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Title: Rola dramy w rozwijaniu kompetencji komunikacyjnych uczniów edukacji wczesnoszkolnej

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Citation style: Gogolin Olimpia, Szymik Eugeniusz. (2019). Rola dramy w rozwijaniu kompetencji komunikacyjnych uczniów edukacji wczesnoszkolnej. "Konteksty Pedagogiczne" (No. 1 (2019), s. 121-146), doi 10.19265/KP.2019.112121



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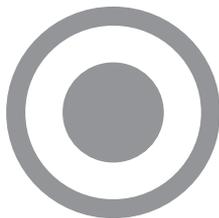
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i Szkolnictwa Wyższego



Pedagogical Contexts 2019, No. 1(12)
www.kontekstypedagogiczne.pl
ISSN 2300-6471
pp. 121–146
DOI: 10.19265/KP.2019.112121



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Received: 28.04.2019
Accepted: 10.05.2019

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THE ROLE OF DRAMA IN DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES OF EARLY PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

ROLA DRAMY W ROZWIJANIU KOMPETENCJI
KOMUNIKACYJNYCH UCZNIÓW EDUKACJI
WCZESNOSZKOLNEJ

Keywords:
communication
competences,
key competences,
drama, early child-
hood education

Summary: The article is an attempt to answer the question of what role drama plays in the development of competences among early childhood education pupils. The theoretical part presents the concepts of competences and key competences in the context of linguistic, cognitive and social processes. Next, the authors briefly discuss the method of drama by presenting the classification of G. Bolton's drama techniques. The practical part discusses the results of tests carried out among teachers (posttest) and among pupils (pretest, posttest, and language proficiency test).

Słowa kluczowe:

kompetencje komunikacyjne, kompetencje kluczowe, drama, edukacja wczesnoszkolna

Streszczenie: Artykuł stanowi próbę odpowiedzi na pytanie, jaką rolę odgrywa drama w rozwoju kompetencji komunikacyjnych uczniów edukacji wczesnoszkolnej. W części teoretycznej zostają przybliżone pojęcia: kompetencji, kompetencji kluczowych w kontekście procesów językowych, poznawczych i społecznych. Następnie autorzy omawiają pokrótce metodę dramy, eksponując klasyfikację technik dramowych autorstwa G. Boltona. W części praktycznej omówione są wyniki badań przeprowadzonych wśród nauczycieli (ankieta posttest) oraz uczniów (ankieta pretest i posttest oraz test kompetencji językowych).

Introduction

Nowadays – in the era of globalization and civilization changes – the broadly understood term “competence” is of key importance. The term originates from Latin, in which *competentia* means “correspondence” and “compatibility,” and the root *competere* means “to get together, agree, be suitable for, compete” (Kopaliński, 1975, p. 510), as well as “to occupy a certain position” (Męczkowska, 2003, p. 693). The term has a wide range of meaning. In pedagogy, it can be defined as “the ability for self-fulfillment, which is mainly the result of effective learning; in the colloquial sense – the skills, qualifications and powers to perform tasks in a specific field” (Kupisiewicz & Kupisiewicz, 2009, p. 82).

Competence development begins in the first months of life. The following article emphasizes the competences taught in the early childhood education process, because, as L. Wołoszynowa points out, “the school performs the function of educating young generations, preparing them for life and work, as well as caring for them, which is why it has to be seen as a powerful development factor” (1982, p. 522). Bearing in mind the above, the goal of our work is to determine the influence of drama on the communicative competence of Polish students in the early years of their education.

While discussing the competences of an individual, we focus on the areas of change within key competences in the process of lifelong learning, identified by the European Union.¹ When selecting the key competences, we paid

¹ The analysis of these competences is annexed to the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning.

attention to communication aspects. Therefore, we can point out “competence in understanding and creating information” and “personal, social and learning skills.” In the case of the former, the language and cognitive competences become more and more important, which is why it is the focus of two out of the three specific research problems we discuss. The third detailed research problem oscillates between personal and social competences.

Before we proceed to the analysis of key competences, it is worth introducing the concept of communication competence. In the PWN *New Lexicon*, it is defined as “the ability to use language according to the social situation and the characteristics of the recipient; together with language competence, i.e., the ability to use a given language, communicative competence creates human language knowledge” (*Nowy leksykon PWN*, 1998, p. 823). Thus, it becomes a condition for social behavior.

