

Using Role-Play Activities to Develop Speaking Skills: A Case Study in the Language Classroom

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Abstract: The implementation of role-play activities leads to better communication skills because students are engaged in conversational activities. Teaching English language through role-play is very influential in that it enhances students' exposure to language which is considered as the key factor to speed up the language learning process. Students via producing speech in role-play activities can have a good command of communicative competence. Moreover, conduct of role-play activities can provide a stress free learning environment where students enjoy using the language. Role-play activities will enable students to gain self-confidence and consequently they will stand a better chance of promoting their speaking skills. Students are motivated to use the language effectively through role-play activities. This study aims to explore the benefits of role-play activities in developing speaking skills. It has been found that role-play activities impact speaking skills of foreign language learners.

Keywords: Communication, Communicative Competence, Motivation, Role-play Activities

1. Introduction

Role-play activities (RPA) are powerful language teaching methods that entail all of the learners' interactive involvement in the learning process. This study aims to prove that learners are enthusiastic about learning English through role-play. The aim of learning through role-play is to improve their speaking, writing, reading and communicative skills. RPA fosters and encourages motivation of learners in an entertaining way and provides a rich experience of language. There are quite many reasons in high favor of the use of RPA in second language classrooms. RPA can provide motivation because they are enjoyable and entertaining for the learners. It integrates language skills in a natural way and helps learners who have never experienced such encouragement before. RPA has a huge effect on the classroom atmosphere and dynamics, thus enables learners to become aware of common mistakes in English. The use of RPA provides great opportunities for students to communicate with each other even if they have limited vocabulary. RPA encourages learners to communicate and express themselves bravely. Learners need to experience a real language environment to promote their language skills, and RPA helps learners to improve their speaking skills through teaching them some routine phrases and common words. Furthermore, learners can develop their multiple intelligences through RPA. It is important for students to work together in a group and interact with others. Some teachers insistently continue teaching using traditional styles and they refrain from using RPA in their lessons. They are worried about how to control class, how to organize and how to build authority during RPA. If they try and see the effectiveness of RPA, they will implement RPA in their teaching process.

2. Literature Review

Role-play is a study in which students act specific roles through saying and doing. Blank (1985) defines role playing as an activity which “requires physical involvement on the part of students. Two or more people “act out” the part of individuals in a hypothetical situation” (p. 55). The physical involvements of students in role playing in the classroom motivate them to learn the foreign language effectively. RPA is mostly conducted in the classroom; therefore it provides a stress-free environment for learners.

Communication in the second language has always been a source of frustration for language learners, yet communicative competence holds an important place in language learning. RPA is useful for learners to promote their speaking skills. Rayhan (2014) puts forwards that “speaking is significant to an individual’s living processes and experiences as are the ability of seeing and walking. Speaking is also the most natural way to communicate” (p.2). Thus, without speaking skills learners cannot convey their messages. The implementation of RPA in EFL classes enhances communicative competence of learners.

RPA has been identified as an extremely effective methodology in language teaching. A high degree of thinking, feeling and moving is engaged and at a later time it aids in the development of skills in language learning process. RPA is a tool which is flexible, variable and feasible among all areas of the EFL curriculum. Through exposure to the target language learners stand a better chance of developing their language proficiency. Dorathy and Mahalakshmi (2011) claim that “role play is a technique in which students are presented with a real or artificial environment and they are exposed to some kind of case or situation and they need to exhibit the same in form of roles” (p.2). The comfortable learning environment created by the use of RPA encourages learners to get involved in real life conversations.

The development of communicative competence is a major problem for language learners. Though learners have a good command of grammar and vocabulary knowledge, they may have difficulty in communication. RPA provides great encouragement for learners to communicate in the target language. Shen and Suwanthep (2011) argued that, “it (role-play) involves such speaking activities as behavioristic role-playing, recording and comparing, and listening and retelling, which require students to repeat the speaking materials over and over again” (p.6). RPA is useful in that it both enables learners to get exposed to the target language and communicate effectively. Learners need to be active in order to improve their communication skills. Luca and Heal (2006) argued that “students played an active rather than passive role and emphasis was transferred from individual activities to communication and collaboration, which allowed flexibility in the delivery of material in terms of the number of participants, the timing and spatial location of the teaching and learning process and also how participants were taught new skills and competencies” (p.474). RPA enables learners to develop speaking skills. Learners see how language works naturally; at the same time, they have a good opportunity to use the language they have learnt from RPA in real life situations.

3. The Benefits of Using Role-Play Activities

There are many benefits of using role-play activities in the language classroom. Using role-play in an EFL classroom is one of the greatest ways to improve learners’ discourse. Dorathy and Mahalakshmi (2011) stated that “role play is very important in teaching English because it gives students an

opportunity to practice communicating in different social contexts and in different social roles. In addition, it also allows students to be creative and to put themselves in another person's place for a while" (p.2). Through RPA learners practice in the second language which fosters their communicative competence. Huang and Shan (2008) state that RPA enriches learners' vocabulary knowledge which is a crucial element to communicate in the target language. Communicative competence requires grammar and vocabulary knowledge and RPA provides learners the language knowledge they need to develop their proficiency.

