Digital Drama Technique in English as a Foreign Language Teaching and Learning: From Viewers' and Actors' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Due to the emergence of COVID -19, the transition from offline to online teaching also changes how drama techniques work. Specifically, the digital drama technique was used to teach English, when regular classes were almost impossible. There seems to be very little, if any, research on digital drama techniques, especially in the Vietnamese context. Consequently, this study examines how the digital drama technique affects Vietnamese students learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Additionally, the differences and similarities between teachers' and students' perceptions of the technique's impact are examined.

Methodology: The study used a quantitative approach. A survey was used to collect data from 1207 students and 69 teachers.

Findings: The survey revealed that the technique was helpful for EFL students' learning. The participants mostly perceived the positive impacts of the technique. However, differences in perception between teacher and student were discovered. The students considered it beneficial for improving their writing and reading skills while teachers perceived this technique as helpful in exploring new creative ideas.

Practical implications: The technique was approved as useful for language teaching and learning. English teachers are encouraged to use this technique in their teaching in practice.

Contribution to literature: The study becomes a good source for further research to build a more profound theoretical framework. More researchable ideas related to this unique online teaching technique are suggested to enrich the literature in this field.

Keywords: Actor, Digital drama technique, English as a foreign language learning, English as a foreign language teaching, Perspectives, Viewer

1. INTRODUCTION

English has become crucial in Vietnam since it is the language of international organizations of which Vietnam is a permanent member. Therefore, English teaching and learning receive remarkable attention from Vietnamese educators. Many studies have been conducted to investigate the most appropriate techniques for Vietnamese students (Khuong, 2015; Vu & Nguyen, 2020)). One of the techniques proving its benefits is drama (Le, 2019). Most studies using drama in English classes have been conducted in traditional or face-to-face classrooms (Le, 2019). However, the emergence of COVID -19 has required educators to switch from offline to online teaching. Therefore, techniques for teaching English also need to be adjusted to be more suitable for online education. Naturally, the drama technique has also moved online and is now known as the "digital drama technique". However, there seems to be very little, if any, research on digital drama techniques done in Vietnam. This makes the application of this learning technique somewhat baseless. The application of a teaching method that does not go through the actual data can cause bad results for the quality of teaching and learning. Therefore, the aim of this study is to determine the impact of digital drama techniques on the English learning of Vietnamese students. In particular, this study was conducted in a quantitative design with a large number of participants including both Vietnamese students and teachers. Participants in this study were selected based on their experience of teaching and learning using the digital drama technique. Therefore, they will have their own comments or perceptions about the impact of digital drama techniques on the quality of teaching and learning. The selection of participants with two different perspectives, one from the teacher and

the other from the learner has a specific goal. This study in particular, provides the most comprehensive results on the impact of digital drama techniques on English learning. Furthermore, the differences and similarities between students' and teachers' thoughts on the effects of digital drama techniques on English learning were also examined. Students' perception of the impact of digital drama techniques on their learning will be based on their actual experience as characters in a drama. In contrast, teachers' perceptions come from guiding students and observing how they perform and their progress through learner assessments. Understanding the similarities and differences in perception will help both sides understand each other better in the process of learning and implementing the project. As a result, this study addresses two research questions as follows:

1. *How do Vietnamese students and teachers perceive the impact of digital drama techniques on English as foreign language (EFL) students?*
2. *Are there any differences between Vietnamese students' and teachers' perceptions of the impact of digital drama techniques on EFL students' learning?*

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Drama Technique

Drama is referred to as "the performance of a script by actors on a stage in front of audiences". The drama technique is proven to be useful, especially, for language teaching and learning because it is a chance for language learners to reflect their personality, ideas, imagination and feelings and draw on the natural ability of every person to imitate, mimic and express himself or herself through gesture (Maley & Duff, 2005). More specifically, they will transform into characters in an existing scenario and the roles they play may have similar or completely different personality traits from their real selves. Students need to have several skills in order to portray the character in the play.

