

# **THE USE OF DRAMA TO PROMOTE ORAL SKILLS**

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## TABLE OF CONTENT

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>ABSTRAK</b>	<b>v</b>

### CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study	1
1.2 Research problems	3
1.3 Objectives of the study	4
1.4 Research Questions	4
1.5 Significance of the Research	5
1.6 Operational Definition of Terms	5
1.6.1 Drama	5
1.6.2 Verbal forms of communication	5
1.6.3 Non-verbal forms of communication	6
1.6.4 Audiences' responses	6
1.6.5 Level of Confidence	7
1.7 Scope of the study	7

### CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Communicative Language Approach	8
2.2 Drama and oral Skills	11
2.3 The use of drama to promote oral skills	13
2.3.1 Developing speaking through drama	14
2.3.2 Developing listening through drama	15
2.3.3 Developing verbal forms of communication through drama	15
2.3.4 Developing non-verbal forms of communication through drama	17
2.3.5 Developing self confidence through drama	17
Summary	18

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN**

3.0 Research design	20
3.1 Research participants	21
3.1.1 English for Self-Expression (ESE)	21
3.1.2 ESE Students	22
3.2 Instrument for data collection	23
3.2.1 Participant observation	23
3.2.2 Interviews	24
3.3 Data collection procedures	25
3.4 Data analysis	26
3.5 Limitation of the study	26

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

4.1 Findings	27
4.1.1 Research Question 1	28
4.1.2 Research Question 2	35
4.1.3 Research Question 3	36
4.1.4 Research Question 4	36
4.2 Discussion for the findings	39
4.2.1 The use of verbal forms of communication	39
4.2.2 The use of non-verbal forms of communication	41
4.2.3 The types of audiences' responses	41
4.2.4 Participants' level of confidence	42
4.3 Summary	43

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 Summary of the study	46
5.2 Implications of the study	49
5.2.1 Implications to teachers or instructors	49
5.2.2 Implications to students	49
5.3 Recommendations for future research	50
5.4 Conclusion	50
References	51
Appendixes	53

## **List of Tables**

- Table 1 Act of communication
- Table 2 Verbal forms of communication which represent elementary forms of conversation.
- Table 3 Verbal forms of communication which represent dialogues that focus on receiving a particular service.
- Table 4 Verbal forms of communication which represent dialogues in the form of formal or an informal conversation
- Table 5 Verbal forms of communication which represent dialogues in the form of discussions.
- Table 6 Types of non-verbal forms of communication
- Table 7 History of participants' involvement in drama
- Table 8 Participants' level of confidence
- Table 9 Participants' opinion whether drama has improve their English
- Table 10 Participants' opinion about the skills that improve most in drama
- Table 11 Participants' willingness to perform drama in English for another subject

## **List of abbreviations**

<b>ESE</b>	<b>English for Self-Expression</b>
<b>MUET</b>	<b>Malaysia University English Test</b>
<b>UNIMAS</b>	<b>Universiti Malaysia Sarawak</b>

## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE USE OF DRAMA TO PROMOTE ORAL SKILLS**

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Communicative competence is regarded as the main focus of second language instruction. Since communicative competence has become important nowadays, there is a good reason to increase the emphasis on oral skills in the classroom. The use of drama is one of the ways to promote oral skills. The aim of this study is to investigate in what ways does drama promotes oral skills which are able to function in communication. The participants for this study are English for Self-Expression (ESE) students. There are two methods being used to collect the data, namely; observation and semi-structured interviews. The findings from this study has concluded that the verbal forms of communication as well as non-verbal forms of communications are being used by the participants in drama performance to achieve certain functions in communication. Audiences' responses and participants' level of confidence also cannot be neglected as both are able to enhance students' ability to improve oral skills.