4. Research Questions

1. What is the role of role-play activities on foreign language learning?
2. Do role-play activities impact communication skills of foreign language learners?

5. Methodology

5.1 The aim of the study

This study finds out the effectiveness of using RPA on improving learners' speaking and discoursing ability. The study focuses on the value and significance of RPA and its application in language teaching. 45 learners participated in the study. The learners were all ELT third year students.

5.2 Data Collection

Quantitative research method has been employed in the study. Data has been collected through a survey. The collected data has been analyzed through SPSS. Cronbach's Alpha reliability has been calculated as 81.3.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,813	10

6. Findings

It has been found that RPA motivates learners to learn better in the foreign language (Q1), and learners are encouraged to achieve better. In other words, RPA develops self-confidence of learners (Q2). Motivation and self-confidence are crucial factors in improving communicative competence of learners (Q3). When learners have been substantially encouraged, their accomplishment in the foreign language will be better (Q4). It has been found that motivation, and self-confidence positively influence on foreign language learning (Q7). This study has suggested that motivation and self-confidence contributes to foreign language learning, it has been found that 29.9 % of the variations has been explained (table 2). And the significance level is ,006 which is $P < .1$, then the significance is at 90% (table 3).

Table 2: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	,547 ^a	,299	,229	,688	1,924

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q4, Q2, Q1, Q3

b. Dependent Variable: Q7

Table 3: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8,062	4	2,016	4,262	,006 ^b
	Residual	18,915	40	,473		
	Total	26,978	44			

a. Dependent Variable: Q7

b. Predictors: (Constant), Q4, Q2, Q1, Q3

The following role-play activity is useful for learners because it aims at teaching noun clauses which has been difficult to learn for most learners. But this activity teaches noun clauses through providing an enjoyable learning environment. Learners through such activities are motivated to learn language skills.

‘Do You Know Where My Book Is?’

Where are my pencils?

Cem : Hey Ali , do you know where my pen is?

Ali: Yes, it is on your desk.

Cem : Okay thanks. Hey Fatih, do you know where my eraser is?

Fatih : Yeah, it is on your bed.

Cem : Okay thanks. Hey Aktug, do you know where my ruler is?

Aktug : Yeah, it is between the books

Cem : Okay thanks. Hey Azra, do you know where my sharpener is?

Azra : Yeah, it is in your pencil case .

Cem : Okay thanks. I have everything I need. Now I can go to school.

Fatih: Hey Cem, do you know where your pencils are?

Cem : No. Where are they? I need them.

RPA presents language materials in a natural way to learners (Q5). Learners through repeated exposure to language elements in RPA learn the language incidentally. Furthermore, RPA provides a good opportunity for learners to learn everyday language (Q6). Constant exposure to language elements and everyday language in role-play activities enable learners to develop vocabulary knowledge (Q8) and language skills (Q7). It has been found that RPA presents the language items in a natural way so learners acquire the language with ease, and RPA contributes to language skills and vocabulary development. 59,6 % of the variations has been explained (table 4). The significance level is ,000 then the model is significant at 99 % (table 5).

Table 4: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	,772 ^a	,596	,556	,660	2,553

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q7, Q5, Q8, Q6

b. Dependent Variable: Q9

Table 5: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	25,764	4	6,441	14,777	,000 ^b
	Residual	17,436	40	,436		
	Total	43,200	44			

a. Dependent Variable: Q9

b. Predictors: (Constant), Q7, Q5, Q8, Q6

Finally the study has shown that RPAs have influence on the development of speaking skills of language learners. Simply put, the study has proved that RPAs provide learners the necessary components learners need to develop their communicative competence. The study has suggested that 51,7 % of the variables has been explained (table 6) and the significance level is ,000 so the model is significant at 99% (table 7).

Table 6: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	,719 ^a	,517	,425	,795	2,101

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q10, Q1, Q6, Q2, Q9, Q5, Q8

b. Dependent Variable: Q11

Table 7: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	25,037	7	3,577	5,654	,000 ^b
	Residual	23,407	37	,633		
	Total	48,444	44			

a. Dependent Variable: Q11

b. Predictors: (Constant), Q10, Q1, Q6, Q2, Q9, Q5, Q8

4. Conclusion

RPA is useful to learn foreign language, because language occurs in a natural way. Learners develop their motivation and self-confidence through these activities; therefore they are encouraged to achieve better in foreign language learning. RPA teaches vocabulary and everyday language to learners. These are significant elements learners need to develop their communicative competence. It can be concluded that, RPA improves learners' speaking skills.

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