traditional segregated approach and institutionalization of special needs children (Obi, 2013). Most children acquire information easily through oral communication and reading. By contrast, children with hearing impairment build up their knowledge little by little via formal teaching. Hearing loss causes changes in signal processing of the auditory system both quantitatively and qualitatively, and therefore deprives hearing impaired children of many opportunities of incidental learning, which is the main mode of learning for children from 0 – 6 years old (NWL Foundation 2012). It is important to note that both sensory and social stimulations during early childhood play a crucial role on the development of senses and intelligence. Hence, the process of learning occurs under the integration of all senses. Every concept can be learned using more than one sense and method. By doing so, hearing impaired children can learn from different perspectives, experiencing the link among them, from various depths of a concept and foster the ability of generalization.

Moreover, because of new thoughts and perspectives due to technological advancement which have made the society to realize that we can no longer be satisfied with the fact that hearing impaired children cannot “listen and speak”. But we should help them develop their ability to learn and to solve problems, integrate with the mainstream society and become truly independent individuals.

To achieve this goal, a teaching method which applies multiple intellectual developments in the education of the hearing impaired children is advocated for. Therefore, in addition to “individual class; and “group class”, which are conventional teaching methods that put most emphasis on “listening” and “speaking”. Language learning among hearing impaired children should begin with “story” telling class “music class”, art class and/or “drama class”.

This will hitherto enhance the intellectual development of the hearing impaired children with particular reference to linguistic intelligence, logical intelligence, mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, bodily intelligence, musical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence and interpersonal intelligence. Children with hearing impairment can be help to develop their multiple intelligences in an inclusive classroom environment in natural contexts through the application of drama so that they can be equipped with abilities of independent learning and social adaptation which are necessary ingredients in receiving mainstream education in an inclusive setting.

Key words: Inclusive school environment, drama method, personality development, hearing impaired children socialization process, language development and academic performance.

Statement of the Problem

Language is very important to every child. The hearing impaired children are not exceptional in this regards.

One of the major criterion in the education of the hearing impaired children as well as normal children is to provide them with opportunities to be self reliant in the society. To achieve this, freedom with control is needed and this can be attained when they are taught by applying dramatic techniques in the teaching process.

Many regular teachers of the hearing impaired children in inclusive school settings assume that since the hearing impaired children cannot easily perceived sound like their hearing counterparts, their language cannot be developed. As a result of this, they have not been making much efforts at improving the language component of this category of children. But far from this erroneous stance, hearing impaired children have their brains intact and only needed to be stimulated by the ingenuity of the teachers. The hearing impaired children deserved more attention in the teaching process than their hearing peers. The teacher need to be more pragmatic by adopting teaching methods (drama) that will make learning easier and lasting for the hearing impaired children in the inclusive classroom. It is important to note that the hearing impaired children mostly rely on visual aids for their teaching and learning process. When they are practically involved in their learning, pictures shown to them and are ask to make sentences from what they have seen and acted, they will not easily forget thereby enhancing effective learning in an inclusive classroom setting.

Based on this premise is the main thrust of this paper which advocates the use of drama as method of teaching English language other subjects to the having impaired children in an inclusive school setting.

Research Hypotheses

1. To what extent does the use of drama enhances language development (academic performance) of the hearing impaired children in an inclusive classroom environment.
2. To what extent does the use of drama enhances socialization and personality development of the hearing impaired children in an inclusive classroom environment.

H₀₁: There is no significant mean difference in language development (academic performance) hearing impaired children taught using drama method and those not exposed to drama and picture method.

H₀₂: There is no significant mean difference in the socialization process of and those not of hearing impaired children exposed to use drama method.

H₀₃: There is no significant mean difference in the personality development of the students exposed to the use of drama method and those not exposed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Drama and language development (academic performance) Barker (1977) opine that the complexity of drama as a therapy requires the creation and development of dramatic games as a primary sources of the learning process for the hearing impaired children. These dramatic games are not only a part of the therapy but become therapy itself. However, it is not about founding a new discipline or bringing about a new research tool but rather reaffirming several therapeutic approaches after having actually experienced their use. The success of the use of drama as a teaching method requires a relaxed environment to help in the motivation and emotional balance of the hearing impaired children.

In using drama method for teaching (Langley 2006) maintain that there is no precise formula for the hearing impaired children to make use of their own experiences to solve each of their academic problems. Drama creates an atmosphere of freedom that is indispensable for the creative process for the hearing impaired children. A dramatic class must above all be fun and exciting and this involves the active participation of all the hearing impaired children as members of the group; but in addition, the hearing impaired students must be help to develop the feelings that they have really participated in the lesson thereby fostering the spirit of belongingness.

Jennings (1995) observes that drama is essentially a social act. Throughout history, it has allowed better understanding of the capacity of human empathy and identification with others. Indeed the dramatic world is a world where everyone (hearing impaired children) takes active part. Dramatic lesson also offers hearing. Hearing impaired children access to the experience of the body before the verb “being”, by this, even a way to accessed the unsuspected wealth of the mind. Through dramatic actions in the lesson, the mental processes of the hearing impaired individuals emerge as well as symbolic and their images.