## ABSTRAK

*Penggunaan drama untuk membantu kemahiran lisan*

NURFARIZAH BINTI ISHAK

*Kebolehan berkomunikasi dilihat sebagai fokus utama di dalam pengajaran bahasa kedua. Sejak kebolehan berkomunikasi menjadi sangat penting dewasa ini, penekanan harus diberikan untuk meningkatkan kemahiran lisan di dalam bilik darjah. Matlamat kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji bagaimana drama dapat membantu di dalam kemahiran lisan yang mana kemahiran ini dapat berfungsi di dalam komunikasi. Subjek di dalam kajian ini melibatkan pelajar yang mengikuti kursus English untuk Ekspresi Diri. Terdapat dua kaedah yang digunakan untuk mengumpul data iaitu pemerhatian dan temubual semi-struktur. Dapatan dari kajian telah menyimpulkan bahawa penggunaan kaedah komunikasi secara lisan dan tidak lisan telah digunakan oleh subjek di dalam persembahan drama untuk mencapai fungsi di dalam komunikasi. Tindak balas penonton dan tahap keyakinan juga tidak boleh diabaikan kerana kedua-duanya dapat meningkatkan kebolehan pelajar di dalam kemahiran lisan.*

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### Chapter Overview

This chapter includes a broad field of the research topic and slowly will moves on to a specific area which is the background of the study. Next, it will touch on the problem statement. After that, it will continue to the objectives and research questions. Then, it will go to the significance of the research. After that, it will touch on the operational definition of terms. Finally, researcher will elaborate on the scope of the study.

### 1.1 Background of the study

Since 1970s, the main focus of second language instruction has been on communication language competence. The goal is to enable students to communicate in the target language. (Larsen-Freeman, 2001). There are four characteristics of communicative competence, namely;

*“(a) knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of the language; (b) knowledge of rules of speaking; (c) knowing how to use and respond to different types of speech acts; (d) knowing how to use language appropriately.”*

Richards, Platt and Weber (1985) as stated in Nunan (1999).

In other words, students need knowledge of the linguistics forms, meanings and functions. They need to know many different forms that can be used to perform different function in communication. In communicative language approach, students are actively engaged in negotiating meaning with others- they need to understand others and make

themselves being understood by others even though they did not have sufficient knowledge on the target language. (Larsen-Freeman, 2001). Therefore, it can be said that Communicative Language Approach are suitable for beginner to advanced students in the target language learning. It is one effective way to achieve communicative competence as to compare with another approach such as Silent-Way or Desuggestopedia.

Since communicative competence has become useable nowadays, there is a good reason to increase the emphasis on oral skills in the classroom. Oral skills can be defined as *“the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal (spoken) and nonverbal (unspoken) symbols in a variety of contexts.”* (Chaney & Tamara, 1998) Building and sharing meaning are important processes in defining oral communication skills. In building meaning process, speakers and listeners are actively engage with their own previous knowledge, background and experiences when they have to interpret messages. (Chaney & Tamara, 1998). While sharing meaning process means the way speakers and listeners participate in the communication process in order to achieve their communication purposes. (Chaney & Tamara, 1998).

There are various ways to teach oral skills such as public speaking, the use of song or recorded text, and debates. However, teaching conditions may not be as ideal as expected by teachers; too many students in a classroom, the level of proficiency of students range from basic to advanced. (Miccoli, 2003). These problems can be solved by using drama in the classroom. This is because drama is a group activity, therefore, teacher can have five to eight students in each group if too many students in a classroom. Furthermore, drama is suitable for heterogeneous students. This is because drama allows students to rehearse their drama presentation and make improvisation at anytime they want. Therefore, students might feel comfortable and confident to talk because they can rehearse their lines. In addition, drama is one way for students to use the language in a meaningful context which they can relate to their own life. (Miccoli, 2003).

Therefore, in order to make it meaningful teaching and learning, Micolli (2003) decided to bring drama and play production into her classroom. Drama is a way to engage

students to use English in meaningful contexts where they are given opportunities to develop “*character’s personalities, motives, and persona, creating a genuine purpose for communication*” and it brings motivation and fun in the classroom. (Micolli, 2003)

According to Ronke (2005), drama in education uses the means of theater for educational use which the objective is to enhance learning processes. The quality of performance is not so much important, but to ensure to what extent students can learn and communicate effectively. (Ronke, 2005). Drama also allows students to take risks with language and experience the connection between thought and action as well as will provides active communication among students and between students and teacher. (Mamdouh El-Nady, 2000). In his study, Mamdouh El-Nady (2000) has discussed three reasons on drama can be an effective teaching technique to be used in classrooms.

