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ROLE-PLAYING AS AN EFFECTIVE METHOD OF INCREASING SPEECH ACTIVITY IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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Abstract. The article focuses on the benefits of business- and role-playing games in the professional training process of students. Business- and role-playing games, which are the elements of the reproductive method of teaching, are more conducive to train students' language and speech skills and to develop communicative competence of future specialists. The article defines the goals of this method, gives the classification, structure and content of role-playing games. Features of using of the role-playing games are considered in order to enhance learning motivation of students. The ways to organize and the steps to implement the role-playing at the English lessons are provided in the work.

Keywords: active learning, case scenarios, cognitive activity, communicative competence, English speaking skills, future specialists, professional English, qualified specialists, real-life practice, role-playing game, training motivation.

Role play is cosidered one of the effective teaching methods of increasing speech activity. A role-playing game is a form of play activity aimed at the formation and consolidation of knowledge, skills and abilities in the field of professional communication for solving professional problems using the available linguistic, communicative and sociocultural knowledge. Role play gives the students the opportunity to practise the language, the aspects of role behaviour, and the actual

roles they may need outside the classroom.

The past decades have seen a marked increase in the number of language teaching textbooks and materials which include role play. Teaching through role-playing is a great way to make learners step out of their comfort zone and develop their interpersonal skills. This method comes in handy, especially when you are teaching some professional skills. The role playing approach will help students understand how the academic material will be relevant to their everyday tasks [1].

Role-playing is one of the active teaching method, where the role structure is used. The aim of role-playing is to provide deep and comprehensive analyze of the problem that can appear. The concept of role-playing is defined by some foreign methodologists as J.Revell and J. Laylor as spontaneous behavior of those, who study, their reaction on others behavior, who take part in hypothetical situation [3, p. 54]. Methodologist D.Berne shares the same idea. He defines role-playing as the method when a student has to improvise fluently within certain situation appear in a role of one of the participants [5, p. 427]. Role-playing is divided into two categories: spontaneous or improvisational – where simple situation are simulated and a teacher completely relies on students' improvisational skills. Such play doesn't demand long preliminary preparation and can be simulated in the process of training depending on the difficulties, that release in communication. The plot or case scenario, which is conducted according to the preliminary scenario, has instructions for all the participants with the description of their objectives and even interpersonal positions. When spontaneous role-playing is offered the students are suggested to play out the situations, which they can be involved in professional activity. Topics for improvisational role-playing are chosen relating to students' future profession [1]. The effectiveness of plot role-playing is defined by the quality of preliminary training of a teacher and students. Preparing role-playing a teacher makes up the brief description of the scenario, defines the roles and prepares confidential information for performers, makes up tasks for the participants, gives instructions for active members of the role play, defines time for role-play, settles questions for feedback.

For the role play to be fully successful, each student should be active almost

100% of the time. Coherent speech requires a great deal of mental activity. The listener must show the understanding of the speaker, relate what is being said to his own opinions and needs in order to be able, when his turn to speak has come, to formulate an appropriate, acceptable and understandable message [4, p. 36-39]. This is where role-playing can be useful as an effective technique to get prepared for a variety of challenging and difficult situations.

Speech interaction is an important condition for organizing a student's educational work in a foreign language class, allowing the most complete solution to the problems of intensive teaching of foreign languages.

One of the staples of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching is the role play. Role plays are used to allow students to practice speaking in a conversational situation, build confidence and fluency, assess progress, and put learning into action.

Role plays are often set up to target particular grammar points – simple past tense, future with 'going to', infinitives, etc. – and to test social interaction skills such as negotiating, interrupting, asking for assistance and making small talks. Role plays may be as simple or as complicated as the teacher desires. Verbal instructions, secret messages, gestures and cue cards are all common ways of setting a scene [8].

Role plays are an essential tool to have in the teaching box but it pays to be aware of what type of role play to use. In the classroom four main types of role plays can be used, but it should be beared in mind that there is often an overlap and particular situations may combine two or more of these elements.

1. The conflict role play. The conflict role play puts participants on a collision course and asks them to deal with this as best as they can. Situations might include attempting to change an airline booking at a peak time or asking a noisy neighbor to turn down the stereo. They test language skills under pressure and are best for students who have some maturity and confidence in their abilities.