Hefferman (2012) upholds that drama has many instrumental features for the hearing impaired which facilitate development in Mnemonic order which causes the stimulation of the memory or psychomotor (control gesture), moral (illustration of the exemplary ethical

acts) either purely pedagogical, (as compensatory according to a work pace of entertainment leisure) where the world of feeling is easily represented in a non-verbal way.

Thus Garguilo (2009) observes that there are “no bad students’ only poor teachers”. He contended that hearing impaired children learning difficulties may result from poor teacher as a result of adopting inadequate instructional strategy, implying that the quality of the learning environment contribute to the learning problems faced by this category of students. Research has proven that the academic deficit of the hearing impaired children can be remediated by exposure to individualized and high quality instructional practices adopted by the teachers.

In the same vein, Greene and Hasselbring (1981) maintain that the development of an adequate communication system is given the highest priority in the planning of educational program for hearing impaired children who have demonstrated significant deficit in hearing prior to the acquisition of a linguistic symbol system (i.e Spoken English), must be based on “best” method of teaching (drama) if adopted by the teacher will enhance language development.

He further opined that without the meaningful language system, the hearing impaired children cannot succeed even in the basics of education.

Langley et al; (2006) conducted a research on the integration of deaf student into the university by employing dramatic therapy method. They adopted the theatrical game approach based on spontaneity, imagination, creativity a source as sense of friendship among deaf people.

The result revealed that the theatrical game sessions shared by the group have created a shared experience that has built and strengthened relationships, favours the development vital language components to discuss the process of interaction among the hearing impaired children.

It must be understood that drama exercises in the classroom are essentially therapeutic acts which enable the hearing impaired children to externalize all feelings and frustrations from the inner being. Drama is a tool of expression by which the hearing impaired child soon realized that his/her actions and gestures has different ways of expression.

Furthermore, the application of the drama method help deaf children to understand that learning takes patience and is systematic in nature. Hence in a drama method the creative process of the play (lesson) must be directed towards a specific purpose (objective goal oriented).

Ewa, (2005) citing Tansley and Guilliford (1977), pointed out that drama creates awareness and creativity in the lives of the hearing impaired students. All creative work has intellectual contents which foster personality development of the hearing impaired children.

Experience has shown that many hearing impaired children are immature emotionally. With the application of drama in the teaching process, they learnt to shed away frivolities. Accordingly drama develops the personality of the hearing impaired children through spontaneous dramatic activities in the lesson. Watching hearing impaired children at play, one realizes how much characteristics is their love of make believe and dramatic play. One observes the fundamental and dynamic part which motion, movement and rhythm plays in

their activities. One is struck by their imagination and by their complete absorption in dramatic plays as it arises spontaneously in the absence of self consciousness.

Langley (2006), observes that dramatic lesson provides hearing impaired children opportunities to develop imagination through improvisation, increasing sensitivity and appreciate reaction to the environment. Moreover, the hearing impaired children are encouraged through drama to use their imaginations in both real and unreal life situations.

Agba (2010) observes that drama lessons provide the hearing impaired children opportunity for emotional re-education as well as occasion for improved social behavior. Many hearing impaired are socially deprived due to their inability to possess verbal language. In most cases their lives have almost been devoid of love, affection and security. They portray a feeling of low self esteem and have little chance to build up better social relationship and ideal acceptable behavior.

He observes further that through drama, the hearing impaired children learn a lot. They are help to develop social relationships and skills as they learn to use play materials and equipment with one another, taking turns to lead and to follow, to ask for what they want/deed to understand the roles of parents, peers, professionals and others as the case may be.

Moreover, as the hearing impaired children walk, climb, skip or jump during a dramatic lesson they are exercising muscles and gaining physical fitness. In the same vein, having contact with other non-hearing impaired children in an inclusive classroom environment and the need to communicate with them will stimulate their language growth.

He sums up the values of the use of drama in teaching the hearing impaired children to include:

1. **Reading readiness:** Drama helps the hearing impaired children in visual and auditory discrimination, enriched vocabulary, clarification of concepts, interest in books and reading.
2. **Listening:** Dramatic lesson aids the hearing impaired individuals in discussion, appreciation and enjoyment of good literature, listening while others speak.
3. **Speaking:** Drama aids the hearing impaired children in discussion and planning, ability to speak fluently with/without the use of sign language in front of the group/peers, taking turns in speaking, signing and feeling secure as being a member of the group.
4. **Writing:** Drama as a tool in teaching helps the hearing impaired children in recognition of the values of writing. In the same vein Hefferman, (2012), sum up the advantages of drama in the classroom to include:
 - Drama lesson engages kinesthetic learners (these learn through moving or doing)
 - Drama can boost hearing impaired spoken self esteem and confidence.
 - Drama can be used to teach team work and to help new class mates to bond (inclusiveness)

- Can help hearing impaired children engage with difficult and dull plays.
- Can be used to teach all sub-seers in the curriculum as lesson to children with short attention span.

METHODOLOGY

Design: The experimental research design was adopted for this study to test the viability of the application of drama method on the language development of the hearing impaired students in the inclusive school.