Various terms for drama in education have been used in literature, including "educational drama, informal drama, creative drama, developmental drama, and process drama. Drama in education is often called as drama activities, creative dramatics, drama techniques, educational drama, creative drama, story drama, process drama, child drama and children's theatre". The common characteristics of drama in education are developmental and educational. It has an impact on student development as well as academic achievement. For many scholars, drama in education practically encourages students to perform an original plot or a story they have read before in an improvisational way to act out the context without translation and to use their own knowledge without resorting to memorization. Therefore, this technique has the potential to give students positive points regarding their language learning as well as their creativity.

In short, drama is often associated with works of art on stage or on the small screen. The characters are presented by the artists and the plot is written by the writers. However, drama is also used in education. Instead of artists playing characters in dramas, students take on the roles. Actual experience as an actor in a drama is believed by educators to have a major impact on students' motivation and their academic performance.

2.2. Drama Technique in EFL Classrooms

In the past two decades, a growing number of subject areas have started to include drama in their teaching and learning. So the field of foreign language teaching which has witnessed a tremendous increase in the use of drama in different contexts (Fleming, 2018). Drama is helpful for the development of learners' language skills (Maley & Duff, 2005; Mokhtar, 2021; Paley, 1990; Ulas, 2008; Zakarneh & Mahmoud, 2021). Especially, Maley and Duff (2005) noted that drama naturally integrates language skills and harmonizes verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication. Different studies reveal that drama enhances comprehension (Tajareh, Oroji, & Damavand, 2017), retention of knowledge (Çayır, Akhun, & Şimşek, 2016) and vocabulary (Çayır et al., 2016; DÖNÜK, 2018). Furthermore, drama positively affects learners' communicative and affective skills by stimulating authentic conversation which helps them overcome their fear of certain emotional, linguistic or social constraints (Brash & Warnecke, 2009). Drama helps learners develop their language competence since they actively imagine and process information through the use of language and other symbolic forms (Baldwin & Fleming, 2003). Moreover, studies also reveal that drama techniques significantly impact students' personal development (Freeman, Sullivan, & Fulton, 2003) have motivational and relaxing effects on students and improve the quality of education (Poston-Anderson, 2008).

Furthermore, certain experimental studies reveal that drama decreases students' anxiety levels and makes them feel more confident and motivated. Since drama provides an authentic communicative environment for

learners (Ulas, 2008). It enhances learners' motivation and self-esteem by providing a conducive classroom environment (Pacyga, 2009). A classroom with drama activities motivates learners to learn and provides them with a relaxing yet challenging environment in which to study. In addition, it helps them to be more confident and express their emotions and feelings freely (Duff, Grellet, & Maley, 1984). Akey (2006) found that students get more success when they feel confident and when teachers use activities based on peer interactions in the lessons. Based on that, it can be seen that drama techniques completely satisfy the conditions needed to become part of supporting students to achieve academic success.

Language and context cannot be separated. Using drama in foreign language classrooms creates an environment where language is naturally used in and through interactions in social contexts. Educational drama incorporates learners into contexts where they are encouraged to spontaneously interact with their environment in meaningful ways (Cunico, 2005). Holden (1981) believed that drama helped boost students' imaginative growth and encouraged creativity. More specifically, the drama technique might stimulate students' imaginative power to play the role of the character that they want to be in the future overcoming their problem of shyness.

In conclusion, the drama technique is used in the field of teaching and learning English in many contexts around the world. The use of this technique has brought a lot of benefits to improve the quality of teaching and learning English. Specifically, this technique is said to have a good impact on students' linguistic competence, language skills, classroom practice and other values related to their psychology and talents. Therefore, the use of the technique solves many problems in teaching English in many different countries around the world including in Vietnam during a difficult time caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and unpredicted future disasters.