D. Hymes pointed out four aspects of this competence. The first is systemic potential, and, therefore, the ability to express something through language. The second is correspondence, or the effectiveness of expression. The third is occurrence, associated with the social implementation of statements. The fourth – feasibility – refers to the social and psychological conditions of the speaking individual.

Key Competences

In the annex to *Official Gazette* No. C/189, the European Union defines key competences as a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Competences in the field of understanding and creating information are understood as the individual’s skills concerning the recognition, understanding, expression, formulation, and interpretation of concepts, opinions, phenomena and feelings in oral and written form. Having these skills is a prerequisite for effective communication with the environment, which also provides the basis for further education.

These competences include the ability to read and write, and correctly understand written information, and thus require knowledge of vocabulary, functional grammar, and language functions [...], [and] the ability to distinguish and use sources of various types, to search, collect and process information, to use appropriate help, and to formulate and express one’s arguments in speech and writing in a convincing manner, according to the context. (*Załącznik. Kompetencje kluczowe... [Appendix. Key competences...]*, 2018, p. 8)

Writing about competence, W. Kopaliński weaves the language aspect into the definition: “in the theory of language, [competence] is an intuitive knowledge of the language that everyone who speaks in the mother tongue from the age of 6 to 8 has a command of, enabling him/her to correctly express himself/herself and distinguish between correct and incorrect sentences” (Kopaliński, 1975, p. 510).

The concept of “linguistic competence” was created by N. Chomsky. In his understanding, the term meant implicit mental knowledge related to the use of the language system.

I. Kurcz, the author of *Psychology of Language and Communication*, considers language competence to be the ability of homo sapiens to acquire language, i.e., the rules for the combination (putting together) of language signs (sound or sign language) into sentences. These rules are different in different languages.

In his model of language knowledge, Kurcz distinguishes communicative competence – the ability to use language according to the interlocutor and the social situation² – apart from strictly linguistic competence. The basic components of the communication competence model are, therefore, knowledge, motivation and skills (Morreale, Spitzberg & Barge, 2007, p. 80).

From our point of view, the concept of strictly linguistic competence can be understood very narrowly. Fully linguistic competence (in pure form) is related only with the ability to acquire language, i.e., the innate ability to form sentences in a language. This means that the language user assimilates the vocabulary and basic syntactic rules but is unable to understand metaphors or allusions.

In combination with communicative competence, language competence covers a whole range of human behaviors³ and emotions, and the attitude towards the people one meets. Communication competence is, in turn, related to the human psychical sphere. These competences contribute to pupils’ linguistic knowledge and their ability to use language.

² The concept of communication competence was introduced by D. Hymes (1980, pp. 41–82). In turn, U. Żydek-Bednarczuk (2009, p. 57) writes that “communication competence concerns the degree to which desirable goals are achieved through communication in a manner appropriate to the context.” See also: Nęcki, 1996, p. 192.

³ The pupil’s linguistic behavior will depend on both competences, i.e., linguistic competence and communication competence.

The semantics of the notion of language competence and communicative competence can be broadly understood. We assume that an important principle that a teacher should follow when working with students at the level of early childhood education in the Polish language is the following: "One understands what one feels." We devoted our research to the changes in the area of communicative competences experienced by students in connection with their participation in drama classes, both in their own opinion and in the opinion of the surveyed teachers.

By cognitive development, we understand the development of skills in the perception, memorization and processing of stimuli reaching an individual from the outside world. The concept of cognitive development is inseparably connected with cognitive processes, which include receiving impressions, perception, thinking and memory. Receiving sensations and perception enable one to learn certain information about the world and other individuals. Thinking is a higher form, while memory processes are designed to store and recall previously obtained information.

From the moment of birth until the second year of life, a child goes through a sensorimotor period, which is characterized by the fact that the child interacts with the environment with the help of the senses. This is why children love to take everything into their mouths and try everything. That is how they learn about objects and their properties.

From the second year of life, children begin to associate the subject with its name. They enter the period of preoperational development. As the child has not yet fully developed her/his speech skills, she or he thinks through action. As toddlers, children make decisions based on their own perception of the world, develop perceptions and spatial imaginations that are self-centered. This property disappears in the fifth year of life, when children begin to realize that their ideas do not necessarily reflect reality, and that their beliefs may differ from the beliefs of other people.

In early childhood, toddlers acquire "the ability to recall absent things and phenomena by means of symbols and signs that Piaget called a symbolic function" (Strelau, 2007, p. 300). At the end of this period, they begin to notice the differences between objects; they can also group them on the basis of their similarity.