Population: The population comprised of SS2 hearing impaired students integrated in government comprehensive school, Akim, Calabar Cross River State and 10 hearing impaired student in Special Education Secondary School, Calabar Cross River State.

Sample/Sampling Technique: A total of 12 hearing impaired students were drawn from the population using the hat and draw method. The 6 hearing impaired students drawn from Government Comprehensive Secondary School Akim constituted the experimental group while the other 6 students drawn from Special Education Secondary School constituted the control group (segregate).

Instrumentation: The main instrument used for data collection in this study was teacher made test in English language comprising comprehension passages and objective questions.

Validity of the Instrument: The instrument used for the data collection was validated using face to content validity.

Each of the item on the teacher made test were formulated to relate to the hypothesis under investigation

Reliability of the Instrument: To determine the reliability of the instrument used for this study, test-retest reliability was conducted on a similar sample size using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient and the result yielded 0.80 this show a high level of reliability.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant mean difference in the language development of hearing impaired students exposed to the use of drama method and those not. The result of the analysis is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Independent t-test of the difference in language development between having impaired students taught with the use of dramatic methodology and those not taught.

Variable	N	\bar{X}	S	t-cal
Exposed to drama	6	70.0	600	
Not exposed to drama	6	31.7	56.67	3.662

a $P > .05$; $df = 10$, critical = 2.228

Result in the table showed that calculated t value of 3.662 is greater than the critical value of 2.228 at .05 levels of significance and 10 degree of freedom.

The null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is a significant difference in language development of hearing impaired students taught with the use of drama method. Judging from their means score difference ($X = 70.00 > 31.7$) for student taught with the use of dramatic method and those not exposed to dramatic method respectively. The result revealed that those taught with the drama method perform better.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant mean difference in the socialization process of the hearing impaired students exposed to drama method and those not.

The result of the analysis is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Independent-test of the difference on socialization process of the hearing impaired students exposed to drama method and those not.

Variable	N	\bar{X}	S	t-cal
Exposed to drama	6	85.0	100	
Not exposed	6	60.0	80	7.144

a $P > .05$; $df = 10$, critical $t = 2.228$

The result in table 2 showed that the calculated t value of 7.144 is greater than the critical t value of 2.228 at .05 levels of significance and 10 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis was rejected.

This means that there is a significant difference in the socialization process of the hearing impaired students exposed to the use of drama method in the inclusive classroom setting.

Judging from their mean score difference ($X = 85 > 60$) for the student taught with the use of drama method and those not exposed to the drama method respectively, the result revealed that those taught with the drama method perform better.

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant Mean difference in the personality development of the hearing impaired students exposed to drama method and those not.

The result of the analysis is presented in table 3.

Table 3: Independent test of the difference in the personality development of hearing impaired student exposed to drama method and those not.

Variable	\bar{X}	S	t-cal
Exposed to drama	80	900	
Not exposed to drama	65	0	4.247

a $P > 0.05$; $df = 10$, critical $t = 2.228$

Result in table 3 showed that the calculated t value of 4.247 is greater than the critical t value of 2.228 at 0.05 levels of significance and 10 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis was rejected.

This means that there is a significant difference in the personality development of the hearing impaired students where drama method was applied than those where the method was not applied. Judging from their mean difference ($X = 80 > 65$) for the hearing impaired students where the drama method was used and those not taught with the use of drama method respectively, the result revealed that those exposed to the drama method perform better.

DISCUSSION

The findings in hypothesis one is in accordance with the work of Langley et al (2005) whose result showed that the group used in their study have a shared experience that has been built and strengthen relationships, cohesion of the group and enhances the development of vital language to discuss the process of interaction. This view is equally shared by NWL Foundation (2001) which up holds that drama method help in the intellectual development of the hearing impaired students.

In the same vein Hasselbring (1981) holds sway that the development of an adequate communication is given the highest priority in the planning of education program for children who have demonstrated a significant deficit in learning prior to the acquisition of linguistic symbol must be based on best method of teaching that will enable language development. He further opined that without a meaningful language system the students cannot succeed even in the basics of education.

The finding of hypothesis two is in agreement with Ewa (2003) who opined that drama create awareness and creativity in the life of the hearing impaired students which have intellectual content that foster personality development of the hearing impaired students. Accordingly drama develops the personality of the hearing impaired students through spontaneous dramatic activities.

The findings of hypothesis three is in accordance with the views of Agba (2010) who observes that drama provides the hearing impaired students opportunity for emotional re-education as well as occasion for improved social behavior. He observes further that through drama the hearing impaired children learn many things. They are help to develop social relationship and skills as they learn to use the play materials and equipment with one another.

CONCLUSION

From the words of Garguilo (2009) there are no bad hearing impaired students but only poor teachers who adopt teaching methods that will make learning difficult for the students with hearing impairment. The hearing impaired students like their hearing counterparts can do better in all ramifications if my proper medium of instruction/teaching strategy is applied. Heaving x-rayed the benefits accrued to the use of drama method in teaching; it is the quest of this write-up to advocate the use of drama method in teaching the hearing impaired at all levels of education in the inclusive classroom settings.

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