2.3. Digital Drama

Significant work has been done on digital technologies within drama contexts (Dunn, Bundy, & Woodrow, 2012). Technologies are often used at the beginning of the play to create pretexts for the work (Carroll, Anderson, & Cameron, 2006). Cameron (2009) states that digital media forms can be used "to extend the life of the drama beyond the boundaries of the physical space in which it may originally or ultimately, be enacted" (p. 55). This means that digital materials can be 'seeded' into all phases of the work. Participatory media (which allow for consent sharing) and mobile media have recently provided excellent opportunities for young people to use digital media (Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton, and Robinson (2006). Since then, the drama technique has not only been used in the traditional classroom but can also be used online. The development of online means of information exchange promises to bring a new form of teaching suitable for difficult periods for going to traditional classes, especially pandemics like COVID -19 that may take place in the future.

To sum up, educational drama has been proven to have numerous positive effects in foreign language classrooms. The recent development of information technology has more significant potential for helping language learners learn. To the authors' knowledge, no studies have been conducted to investigate the impact of online educational drama. Everything has to be implemented online, from drafting and revising the scripts to rehearsing and performing the plays. The current study is probably the first to explore the impact of digital drama techniques on foreign language learners from the perspectives of the teachers and students involved.

3. METHOD

3.1. Research Design

This study was conducted quantitatively to collect data from a large number of participants. Collecting data for a large sample is not easy for any researcher. However, given the large number of participants, the study will have the potential to provide a broad overview of the research findings allowing the readers to get an overview of the participants' perceptions of the research topic. Therefore, finding a research design that is favorable for data collection is always a top priority for the researchers. According to Heale and Twycross (2015), a quantitative research design allows researchers to generalize the findings from vast data. For this current study which includes 1276 participants, a quantitative research design is appropriate.

3.2. Participants

There are two types of participants in this current study: EFL students and teachers in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. Specifically, the number of EFL students is 1207and the number of teachers is 69. These participants were selected through a collaborative project between an international institution and a university in Vietnam.

Specifically, in this project, students and teachers directly participated in small projects assigned by the organizers. Students would perform dramas under the supervision and guidance of the teachers. In other words, students would directly transform into characters in a scripted drama. Under the teachers' guidance and explanation of the character lines, students could make the same or different manuscripts. The teachers in charge of guiding the group would observe and ensure that there were no violations of moral or religious values in the play. Therefore, the participants both experienced using the digital drama technique in their learning and teaching. They were aware of how the technique affected EFL students' learning. The practice would help the teachers and students understand the issues.

All the participants voluntarily participated in this current study after a letter of consent was sent to them through email. In the email, participants were informed about the topic, purposes and significance of the study to help them understand the value they may bring to teaching and learning in the context of Vietnam through their participation in this current research. Besides, the researchers ensured that the data collected would be used for this study only and that the participants' personal information was kept confidential. They were allowed to withdraw from the project if they found it inconvenient for the data reported in this research. The above work was carried out in order to ensure research ethics.

3.3. Instrument

For this quantitative study, a 5-part questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants. Participants' personal information such as gender, age, learning and teaching experience etc. collected in the first part. The four following features aim to investigate the participants' perceptions of the technique's impact on students' linguistic competence (9 items), language skills (6 items), classroom practice (8 items) and others (5 items). A five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," was used for all items.

The questionnaire items were written in both English and Vietnamese to avoid participants' ambiguity. All research team members worked on the transcription to maximize its quality. Then, they sent the works to an expert in the field of interpretation and translation to check whether or not the Vietnamese and English versions were equivalent. As a result, the validity of the questionnaire was ensured. The questionnaire was piloted with 50 students and 20 teachers, who would be excluded from the study before it was officially used in this current study. The pilot aimed to check whether or not the instrument was reliable. Quantitative data were analyzed by Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 20.0 for data analysis. The alpha coefficient was calculated using a Scale test, a function provided by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 and the results ensured the questionnaire's reliability (α=.91). The questionnaire has sufficient validity to be used in the official research.