In the pre-school period, children develop recent memory and long-term memory. Egocentric thinking turns into intuitive thinking. During this period,

“the development of children’s theories of the mind” also takes place (Kielar-Turska, 2000, p. 104).

From the age of seven, children enter the concrete operational stage.⁴ When making decisions, not only do they follow their perception of the world, but they also try to verify the correctness of their own observations. This leads to the formation of logical memory, which, in turn, facilitates learning. From the perspective of schooling, the key function is also auditory and visual sensitivity, conducive to the acquisition of reading and writing skills.

According to J. Piaget, cognitive development ends in adolescence, and therefore, at around 11–12 years of age. Young people then enter the formal operational stage which Piaget describes in the following way:

[...] in the period of 11–12 years there is [...] in the child’s thinking a fundamental change, which is the culmination of the operations constructed during the second childhood: the transition from concrete thinking to “formal” thinking, or “hypothetical-deductive” thinking. (Piaget, 2006, p. 60)

To sum up, it is worth noting that in the didactic and educational process, one way to stimulate the senses which are the basis of cognitive development is the use of the drama method. This method helps to develop memory, imagination, thought and speech.

By social development, we understand changes in a person that contribute to the fact that she or he consciously participates in life and social activities. As A. Matczak emphasizes, “the beginnings of social development are marked by the time the child begins to distinguish people from things and behave differently to them” (Matczak, 2003, p. 155). Social development contributes to the socialization of individuals and the changes related to their relationship with the environment, as well as their knowledge about themselves. Social development is also associated with emotional development and moral development.

Infants are already learning to recognize voices, make eye contact and smile. They also begin to establish emotional ties with a guardian who “becomes a safe base” enabling the child to explore the immediate environment, including his/her own body, and to gradually become independent (Czub, 2015, p. 49).

⁴ In the phase of operations, “they are able to assemble, reverse, and combine the same elements within a given whole, and express the same material from different points of view” (Przetacznikowa & Makiello-Jarza, 1980, p. 137).

In toddlers, signs of positive social feelings are visible. Although children are not yet able to organize their own fun, they are happy to be in the company of other children.

Another opportunity to make new friends appears when a child goes to kindergarten. It helps to build relationships full of harmonious coexistence and cooperation. It should be emphasized, however, that these relations are not yet permanent and are based primarily on fun. "Particularly important are role games that allow one to discover rules related to a given role. Thanks to this, a child can learn the essence of a given role" (Harwas-Napierała & Trempała, 2000, p. 113).

It is possible to talk about the formation of friendships in the case of slightly older children from around the age of seven. The foundation of friendship is mutual trust, help and respect.

"By entering school, a child reaches a certain level of social and emotional maturity, allowing him/her to adapt to the school situation" (Przetacznikowa & Makiełło-Jarza, 1980, p. 137). At school, children become part of a formal group (school class). Their contacts depend on acquired communication skills.

Peers continue to play a key role for adolescents. "Membership in a group of peers, friendships and intimate relationships give one a chance to get to know better the behaviors and expectations of others [...]. Besides, they are an opportunity to improve the ability to adapt to another person's otherness" (Bardziejewska, 2015, p. 359).

Referring to the key competences in the lifelong learning process published in the *Official Journal of the European Union*, it should be noted that "personal, social and learning skills competences" are understood as "the ability to reflect upon oneself, effectively manage time and information, work with others in a constructive way, remain resilient and manage one's own learning and career" (*Załącznik. Kompetencje kluczowe... [Appendix. Key competences...]*, 2018, p. 10). This requires the ability to effectively communicate in different environments, as well as cooperation, assertiveness, empathy, tolerance and looking at a given problem from different perspectives, abilities that can be taught by the drama method. Drama, in fact, allows students to put themselves in the situation of someone else, and thus allows for a better understanding of someone's attitudes and behavior.

Drama and Its Multi-Faceted Dimension

Teaching by experience is an essential element of the drama method. Drama is a didactic and educational method with a multifaceted dimension; it is a way

of learning through experience and acting based on a fictional situation. This method contributes to the development of imagination, it shapes empathic, verbal and non-verbal communication skills and cooperation. What is more, the techniques of improvisation and “entering the role” used during drama classes make it easier to build a model of life and interpersonal relations.

The precursor of the drama method was B. Way, the author of the most famous work on this method, i.e., *Development Through Drama*. The most famous theoreticians and practitioners of drama in Europe were G. Bolton, L. Chanceler, H. Caldwell Cook, C. Desinan, D. Heathcote and P. Slade.