2. The cooperative role play. The cooperative role play takes the opposite tack and requires participants to work together for the common good. Planning a meeting with foreign partners, defining the list of events for an advertising campaign, brainstorming ways to attract tourists to local attractions are all cooperative role

plays. Often involving 'safe' situations, cooperative role plays are good for gently easing shy students into conversations and for building relationships within a student group.

3. Information gap role plays. Information gap role plays are based around filling in holes in the participants' knowledge. Answering questions from customs officers, asking for timetabling details, making a library card or interrogating a murder suspect are all information gap type situations. If based on the students' real selves these role plays are simple to set up, but fictitious situations may require more elaborate preparations. They are an excellent way to practice question and answer patterns and prepare students for real-life encounters.

4. Task-based role plays. Task-based role plays require participants to complete a set activity such as checking into a hotel, giving directions to a taxi driver or ordering a meal. They are useful for helping students to practice realistic survival English skills and are an excellent way to build students' confidence in their ability to function in real situations [2, p.p. 863-870].

Role play, in which learners act out roles in case scenarios, appears to be used across a broad range of discipline areas to address learning across the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains. The development of a prospective typology of role play learning opportunities is derived from role-play scenarios. The typology includes three categories of role play. They are 'Role-Switch', 'Acting' and 'Almost Real Life'. As an approach to using role plays 'Role-Switch' is a model that overtly focuses on helping students to learn from the inside out, that is to understand the actions of either people or things through taking on the role of being this other person or object. The 'Acting' model of role-play focuses on developing students practical skills through 'acting out' a small group scenario (for example, a patient, a professional and an observer) that requires the practising of a skill. In the 'Almost Real Life' category, students are provided with a role-playing experience, that is as close as possible to the real experience [5, p.p. 427-436].

Role-playing takes place between two or more people, who act out roles to explore a particular scenario.

It's most useful to the teacher and the students to get prepared for unfamiliar or difficult situations. For example, sales meetings, interviews, presentations, or emotionally difficult conversations can be practiced, such as when the participants of the role play are resolving a conflict. By acting out scenarios like these, a teacher can explore how other people are likely to respond to different approaches. A teacher can get a feel for approaches that are likely to work, and for those that might be counter-productive. A teacher can also get a sense of what other people are likely to be thinking and feeling in the situation.

By preparing for a situation using role-play, the experience and self-confidence with handling the situation in a real life should be built up, and quick and instinctively correct reactions to situations must be developed. This means that a teacher will react effectively as situations evolve, rather than making mistakes or becoming overwhelmed by events [8]. Role-play is also used to spark brainstorming sessions, to improve communication between team members, and to see problems or situations from different perspectives.

To set up and run a role-playing session, the five steps should be followed.

Step 1: Identify the Situation. To start the process, gather people together, introduce the problem, and encourage an open discussion to uncover all of the relevant issues. This will help people to start thinking about the problem before the role-play begins. If you're in a group and people are unfamiliar with each other, consider doing some icebreaker exercises beforehand.

Step 2: Add Details. Next, set up a scenario in enough detail for it to feel "real." Make sure that everyone is clear about the problem that you're trying to work through, and that they know what you want to achieve by the end of the session.

Step 3: Assign Roles. Once you've set the scene, identify the various fictional characters involved in the scenario. Some of these may be people who have to deal with the situation when it actually happens (for example, salespeople). Others will represent people who are supportive or hostile, depending on the scenario (for example, an angry client).

Once you've identified these roles, allocate them to the people involved in your

exercise. They should use their imagination to put themselves inside the minds of the people that they're representing. This involves trying to understand their perspectives, goals, motivations, and feelings when they enter the situation.

Step 4: Act Out the Scenario. Each person can then assume their role, and act out the situation, trying different approaches where necessary. It can be useful if the scenarios build up in intensity. For instance, if the aim of your role-play is to practice a sales meeting, the person playing the role of the potential client could start as an ideal client, and, through a series of scenarios, could become increasingly hostile and difficult. You could then test and practice different approaches for handling situations, so that you can give participants experience in handling them.

Step 5: Discuss What You Have Learned. When you finish the role-play, discuss what you've learned, so that you or the people involved can learn from the experience. For example, if you're using it as part of a training exercise, you could lead a discussion on the scenarios you have explored, and ask for written summaries of observations and conclusions from everyone who was involved [4, p. 37-39]. Some further tips can be usuful to make students comfortable in role-playing.

Some people feel threatened or nervous when asked to role-play, because it involves acting. This can make them feel silly, or that they've been put on the spot.