Firstly, drama can create “*supportive intellectual and emotional environments*” that encourage students to think and apply their communication skills. Secondly is drama as a teaching technique to promote long-term retention of vocabulary. And thirdly, drama motivates students to learning and use of new language as a medium of communication.

## **1.2 Research problems**

There are many people does not believe drama can be used for adult learners. This is because they think drama is drama is not an activity to enhance learning and it can be used with children only. According to Wan Yee Sam (1990), there are several disadvantages of using drama in language classrooms. These disadvantages are the reasons why teachers are avoid drama in their classrooms.

Firstly, the drama activity is artificial. Richards, 1985 as stated in Wan Yee Sam (1990) observed that although role-play is supposed to provide authentic situations for students to use language, the situations sometimes created were artificial and not relevant to the needs of the students. Secondly, some people believed that drama activities make students having too much fun where at the end of the lesson, no learning is taking place.

Thirdly, drama activities can cause embarrassment especially among adult learners. Therefore, it is often seen drama only being used to children and not for adult learners.

Therefore, in this study, the problem to be investigated is in what ways does drama will promotes oral skills which are able to function in communication. This study will determine the use of verbal forms of communication as well as non-verbal forms of communications to enhance their needs in improving speaking skills.

This study also will investigate students' confidence in performs drama. In drama activity, students might encounter various situation such as being kidnapped by the alien, being a waiter or customer, etc. Therefore, the researcher wants to know whether they are confident to act as all of them are adult learners.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

There are four objectives for this study:

**1.3.1** To find out the use of verbal forms of communication whether they are able to convey the function in communication.

**1.3.2** To find out the types of non-verbal forms of communication

**1.3.3** To find out audiences' responses in order to check whether students/ presenters are able to convey meaning to the audiences.

**1.3.4** To find out students' level of confidence in drama presentation.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

This research aims to answer the following questions:

**1.4.1** Do the use of verbal forms of communication will help students to convey the function in communication?

**1.4.2** What types of non-verbal form of communication is used in drama presentation?

**1.4.3** What are audiences' responses towards the performance?

**1.4.4** What are the students' levels of confidence while presenting drama?

## **1.5 Significance of the Research**

It is hoped that this research could guide the lecturers and teachers by providing them with the information and ideas on what is needed such as drama can be used for adult learners with level of proficiency ranged from basic to advanced. It is important to change some negative perceptions towards the use of drama in language classrooms such as drama is for children only and drama is not serious activity that can cater the students' needs. However, drama is one way to promotes oral skills as many students in second language learning are afraid to talk in their classrooms. This might be due to the fact that students are afraid of making mistakes in speaking. However, in drama, it allows students to actively engaged as students have the opportunity to rehearse and make improvisation. Therefore, it is hoped that educators take this opportunity to bring drama in their classrooms.

## **1.6 Operational Definition of Terms**

### **1.6.1 Drama**

In this study, drama is defined as an activity that requires students to use verbal and non verbal forms of communication. Both were thought to play an important role in the language learning process. It is also represent the relationship towards oral skills where speakers and listeners in the drama are able to build and share meaning. (Chaney & Tamara, 1998). In this study, the researcher will analyze the product which is the drama presentation and not the process of drama presentation.

### **1.6.2 Verbal form of communication**

According to Chaney & Tamara (1998), verbal form of communication is words and phrases being used to convey information about purpose and emotion. In this study, the verbal forms of communication in drama are divided into four major categories, namely; elementary forms of conversation, dialogues that focus on receiving a particular

service, dialogues in the form of formal or an informal conversation, and discussions. (Desselmann and Helmich, 1981 as stated in Ronke, 2005). Below are the situations for four major categories in verbal forms of communications. Other examples of the situations will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

<b>Verbal forms of communication</b>	<b>Example of the situations</b>
Elementary forms of conversation	Formulating desires and requests.
Dialogues that focus on receiving a particular service	Conversation involving a purchase.
Dialogues in the form of formal or an informal conversation,	Talking about oneself.
Discussions	Taking a position on certain points of view

**Table 1: Verbal forms of communication**

### **1.6.3 Non verbal form of communication**

According to Ronke (2005), humans that lived three million years ago did not have vocal cords and only express themselves through their body. They use gestures and dance as a means to communicating. In this study, non-verbal forms of communication are defined as the use of hands, feet, shoulder, head, and emotional expressions such as laughing, crying, and shouting. (Ronke, 2005)

### **1.6.3 Audiences' Responses**

The presence of audience is what makes the drama presentation is different from other forms of entertainment such as film or television. Therefore, audiences are defined as persons who attending a drama presentation and able to show their reactions to what is happening on the stage. In addition, audiences' responses such as burst of laughter can influence the actor or actress on the stage. (Wilson, 2004).