Drama appeared in Poland over three decades ago. On the 12–15th of April 1985, five English experts in drama, also actors and educators, visited the Warsaw Ochota Theater. The visitors from the Greenwich Young People’s Theater Company conducted drama workshops. The addressees of these classes were teachers, theater instructors and actors. During the workshops, the Britons focused primarily on social drama, which was intended to prepare young people for social roles.

First, drama was mainly used by teachers of early childhood education. There it took the form of quasi-games. In older classes, drama primarily served as a friendly and attractive interpretation of literary works for students.

In the early 1990s, drama began to enter schools at various levels of education, care and education centers, as well as cultural centers. At the end of the century, it was introduced to the core curriculum in all types of schools as one of the methods for activating students in the didactic and educational process.

In the field of working with children in Polish language education, various drama techniques are used, such as: building individual and group monuments, creating sculptures and vivid pictures, pantomime etudes, “entering the role,” mini-stories, improvised scenes or stagings, drawings and stop-frames, along with the strategy of “five levels of consciousness,” and others.

Methodological Assumptions of Own Research

The main goal of the research was to determine the influence of drama on the communicative competence of students of early childhood education in the Polish language. The main research goal was to try to answer the following question: What types of changes in the field of communication skills occur among students of early school education in connection with their participation in drama classes, both in the opinion of the students themselves, as well as the teachers surveyed?

This problem is further elaborated by the following research questions:

1. What changes in language competence in relation to participation in the Polish drama lessons were noticed by the students and by their teachers?
2. What cognitive changes were noticed by the students and by their teachers?
3. What changes in the social sphere were noticed by the students and by their teachers?

In the study, as a dependent variable, we adopted changes taking place in students participating in classes using drama. Its indicator is changes in the scope of language, cognitive, and social competences. The gender and the place of origin represented independent variables.

Test Methods

In the context of our goals, the following research methods were considered the most useful:

1. A diagnostic survey based on a survey technique using a questionnaire as a research tool for early primary school students. We conducted the survey twice – for the first time, in September 2017, i.e., at the beginning of the school year (pretest). At the time, we asked the students about two issues. The first one concerned the opinion of the respondents on the lessons in the field of Polish language education in which they took part; the second related to the self-assessment of the respondents. We carried out the research for the second time in June 2018 (posttest). The survey questionnaire referred to three issues. The first two concerned the participation in drama lessons and their evaluation by the students, the third, the changes that the students saw in themselves thanks to their participation in the drama classes.
2. A language competence test, carried out both at the beginning (pretest) and at the end (posttest) of the school year. The test was to demonstrate whether participation in the drama classes increases the scope of knowledge and skills of the students in the linguistic sphere.

Description and Analysis of Own Research Results

The study covered students from grades I to III of primary schools located in Gliwice, Czerwionka-Leszczynach, Stanowice and Dębnieńsk (Śląskie

Voivodship). In this way, opinions were obtained from people living both in the city and in the countryside.

The research group included representatives of two environments. The first of them were students – a total of 155 children, the second were teachers – a total of 15 people. Among the teachers surveyed, there were only women living in cities.

Greater diversity can be seen in the group of pupils examined. Boys predominated here (50.97% vs. 49.03% girls), as well as people living in the countryside (54.19%, as opposed to 45.81% urban residents). Details are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1
Gender

Gender	Numerical Value	Percent
Girls	76	49.03
Boys	79	50.97

Source: own research.

Table 2
Place of Origin

The Place of Origin	Numerical Value	Percent
City	71	45.81
Countryside	84	54.19

Source: own research.

The first question in the questionnaire was: “What lessons do you like the most?” Students had to mark at least one answer. The boys declared that the classes they liked the most were the ones during which they performed various physical exercises (78.95% from the countryside and 82.93% from the city); cooperated with other colleagues (60.53% from the countryside and 34.15% from the city); took part in shows/games (65.85% from the city, with only 15.79% of the boys from the countryside).

The girls appreciated the lessons during which they worked with colleagues or friends (69.70% from the countryside and 34.88% from the city); performed various physical exercises (66.67% from the countryside and 51.16% from the city); took part in shows/games (53.49% from the city and 27.27% from the countryside); played fairy-tale scenes (53.49% from the city and 36.36% from the countryside).

Detailed data are presented in the tables below.