To make role-playing less threatening, start with a demonstration. Hand two "actors" a prepared script, give them a few minutes to prepare, and have them act out the role-play in front of the rest of the group. This approach is more likely to succeed if you choose two outgoing people, or if you're one of the actors in the demonstration.

Another technique for helping people feel more comfortable is to allow them to coach you during the demonstration. For instance, if you're playing the role of a customer service representative who's dealing with an angry customer, people could suggest what you should do to make things right [2, p. 863-870]. Role-play is a technique that allows students to explore realistic situations by interacting with other people in a managed way in order to develop experience and trial different strategies in a supported environment.

Depending on the intention of the activity, participants might be playing a role

similar to their own or their likely one in the future, or could play the opposite part of the conversation or interaction. Both options provide the possibility of significant learning, with the former allowing experience to be gained and the latter encouraging the student to develop an understanding of the situation from the 'opposite' point of view. Participants are given particular roles to play in a conversation or other interaction, such as an email exchange, typical of their discipline. They may be given specific instructions on how to act or what to say, as an aggressive client or patient in denial, for example, or required to act and react in their own way depending on the requirements of the exercise.

The participants will then act out the scenario and afterwards there will be reflection and discussion about the interactions, such as alternative ways of dealing with the situation. The scenario can then be acted out again with changes based on the outcome of the reflection and discussion. The relevance of a role play which has been chosen to suit the students' interests, experience and needs is obvious. It also gives the students a chance to use the language themselves, without the direct control of the teacher. For any age group, aim or type of class, whether it is voluntary or compulsory, every student responds positively to activities, which have an obvious practical application. A feeling that what one is doing is relevant and useful is a powerful factor in increasing the motivation to learn. Increased motivation leads to increased student involvement in the learning process [6, p. 992-1002].

Every language teacher is faced with a similar problem: no learning group is homogeneous. Teachers are always in need of activities that can be graded to suit a wide range of abilities. Role play is an excellent exercise for dealing with this problem. Roles can be designed with 'faster' and 'slower' students in mind. Fairly fluent and confident students should get roles requiring a lot of speaking. Shyer students and those who are not very fluent in a foreign language should also participate, but according to their own abilities. Roles can be created to fit not only the linguistic ability, but also the personality of the individual student. Students with mixed abilities can prepare roles together. A 'slower' student could prepare the role with a 'faster' student, making more detailed notes during the preparation process so

that he had some support when in the actual role play situation. Students are often willing to help each other in this way and should be encouraged to do so [3, p.57-58].

Role plays can be useful not only for developing speaking skills, but for writing skills as well, if it is a group of advanced level students. Extra writing practice can be provided by getting the students to write letters expressing different points of view to the local paper, or formal reports of their discussion, or business letters to different companies and memos to the staff. The follow-ups of many role plays for students of business/management might take the form of letter-writing. Classroom communication related to the work on the case is represented in the form of dispute, discussion, argument, description, comparison, persuasion, and other speech acts.

Such activity directly develops and trains skills of the right strategy of verbal behavior, norms, and rules of the English-language communication. Therefore, the particular method provides both cases and a particular type of educational material and the special methods for its use in educational practice English [8].

Role plays are recommended for teaching English the elder students as it is necessary for participants to have a definite amount of knowledge and skills. It is evident that a particular approach for teaching English promotes analytical, managerial, decision-making skills, interpersonal skills, creativity, oral and written communication skills in English. It also provides the ability to analyze a situation, evaluate alternatives, and choose the best option to make a plan for its implementation. If during the academic year, this method is applied systematically, the students will develop their knowledge in English and get rid of language barrier improving their English speaking skills in real-life practice.

Lastly, it always helps if students are enjoying themselves. Role-plays don't have to be deadly serious affairs, but as teachers we get more out of them if we approach them seriously and tie them in to our broader lesson goals [7, p. 72-93].

In conclusion it should be noted, that role-play is one of the effective and productive methods of increasing speech activity that causes the optimization of teaching process in training professional English. It motivates students, improves their productiveness in spoken language and makes them more confident in future

professional activity. Role-playing imitates future professional activity, contributes to the developing of students' professional skills and habits during classes. The role-playing model allows students not only feel themselves in certain communicative roles but reveals their emotions, intellectual habits and creative imagination. One of the most effective and successful way of teaching professional English for bachelor students is applying in the process role-playing method.

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