#### **1.6.4 Level of Confidence**

In this study, level of confidence are defined as performers' opinion on their confidence when acting as drama encourages the participant to facilitate their self-esteem, motivation as well as self-confidence and good self-image. The high level of confidence will have effects on acquisition of the performers. Therefore, it can be said drama can make people acquire knowledge when the actor or actress are confidence in their acting. (Krashen, 1982, as stated in Ronke, 2005).

#### **1.7 Scope of the Study**

This study only covers the use of drama in order to promote oral skills which the skills involved are speaking and listening eventhough drama is one activity that involve all four skills in language learning. This study did not focus on the process of drama such as writing the script; rehearse the lines, finding the props etc. The focus is on the end-product which is drama presentation.

#### **Chapter Review**

This chapter includes a broad field of the research topic and slowly moves on to a specific area which is the background of the study. Next, it touches on the problem statement. After that, it continues to the objectives and research questions. Then, it goes to the significance of the research. After that, it touches on the operational definition of terms. Finally, researcher elaborates on the scope of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Chapter Overview**

This section reviews some related literature relating to drama as a way to promote oral skills. It is divided into sections with their elaborations. This literature review touches on communicative language approach which this is an approach that commonly used for drama in education. Then, it will touch on oral skills and how it can be related to drama. Next, it will touch on the use of drama to promote oral skills which then will be divided into few sections such as developing speaking through drama, developing listening through drama, developing verbal form of communication through drama, developing non verbal form of communication through drama, and developing self confidence through drama. Finally, the summary of this chapter.

#### **2.1 Communicative Language Approach**

Since the 1970s where Communicative Language Approach take places, the focus of learning the language are emotional, creative, social, physical, and aesthetic elements. The teaching and learning process also changed to more action-oriented, interactive and context-oriented forms such as the use of drama in English classrooms. (Ronke, 2005). These characteristics of language focus and language learning process can be achieved through drama or role-play activities. However, drama and role-play activities cannot be simply done without sufficient knowledge on the approach. Therefore, in order to achieve communicative competence level by using drama and role play activities, there is a need

to understand Communicative Language Approach. The researcher will discuss further on several definitions of communicative competence.

There are various interpretations of communicative competence among education people. Some students may know the rules of linguistic usage, but unable to use the language. (Widdowson, 1978 as stated in Larsen-Freeman, 2001). Therefore, Larsen-Freeman (2001) stated communicative competence as the ability to perform certain functions such as inviting, promising, and decline an invitation. In addition, being able to communicate required more than linguistic competence. Larsen-Freeman (2001) concluded that communicative competence as the ability to use the language correctly and appropriately to accomplish communication goals.

Hullen (1976) as stated in Ronke (2005) defined communicative competence to be ability to use the language descriptively and systematically in a situation where the speaker can understand language spoken by others and also can be understood by others. The reason to understand and being understood is to achieve a mutual understanding between speakers and listeners as well as understand one`s nonverbal actions.

Hymes stated that the communicative competence is the ability to decide on ‘What, Where, How, and Why’ of speaker`s speech, the ability to speak and the ability to respond to a social context. (Hymes, 1971 as stated in Ronke, 2005).

Chomsky (1965) defined communicative competence as “accuracy of pronunciation, range of vocabulary and extent of grammatical control”. In other words, students will be assessed based on their fluency as well as the accuracy of language. Hence, spoken language proficiency involves being able to produce fluently and accurately, autonomous utterances which are appropriate to the context of the speech situation. Fluency may be defined as the ability to get across communicative intent without too much hesitation and too many pauses to cause barriers or a breakdown in communication (Crystal, 1977; Bryne, 1986; Nation, 1991). Accuracy refers to the use of

correct forms where utterances do not contain errors affecting the phonological, syntactic, semantic or discourse features of a language (Bryne, 1988).