3.4. Data Analysis

After a month of data collection, the researchers announced that they would stop receiving respondents and start analyzing the available data. First, the research team coded the data into numerical data. Notably, all "strongly disagree" respondents were coded "1", and "5" would be for the "strongly agree" ones. The other responses were similarly coded from words to numbers. The team used a Scale test supported by SPSS 20 to examine the reliability of the actual questionnaire. The alpha coefficient (α=.93) indicated a high level of confidence in the instrument's reliability. Then, a descriptive statistics test was used to measure the average mean scores of participants' responses to the questionnaire to know to what extent the participants perceived the technique to be effective in English teaching and learning in general and in particular clusters, such as students' linguistic competence, skills, classroom practice and others. Later, independent samples T-tests were employed to compare the student and teacher perceptions of the technique's impact on EFL students' learning. The researchers were confident that there is a significant difference between students' and teachers' perceptions if the p value was less than .05 and vice versa. The research team then interpreted the data based on the results of the similarities and differences in the participants' perceptions.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Participants' Perceptions of the Impact of Digital Drama Technique on EFL Students' Learning

Table 1 shows the results of the descriptive statistics test on the participants' perceptions of the impact of the digital drama technique on EFL students' learning.

Based on the results, the participants perceived the technique to be effective in EFL students' learning (M=4.16). In addition, mean scores showed that the participants did not assess the technique that had impact on linguistic competence (M=4.17), language skills (M=4.07) or classroom practice (M=4.16), but the technique

was perceived to be useful for other benefits, such as students' creativity and other talents (M=4.23). This raises concerns about whether this technique is suitable for language teaching because its impact on issues related to students' linguistics is not superior to other effects. However, having a closer look at the mean scores for each cluster, it can be seen that the participants were highly motivated by the technique's impact on students' language development. Therefore, the technique was considered by the participants to be helpful for EFL students' learning.

Table 1. Participants' perceptions of the impact of digital drama technique on EFL students' learning (N=1276).

Types of impact	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Linguistic competence	1.00	5.00	4.17	0.64
Language skills	1.00	5.00	4.07	0.68
Classroom practice	1.00	5.00	4.16	0.67
Others	1.00	5.00	4.23	0.69
Total	1.00	5.00	4.16	0.62

4.2. Comparison between Student and Teacher Perceptions of the Impact of Digital Drama Technique on EFL Students' Linguistic Competence

An independent sample t-test was used to check whether there was a significant difference between the students' and teachers' perceptions of the impact of digital drama technique on EFL students' linguistic competence. The test results are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison between student and teacher perceptions of the impact of digital drama technique on EFL students' linguistic competence.

Positive impact of the technique on students' linguistic competence	Participants	N	Mean	SD	SEM	P
Improve students' English speaking skills.	Ss	1207	4.34	0.73	0.02	0.81
	Ts	69	4.36	0.66	0.08	
Improve students' English listening skills.	Ss	1207	4.04	0.83	0.02	0.20
	Ts	69	4.17	0.69	0.08	
Improve students' English reading skills.	Ss	1207	4.19	0.82	0.02	0.00
	Ts	69	3.51	0.93	0.11	
Improve students' English writing skills.	Ss	1207	3.88	0.91	0.03	0.00
	Ts	69	3.41	0.98	0.12	
Improve students' English grammar knowledge.	Ss	1207	4.03	0.85	0.02	0.00
	Ts	69	3.61	0.81	0.10	
Improve students' English pronunciation.	Ss	1207	4.32	0.75	0.02	0.20
	Ts	69	4.43	0.61	0.07	
Provide students with an opportunity to use language in more meaningful situations.	Ss	1207	4.30	0.76	0.02	0.02
	Ts	69	4.52	0.58	0.07	
Allow students to use English meaningfully and purposefully.	Ss	1207	4.22	0.78	0.02	0.01
	Ts	69	4.46	0.58	0.07	
Help students understand and learn new English vocabulary words.	Ss	1207	4.27	0.76	0.02	0.33
	Ts	69	4.36	0.64	0.08	
Linguistic competence	Ss	1207	4.18	0.65	0.02	0.21
	Ts	69	4.09	0.53	0.06	

Note: Ss = Students & Ts = Teachers.

In general, there was no significant difference between the student and teacher perceptions of the impact of the digital drama technique on EFL students' linguistic competence (MSs=4.18; MTs=4.09; p=.21). However, significant differences were found in their perceptions of the technique's impact on students' reading skills (MSs=4.19; MTs=3.51; p=.00), writing skills (MSs=3.88; MTs=3.41; p=.00), grammar knowledge (MSs=4.03; MTs=3.61; p=.00), chances of using authentic English (MSs=4.30; MTs=4.52; p=.02) and meaningful and purposeful use of English (MSs=4.22; MTs=4.46; p=.01). Particularly, students thought this technique was more helpful for EFL students' reading skills, writing skills and grammar knowledge than how the teachers perceived

it. Conversely, the teachers perceived the technique as a good source for providing EFL students with good chances to use authentic English in a meaningful and purposeful environment.

4.3. Comparison between Student and Teacher Perceptions of the Impact of Digital Drama Technique on EFL Students' Skills

Table 3 displays the results of an independent sample. A t-test was used to check whether or not there was a significant difference between student and teacher perceptions of the impact of digital drama technique on EFL students' skills.

Table 3. Comparison between student and teacher perceptions of the impact of digital drama technique on EFL students' skills.

Positive impact of the technique on students' skills	Participants	N	Mean	SD	SEM	P
Foster students' problem-solving skills	Ss	1207	3.93	0.83	0.02	0.66
	Ts	69	3.97	0.77	0.09	
Improve students' communication skills	Ss	1207	4.24	0.78	0.02	0.06
	Ts	69	4.42	0.70	0.08	
Develop students' critical thinking skills	Ss	1207	4.00	0.87	0.03	0.68
	Ts	69	4.04	0.83	0.10	
Improve students' collaboration skills	Ss	1207	4.32	0.76	0.02	0.58
	Ts	69	4.38	0.77	0.09	
Stimulate students to learn many physical skills	Ss	1207	3.82	0.97	0.03	0.05
	Ts	69	4.01	0.78	0.09	
Develop students' intercultural competence	Ss	1207	4.10	0.82	0.02	0.20
	Ts	69	4.23	0.84	0.10	
Skills	Ss	1207	4.07	0.68	0.02	0.20
	Ts	69	4.18	0.60	0.07	

Note: Ss = Students & Ts = Teachers.

The digital drama technique on EFL students' skills was perceived positively by both teachers and students (MSs=4.07; MTs=4.18; p=0.20). However, regarding the effects of digital drama technique on students' motivation to learn physical skills, there was a significant difference (p=.05). Particularly, the teachers perceived the technique to be more effective in stimulating them to learn physical skills than what the students did (MSs=3.82 < MTs=4.01). This result shows the difference in perception of two subjects in two different positions in the project. The teachers believed that transforming into characters would require students to use more body language. This will help students develop physical skills while speaking English. However, the character transformation was not truly appreciated by students in terms of its impact on their body language. This may be due to the way drama is made through webcam. The students would not be able to move too much because most of what they do is sit in front of the webcam and use a little upper body movement.

4.4. Comparison between Student and Teacher Perceptions of the Impact of Digital Drama Technique on EFL Students' Classroom Practice

An independent sample t -test was used to check student and teacher perceptions of the impact of the digital drama technique on EFL students' practice. Table 4 shows the test results.

There was no significant difference related to the student and teacher perceptions of the impact of digital drama technique on EFL students' classroom practice in general (MSs=4.16; MTs=4.17; p=0.96). Also, no difference was found in the impact of digital drama technique on particular aspects of EFL students' classroom practice between student and teacher perceptions (p>.05). It means that students and teachers had quite similar views on the impact of the digital drama technique on students' classroom practice.

More specifically, through teachers' observations and direct experiences with students, they suggested that the digital drama technique positively impacts students' responsibility for learning, motivation, class participation, self-esteem and use of authentic language. Participating in a project requires EFL students to work in groups to be able to give a good performance. Therefore, it is not for them to do it for themselves, so students must be aware of their need to do well, without adversely affecting the whole group's results. This awareness helps them improve their learning attitude and responsibility. In addition, performing a drama is like recreating a part of real life. Therefore, it increases students' use of authentic languages.

Table 4. Comparison between student and teacher perceptions of the impact of digital drama technique on EFL students' classroom practice.

Positive impacts of the technique on students' classroom practice	Participants	N	Mean	SD	SEM	P
Encourage students to take a greater role and responsibility in the learning.	Ss	1207	4.18	0.81	0.02	0.12
	Ts	69	4.03	0.77	0.09	
Strengthen students' willingness to work constructively and seriously.	Ss	1207	4.17	0.79	0.02	0.60
	Ts	69	4.12	0.81	0.10	
Stimulate students to participate in the learning process.	Ss	1207	4.17	0.80	0.02	0.31
	Ts	69	4.28	0.73	0.09	
Encourage students to overcome the problem of fear.	Ss	1207	4.18	0.83	0.02	0.66
	Ts	69	4.13	0.77	0.09	
Provide students with the opportunity to discuss sensitive topics.	Ss	1207	4.08	0.86	0.03	0.19
	Ts	69	3.94	0.80	0.10	
Help shy students to more active in their drama participation.	Ss	1207	4.08	0.86	0.03	0.07
	Ts	69	4.28	0.71	0.09	
Create a vibrant, familiar and enjoyable environment for both students and teachers.	Ss	1207	4.22	0.80	0.02	0.13
	Ts	69	4.36	0.64	0.08	
Help bridge the gap between the classroom and real life situations.	Ss	1207	4.22	0.80	0.02	0.86
	Ts	69	4.20	0.66	0.08	
Classroom Practice	Ss	1207	4.16	0.68	0.02	0.96
	Ts	69	4.17	0.58	0.07	

Note: Ss = Students & Ts = Teachers.

4.5. Comparison between Student and Teacher Perceptions of the Additional Impact of Digital Drama Technique

Table 5 presents the results of an independent sample t-test to check the student and teacher perceptions of the additional impact of the digital drama technique were different.

Table 5. Comparison between student and teacher perceptions of the additional impact of digital drama technique.

Other positive impacts of the technique on students' learning	Participants	N	Mean	SD	SEM	p
Boost students' imaginative growth.	Ss	1207	4.22	0.81	0.02	0.89
	Ts	69	4.20	0.76	0.09	
Encourage students' creativity.	Ss	1207	4.22	0.79	0.02	0.11
	Ts	69	4.38	0.77	0.09	
Help students become more confident in using English.	Ss	1207	4.27	0.76	0.02	0.57
	Ts	69	4.32	0.68	0.08	
Give students opportunities to express their thoughts, emotions and feelings.	Ss	1207	4.22	0.80	0.02	0.96
	Ts	69	4.22	0.70	0.09	
Explore the potential of creative students.	Ss	1207	4.20	0.81	0.02	0.01
	Ts	69	4.45	0.61	0.07	
Others	Ss	1207	4.23	0.69	0.02	0.31
	Ts	69	4.31	0.57	0.07	

Note: Ss = Students & Ts = Teachers.

The test results indicate that the students and teachers did not perceive the other impact of the digital drama technique on EFL students' learning differently (p=.31). However, teachers perceived the technique to be more effective for exploring the potential of creative students than it was perceived by the students (MSs=4.20; MTs=4.45; p=.01). According to the mean scores, both participants strongly agreed on the positive impact of the technique on student learning. However, for the p-value, the teachers had a higher agreement than their students. This proves that observation has helped teachers determine which students are more creative than their self-assessments. Sometimes, students may not fully understand their potential, leading to a lack of confidence in them. Teachers will be able to know more potential students and encourage them to be more courageous by using this technique.

5. DISCUSSION

In general, though the technique was run digitally, it was considered to offer a positive impact on EFL students' learning as the original drama technique has been approved in previous studies (Maley & Duff, 2005; Paley, 1990; Ulas, 2008)). At a time when the impact of the COVID -19 pandemic is still present, the value of the digital drama technique is even more appreciated. The results would encourage EFL teachers to use this technique, even in this digital world. The COVID -19 pandemic's negative impacts on education have provided educators that have improved their understanding of how learning and teaching should function (Pura, Gustilo, & Biermeier, 2022). Traditional or face-to-face classes seem to be significantly challenged in these difficult times. As a result, digital teaching and learning should be considered the alternative. More importantly, attention should be given to teaching and learning techniques in digital classrooms. According to the findings of this current study, the digital drama technique showed its potential as a helpful technique for the new learning and teaching era.

Although most of the benefits of the digital drama technique listed in this current study were perceived similarly by teachers and students after using it in English classes. They had a considerable number of differences in their perceptions of how the technique is effective for EFL students' learning. For instance, the students were more confident in the positive impact of the technique on their reading, writing and grammatical knowledge than their teachers were. On the other hand, the teachers perceived the technique to be effective, providing students with more chances to use meaningful and purposeful English, stimulating students to learn more physical skills or exploring the potential of creative learners. The different roles of students and teachers in this technique might be the leading cause of the differences mentioned above. The inference above made by the authors is supported by Mollaei, Taghinezhad, and Sadighi (2017). They indicated that students and teachers perceive a particular technique differently due to their differences in the roles they play in the classroom. The students were directly involved in the drama as main characters. The teachers, on the other hand, played the roles of observers and evaluators of the project. The students were better aware of what they learned, besides what was performed in the skits, than the teachers who only evaluated the project but lacked information about the process. As a result, the students perceived their improvement in linguistic competence better than the teachers. Reversely, the teachers had an excellent chance to compare the influence of the digital drama technique to others used in digital classrooms by observing students' drama performances. Consequently, the technique seemed helpful for the teachers to explore more aspects of their students.

6. CONCLUSION

The study was conducted quantitatively with a considerable number of participants including 1,207 students and 69 teachers to investigate their perceptions of the benefits of the digital drama technique in EFL students' learning. More importantly, this current study compares the participants' perceptions to clarify how differently teachers and students think of this technique. The study revealed that teachers and students perceived the technique as positively affecting EFL students' learning. However, they also differed from their counterparts in their perceptions of the specific benefits listed in this current study such as its impacts on students' reading and writing skills, grammatical knowledge, meaningful and purposeful English language use etc.

The findings of this current study are practical for this current period because the effects of the COVID -19 pandemic still exist. It raises concerns about whether or not another pandemic will break out and force everything to operate online as it did in the past. Therefore, training teachers to use this technique is strongly recommended. Policymakers and institution managers should consider organizing this professional development training. Besides, it is also great for teachers to gain more experience using drama techniques in face-to-face classrooms and digital drama techniques in online classes as well. As a result, they will be more aware of the differences between these two kinds of drama techniques and will be able to promote the benefits of each in their teaching.

Furthermore, in addition to giving students the opportunity to work on their favorite scripts in the project, teachers are also expected to be good resources for learning materials. Specifically, teachers should prepare themselves a list of good works that promise to develop not only their linguistic competence but also help them learn more about the culture through the works. Additionally, it is also worth trying to involve the teachers directly in the project as characters in the play which will help them understand the thoughts and aspirations of the students during the project. Moreover, teachers can promptly assist students when they need help.

7. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study was conducted quantitatively to generalize the research results. However, it would be more interesting if the survey could go deeper into participants' thought, which this study is incapable of doing. Therefore, researchers interested in the topic should consider using qualitative data collection tools to increase their likelihood of finding more significant results. In addition, this study focuses on understanding the perceptions of teachers and students about the positive effects of digital drama techniques on learning English Therefore, the difficulties or weaknesses of this technique have not been clarified for users to overcome. Research on the above issue provides multidimensional views of   digital drama techniques. Students in this study perceived that using digital drama techniques would help students develop reading and writing skills. However, the extent to which teachers agree with the above is not equivalent. Therefore, an experimental study on the impact of digital drama techniques on students' English reading and writing skills promises to bring fascinating results.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST
The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS
All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study.

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