Table 3
Elements of Polish language classes preferred by students⁵

Elements of Polish language classes	Countryside			
	Girls		Boys	
	Numerical value	Percent	Numerical value	Percent
I was able to take part in a performance/game	9	27.27	6	15.79
We played scenes from fairy tales	12	36.36	6	15.79
I was able to watch my friends play	15	45.46	19	50.00
I was a literary hero (e.g., Ducky Lucky ⁵)	6	18.18	3	7.90
I cooperated with other colleagues in the group	23	69.70	23	60.53
I could draw my favorite literary hero	7	21.21	5	13.16
We drew the verses of the poem	9	27.27	3	7.90
I could imitate the voices of animals	13	39.39	10	26.32
I recognized the sounds I heard from the corridor	4	12.12	2	5.26
I could change the ending of the story	6	18.18	2	5.26
I could finish the story	8	24.24	3	7.90
I created the story myself	17	51.51	15	39.47
We did various physical exercises	22	66.67	30	78.95
I played with an object I had imagined	5	15.15	3	7.90
We drew the correct word in the air	3	9.09	2	5.26

Source: own research.

⁵ “Kaczka Dziwaczka” – a character from a famous Polish poem for children by Jan Brzechwa.

Table 4
Elements of Polish studies preferred by students

Elements of Polish language classes	City			
	Girls		Boys	
	Numerical value	Percent	Numerical value	Percent
I was able to take part in a performance/game	23	53.49	27	65.85
We played scenes from fairy tales	23	53.49	19	46.34
I was able to watch my friends play	7	16.28	10	24.39
I was a literary hero (e.g., Ducky Lucky)	3	6.98	6	14.63
I cooperated with other colleagues in the group	15	34.88	14	34.15
I could draw my favorite literary hero	11	25.58	8	19.51
We drew the verses of the poem	10	23.26	2	4.88
I could imitate the voices of animals	4	9.30	2	4.88
I recognized the sounds I heard from the corridor	2	4.65	3	7.32
I could change the ending of the story	7	16.28	4	9.76
I could finish the story	12	27.91	1	2.44
I created the story myself	8	18.61	6	14.63
We did various physical exercises	22	51.16	34	82.93
I played with an object I had imagined	6	13.95	3	7.32
We drew the correct word in the air	5	11.63	1	2.44

Source: own research.

In the second task, the respondents were to finish the following sentence: “I believe that I am a person who ...” Eleven skills were indicated to the respondents, to which the students were to assign one of three options: “Well,” “So-So,” “Poorly.”

Looking at the answers given by boys coming from the city, it can be noticed that they feel best when dealing with the explanation of their point of view (70.73%), but that they find it difficult to empathize with other people (36.59%).

Pupils living in the countryside feel well in situations where they have the opportunity to use their imagination (63.16%), and poorly in those in which they are forced to pay attention to other people’s gestures (60.53%).

Looking at the answers of girls, it should be emphasized that students living in a city highly appreciate their ability to use their imagination (44.19%) but feel worse about skills related to making observations (32.56%).

Girls living in the countryside highly evaluate their skills of working in a group (48.49%) and their use of imagination (also 48.49%). Among their weaknesses, they mention paying attention to human gestures (60.61%) and memorizing the content of literary works (57.58%).

Detailed data are presented in the tables below.

Table 5
I am a person who...

I am a person who...	Countryside					
	Girls					
	Well		So-so		Poorly	
	Numerical Value	Percent	Numerical Value	Percent	Numerical Value	Percent
uses imagination	16	48.49	9	27.27	8	24.24
speaks out	12	36.36	16	48.49	5	15.15
learns new words	3	9.09	20	60.61	10	30.30
is observant	8	24.24	19	57.58	6	18.18
can explain my point of view	3	9.09	27	81.82	3	9.09
cooperates with others in a group	16	48.49	8	24.24	9	27.27
distinguishes good from evil	5	15.15	24	72.73	5	15.15
remembers the plot of literary works	1	3.03	11	33.33	19	57.58
makes discoveries	2	6.06	14	42.42	13	39.39
pays attention to other people's gestures	3	9.09	10	30.30	20	60.61
empathizes with other people	6	18.18	19	57.58	8	24.24

Source: own research.

Table 6
I am a person who...

I am a person who...	Countryside					
	Boys					
	Well		So-so		Poorly	
	Numerical Value	Percent	Numerical Value	Percent	Numerical Value	Percent
uses imagination	24	63.16	10	26.32	4	10.53
speaks out	8	21.05	25	65.79	5	13.16
learns new words	1	2.63	25	65.79	12	31.58
is observant	11	28.95	22	57.90	4	10.53
can explain my point of view	0	0	24	63.16	14	36.84
cooperates with others in a group	20	52.63	10	26.32	8	21.05
distinguishes good from evil	11	28.95	23	60.53	4	10.53
remembers the plot of literary works	10	26.32	13	34.21	15	39.47
makes discoveries	16	42.11	3	7.90	12	31.58
pays attention to other people's gestures	5	13.16	10	26.32	23	60.53
empathizes with other people	5	13.16	21	55.26	12	31.58

Source: own research.

Table 7
I am a person who...

I am a person who...	City					
	Girls					
	Well		So-so		Poorly	
	Numerical Value	Percent	Numerical Value	Percent	Numerical Value	Percent
uses imagination	19	44.19	18	41.86	6	13.95
speaks out	7	16.28	32	74.42	5	11.63
learns new words	4	9.30	33	76.74	6	13.95
is observant	13	30.23	19	44.19	14	32.56
can explain my point of view	3	6.98	28	65.12	11	25.58
cooperates with others in a group	14	32.56	24	55.81	7	16.28
distinguishes good from evil	15	34.88	23	53.49	5	11.63
remembers the plot of literary works	9	20.93	27	62.79	9	20.93
makes discoveries	14	32.56	19	44.19	7	16.28
pays attention to other people's gestures	13	30.23	19	44.19	11	25.58
empathizes with other people	16	37.21	19	44.19	8	18.61

Source: own research.

Table 8
I am a person who...

I am a person who...	Countryside					
	Boys					
	Well		So-so		Poorly	
	Numerical Value	Percent	Numerical Value	Percent	Numerical Value	Percent
uses imagination	13	31.71	23	56.10	5	12.20
speaks out	14	34.15	21	51.22	6	14.63
learns new words	12	29.27	21	51.22	7	17.07
is observant	17	41.46	18	43.90	6	14.63
can explain my point of view	29	70.73	26	63.42	5	12.20
cooperates with others in a group	20	48.78	14	34.15	5	12.20
distinguishes good from evil	12	29.27	23	56.10	5	12.20
remembers the plot of literary works	7	17.07	26	63.42	8	19.51
makes discoveries	11	26.83	24	58.54	6	14.63
pays attention to other people's gestures	9	21.95	20	48.78	12	29.27
empathizes with other people	7	17.07	19	46.34	15	36.59

Source: own research.

As one can see, what the majority of questionnaire students value, regardless of gender and place of origin, is the ability to use imagination. This is important in drama lessons, where imagination is the key to success.

Skills that students assess the lowest vary depending on their place of residence. The respondents from the city have problems with making observations (this concerns girls) and getting into the situation of others (mainly boys), whereas the respondents coming from the countryside have problems with reading gestures of other people, and thus with non-verbal communication. The drama method can have a significant impact on raising these competences, as the results of the posttest show.

At the end of the school year, we conducted the second survey. The questionnaire concerned three issues. The first of these was the participation of students in the drama classes. As expected, all respondents answered positively.

Table 9

Participation of respondents in drama classes

Participation in drama classes	Countryside			
	Girls		Boys	
	Numerical Value	Percent	Numerical Value	Percent
Yes	33	100	38	100
No	0	0	0	0

Source: own research.

Table 10

Participation of respondents in drama classes

Participation in drama lessons	City			
	Girls		Boys	
	Numerical Value	Percent	Numerical Value	Percent
Yes	43	100	41	100
No	0	0	0	0

Source: own research.

The next question in the questionnaire was: “How do you rate your participation in drama classes?” The answers show that regardless of gender and place of residence, the respondents readily took part in drama lessons (63.64% girls and 52.63% boys from the countryside, as well as 76.74% of girls and 82.93% of boys from the city). The second most frequently chosen option by the respondents living in the countryside was the answer “I liked to participate in these classes.” It was indicated by 39.39% of girls and 44.74% of boys. This option was also the most popular among the respondents from the city: 100% girls and 95.12% boys.

Respondents from the city – both girls (83.72%) and boys (70.73%) – equally willingly declared their active participation in the drama classes.

Detailed data are presented in the tables below.

Table 11
Evaluation of one's participation in drama lessons

Evaluation of one's participation in the drama lessons	Countryside			
	Girls		Boys	
	Numerical Value	Percent	Numerical Value	Percent
I liked to participate in these activities	13	39.39	17	44.74
I was happy to participate in them	21	63.64	20	52.63
I actively participated in these classes	6	18.18	7	18.42
I came up with ideas during these classes	5	15.15	6	15.79
I had fun during these classes	11	33.33	12	31.58
I acted spontaneously	4	12.12	4	10.53
I felt confident	15	45.46	11	28.95

Source: own research.

Table 12
Evaluation of one's participation in drama lessons

Evaluation of one's participation in drama lessons	City			
	Girls		Boys	
	Numerical Value	Percent	Numerical Value	Percent
I liked to participate in these activities	43	100	39	95,12
I was happy to participate in them	33	76,74	34	82,93
I actively participated in these classes	36	83,72	29	70,73
I came up with ideas during these classes	27	62,79	21	51,22
I had fun during these classes	25	58,14	24	58,54
I acted spontaneously	29	67,44	23	56,10
I felt confident	26	60,47	28	68,29

Source: own research.

The last issue raised concerned the changes observed in the participants of the drama classes. The task of the respondents was to finish the sentence: “In this school year, I have noticed the following changes...”. The study proved that regardless of gender and place of residence, the students did not feel bored (countryside: 69.70% girls and 60.53% boys; city: 65.12% girls and 63.42% boys).

The respondents also appreciated another advantage of the drama classes, namely, breaking the interpersonal barrier on the teacher-student and student-student levels. This is evidenced by the answer “I’m not afraid of the teacher, I like talking to my friends.” This option was chosen by 72.73% of the girls and 55.26% of the boys coming from the countryside, and 55.81% of the girls and 51.22% of the boys from the city.

It is also noteworthy that the drama lessons aroused in the students, especially those coming from the city, a willingness to help others – as declared by 46.5% of the girls and 63.42% of the boys.

Detailed data are presented in tables 13 and 14.

Table 13
Changes observed by students

Changes observed by students	Countryside			
	Girls		Boys	
	Numerical Value	Percent	Numerical Value	Percent
I have become more sensitive	4	12.12	3	7.90
I am not bored during lessons	23	69.70	23	60.53
I am less nervous	9	27.27	9	23.68
I can rejoice and grieve with others	17	51.52	10	26.32
I want to help others	2	6.06	2	5.26
I have become more confident	10	30.30	8	21.05
I know what I can do, what I like, and what I do not like	14	42.42	20	52.63
I'm not afraid of my teacher, I like talking to friends	24	72.73	21	55.26
I feel important	4	12.12	4	10.53

Source: own research.

Table 13
Changes observed by students

Changes observed by students	City			
	Girls		Boys	
	Numerical Value	Percent	Numerical Value	Percent
I have become more sensitive	13	30.23	9	21.95
I am not bored during lessons	28	65.12	26	63.42
I am less nervous	15	34.88	16	39.02
I can rejoice and grieve with others	13	30.23	10	24.39
I want to help others	20	46.51	26	63.42
I have become more confident	15	34.88	22	53.66
I know what I can do, what I like, and what I do not like	20	46.51	23	56.10
I'm not afraid of my teacher, I like talking to friends	24	55.81	21	51.22
I feel important	13	30.23	16	39.02

Source: own research.

The obtained results allow us to state that the students liked the drama lessons and were willing to take part in them. What is more, they see the changes they underwent. Drama increases the level of empathy of the pupils and also has a positive effect on their interpersonal relations, even at the teacher-student level. Breaking schematics and monotony, it increases the students' interest in the discussed topic and, consequently, fully activates them in the didactic and educational process.

In order to assess the influence of drama on the communicative competences of pupils outside the survey, we also conducted a language competence test. The starting point was a short text created by us: "Marek and Jacek are twins. They go to the third grade. Marek has long dark hair and brown eyes. Jacek has short blond hair and green eyes. The brothers like to learn." Based on the text, the level of linguistic awareness of the studied students in the fields of phonetics, inflection, syntax, and phraseology was verified.

Due to the nature of the analysis of the obtained results, we provide detailed data in the final part of the article in the form of summary tables.

When making a comparative analysis of the response test given to the first question, it should be noted that students – regardless of gender and place of origin – made slight progress in the division of words into syllables. The indicator of correct answers in the posttest has moved approximately by 10 percentage points in relation to the pretest.

Some improvement can also be seen in the field of inflection. This is especially visible in the responses of students coming from the city. A surprising change can be seen in the case of the boys living in the city. While in the pretest, 14.63% of the respondents correctly answered the question assessing inflection, in the posttest, 36.59% answered it correctly.

The third question of the test verified syntactic competence. Also here, you can see the students' progress. The improvement is independent of the place of residence, but different in regard to the gender of the respondents. A greater improvement was observed in girls (about 9%) than in boys (about 4%).

The last issue examined was phraseology. The results of girls and boys are similar, while the differences are in the place of origin. The respondents living in the city show slightly better skills in understanding the phraseological relationships than their peers from the countryside.

Table 15
Indicators of correct and incorrect pretest answers

Tasks	Countryside							
	Girls				Boys			
	Correct answers		Incorrect answers		Correct answers		Incorrect answers	
	Numerical value	Percent	Numerical value	Percent	Numerical value	Percent	Numerical value	Percent
1	25	75.76	8	24.24	33	86.84	5	13.16
2	29	87.88	4	12.12	31	81.58	7	18.42
3	26	78.79	7	21.21	36	94.74	2	5.26
4	18	54.55	15	45.45	24	63.16	14	36.84
5	17	51.52	16	48.48	24	63.16	14	36.84
6	25	75.76	8	24.24	30	78.95	8	21.05
7	18	54.55	15	45.45	21	55.26	17	44.74

Source: own research.

Table 16
Indicators of correct and incorrect pre-test answers

Tasks	City							
	Girls				Boys			
	Correct answers		Incorrect answers		Correct answers		Incorrect answers	
	Numerical value	Percent	Numerical value	Percent	Numerical value	Percent	Numerical value	Percent
1	25	58.14	18	41.86	28	68.29	13	31.71
2	25	58.14	18	41.86	27	65.85	14	34.15
3	29	67.44	14	32.56	32	78.05	9	21.95
4	24	55.81	19	44.19	26	63.41	15	36.59
5	10	23.26	33	76.74	17	41.46	24	58.54
6	33	76.74	10	23.26	33	80.49	8	19.51
7	16	37.21	27	62.79	6	14.63	25	60.97

Source: own research.

Table 17
Indicators of correct and incorrect posttest answers

Tasks	Countryside							
	Girls				Boys			
	Correct answers		Incorrect answers		Correct answers		Incorrect answers	
	Numerical value	Percent	Numerical value	Percent	Numerical value	Percent	Numerical value	Percent
1	28	84.85	5	15.15	33	86.84	5	13.16
2	30	90.91	3	9.09	32	84.21	6	15.79
3	29	87.88	4	12.12	37	97.37	1	2.63
4	21	63.64	12	36.36	27	71.05	11	28.95
5	19	57.58	14	42.42	26	68.42	12	31.58
6	28	84.85	5	15.15	31	81.58	7	18.42
7	24	72.73	9	27.27	26	68.42	12	31.58

Source: own research.

Table 18
Indicators of correct and incorrect posttest answers

Tasks	City							
	Girls – 43				Boys – 41			
	Correct answers		Inorrect answers		Correct answers		Incorrect answers	
	Numerical value	Percent	Numerical value	Percent	Numerical value	Percent	Numerical value	Percent
1	30	69.77	13	30.23	31	75.61	10	24.39
2	35	81.40	8	18.60	33	80.49	8	19.51
3	33	76.74	10	23.26	34	82.93	7	17.07
4	31	72.09	12	27.91	29	70.73	12	29.27
5	16	37.21	27	62.79	21	51.22	20	48.78
6	40	93.02	3	6.98	37	90.24	4	9.76
7	23	53.49	20	46.51	15	36.59	26	63.41

Source: own research.

The study has shown that drama increases learners' language awareness, but one cannot talk about significant progress. Perhaps this is because, as a rule, no language training classes are given for a full 45 minutes. In addition, it is difficult to write a language lesson in which only the drama method would be used.

Conclusion

In this article, we paid special attention to competences developed in the process of early childhood education in the Polish language with the use of various drama techniques. We placed emphasis on communication competence, referring to two of the eight key competences identified by the European Union. Within communication competences, we took a closer look at linguistic, cognitive and social competences.

Our research shows that drama as a method of teaching and education contributes to increasing the communication skills of early childhood education students. In the area of language competences, one can notice positive

changes in the field of phonetics, inflection, syntax and phraseology. One can, therefore, be tempted to say that the acquired skills will bring positive results in successive stages of education.

The greatest merits of drama can be seen in the field of social competence. This method not only breaks the shyness of pupils, but also induces them to actively participate in lessons, elicits spontaneity and influences their interpersonal relations. The changes are visible not only on the student-student plane, but also on the teacher-student level. Thanks to this, students feel more appreciated; it is easier for them to discover their creative possibilities and their level of empathy is increased.

The mentioned values are indicative of the popularity of drama and of the fact that it still remains one of the best activating methods in the didactic and educational process.

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