Based on these definitions, Ronke (2005) concluded that communicative competence can be defined as the ability to be communicatively competent in a second language based on these criteria:

*“a knowledge of grammatical rules, the ability to give and receive information, the ability to respond and the ability to perform in a communicative setting”*

Ronke (2005)

For this study, communicative competence is defined as the ability to understand other performers as in drama, the performers sometimes forget their lines and tend to add their own words eventhough they have regular rehearsal before the day of presentation. Therefore, it is important for the performers to have the ability to understand others and being understood by others. It is also important to emphasize communicative competence as the ability to use the language correctly and appropriately to accomplish communication goals such as formulating desires and requests, receiving and providing information about time, place and concrete objects, a conversation involving a purchase, talking about oneself, activities, events and experiences, and analyzing problems to clarify facts and find solutions.

In order to achieve communicative competence, it is important to teach English as second language students the ability to communicate effectively. One of the ways to teach students to communicate effectively is teaching them oral skills. In this study, researcher will find out in what ways does drama is able to promote oral skills which able to function or to achieve the goals for communication. The researcher will find out the dialogues that being used to achieve the goal of communication.

## **2.2 Drama and oral skills**

Drama in education is seen as a tool to initiate learning process rather than as art form. It provides positive impact on the aspect of learning English as a second language. (Ronke, 2005). Bolton and Healtcote as stated in Ronke (2005) has strongly suggested that drama can be used to not only drama courses but also as a method for teaching English language. This is because students can acquire the language when the tasks are authentic where students can relate his or her experiences to the tasks. Drama can be seen as an authentic activity where students apply their own existing knowledge to transfer the scripts into their acting such as crying when feels helpless or laughing in a enjoyable situation.

According to Micolli (2003), in order to learn the second language effectively, students should have a reason to use the language. This can be seen through rehearsal done by students before they present the drama. They practice to include body movement, facial expressions, eye contact as a process to establish the personalities of the character and to make it real. They also “creating a genuine purpose for communication”. (Micolli, 2003)

Oral skill is a communicative process involves seven key elements namely (Allen & Brown, 1976 as stated in Chaney & Tamara, 1998) “sender, message, channel, receiver, interference, situation and feedback.”

Firstly, “sender” means the person who initiates a message. In drama presentation, usually sender is present everywhere as it involves dialogues spoken by the actors or actresses. It can be monologue where the performer talk alone or to himself. It also can be dialogue between two people or more.

Secondly, the “message” that the speaker sends to the listeners, usually involves the combination of verbal and nonverbal to achieve the communicative purposes. In

drama, it usually tries to achieve a purpose for communication such as discussing on problems and try to find a solution.

Thirdly is the “channel” which means “the mechanism through which the message is conveyed- sight and sound. (Allen & Brown, 1976 as stated in Chaney & Tamara, 1998) Sight refers to observance verbal and nonverbal symbols while sound refers to aural reception.

The forth key element is “receiver” which means the persons who actively listen to the message and are able to respond to the messages. This element in drama can be divided into two which are another performer or audiences.

The fifth element is “interference”. Interference is one of the most things to be considered because it will affect the oral communication skills. This means the barriers during the communication process such as “physical, psychological, or environmental barriers”. (Allen & Brown, 1976 as stated in Chaney & Tamara, 1998). The barriers include the loud from music, fear, anger or fatigue. The sixth element is “situation” means the place, duration, and background of the speakers and listeners. For example, the place might be at the coffee shop, duration might be three minutes informal talk and background involves age, gender, or occupation.

The last element is “feedback”. According to Allen & Brown, 1976 as stated in Chaney & Tamara, 1998), feedback means

*“...verbal and nonverbal symbols used by the receiver in reaction to a message. Feedback includes such activities as asking questions, making exclamations, shaking or nodding the head, creating facial expressions, varying eye contact, and using gestures”*

(Allen & Brown, 1976 as stated in Chaney & Tamara, 1998)

These seven steps often referred as the SMCR (Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver) model of communication. (Tamara& Chaney, 1998). This model of communication can be related to the use of drama. For example, a character (sender)

sends the message to other characters (receiver) using verbal and nonverbal communication. The receiver interprets the message through his/her prior knowledge and experience. The interference can be avoided in drama. For example, presenters like to use music as background in their drama and this can be barriers between sender and receiver. The other way to avoid or decrease the barriers is through the use of feedback. The feedback includes asking questions for confirmation or clarity, the use of eye contact, facial expressions or body language. This model of communication will cycle over and over throughout the presentation of drama.

### **2.3 The Use of Drama to promote oral skills**

Micolli (2003) has investigated the effectiveness of English drama for oral skills development in a Brazillian university classroom. Micolli (2003) begins with the rationale of adopting drama in her classroom. Next, she has presented the class procedure. Finally, Micolli (2003) has introduced the use of portfolios in order to record learners' feeling, experiences and so on.

The 'English through Drama' course took place in a Brazillian university. The class met twice a week for 110 minutes over 15 weeks. This class is an optional class. Therefore, in order to enroll for this course, students are required to fulfill the prerequisite which is 120 hours of previous English instruction. (Micolli, 2003)

A very heterogonous group of thirty seven students showed up in a first day. They were surprised to find out they would work towards the presentation of a play. The first five weeks were used to do activities such as "getting to know each other, relaxing and laughing while doing voice, breathing, body language exercise, and role plays". These kinds of activities encourage students to take risk in their speaking where they had to take chances, be wrong, look silly, and always never give up to try. These activities also enhance students' level of confidence. (Micolli, 2003). As all of them are adult learners, they actually gain the level of confidence through the rehearsal.

Therefore, students can improve their oral skills as they tried to maximize the use of verbal and non-verbal forms of communication when appropriate. The use of verbal and non-verbal forms of communication based on their own experiences or knowledge such as trying to imitate actors or actresses in film or television or based on their experiences.

### **2.3.1 Developing speaking through drama**

In drama presentation, students play role as waiters, party guests, policemen, parents, teachers; they try to 'act' like them, not "as professional actors, but with the intention of supporting their speech in the foreign language". They memorize, improvise, watch, listen, move, and rehearse like actors. (Ronke, 2005). It provides opportunity to practice their speaking skill.

Drama can provide "unique possibilities for practice, and expansion of the four language skills especially speaking". (Ronke, 2005) In order to obtain communication skills, the learners should have a purpose to speak. For example, trying to obtain information, express his/her feelings and impressions, or establish and maintain the relationships. (Ronke, 2005).

According to Bernal (2007), speaking in second language is difficult for her students. In her article, "Acting Out: Using Drama with English Learners" reflects on the success of using drama in her English Language Development classroom. She shares various steps for preparing a play as a means of promoting language learning and literacy, such as toning activities. Students were assigned to say the dialogues in different tones. This activity will helps in familiarizing students with language intonations as well as improve their speaking.

### **2.3.2 Developing listening through drama**

Another important aspect in order to achieve communicative competence is through listening. Listener in oral skills should participate actively in order for speakers and listeners sharing and building meaning. (Chaney& Tamara, 1998) In drama, presenters are allowed to practice their dialogues to avoid mistakes. However, many presenters will ‘ad-lips’ or omit few words or lines. Therefore, it is important for students/ presenters to listen actively to their friends. Active listening involves interaction between speakers and listeners. If there is no interaction, it can be seen as presenting of information by a speaker to a listener instead of a process of communication. (Barnes, 1992 as stated Chaney & Tamara, 1998). Interaction also involves understanding other’s people ideas and not just one’s own. (Chaney & Tamara, 1998). Therefore, it is important to listen to others in drama performance in order for interaction take place.

### **2.3.3 Developing verbal forms of communication through drama**

Words and phrase are not only meaning of verbal forms of communication. It also involves vocal characteristics such as pronunciation, articulation, pitch, rate and volume in order to convey additional information about purpose and emotion. (Chaney & Tamara, 1998)

In drama, there are many scenes that enable students to express themselves through the use of verbal forms of communications. Desselmann and Helmich, 1981, as stated in Ronke (2005) divide the use of verbal forms of communication into four major act categories namely; (1) elementary forms of conversation, (2) dialogues that focus on receiving a particular service, (3) dialogues in the form of an informal conversation, and (4) discussions. The situations for each category are stated in the table below: