

Analysis Of the Use of Role Play to Improve Speaking Skill at Primer Año De Bachillerato

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to analyze the use of "Role Play" to improve the oral expression of students who are in the First Year of Bachillerato. After some observations, it was evident that it is very difficult for students to start, maintain and conclude a conversation in the classroom using English. The results obtained after the study show that the most important factors to apply the "Role Play" in activities that involve oral expression, were neglected in the different stages of the process, so the results are not as satisfied. It is suggested to take pedagogical courses, since the weaknesses detected in the application of "Role Play" did not affect only the development of speech, also the learning objectives in general, and it is also advisable to maintain a better relationship between theory and practice, this will help to improve the professional performance of the teacher and the learning of the students.

Keywords: *Role Play; Oral Expression; Teaching Performance; learning.*

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Aplicación de Metodologías Activas en Estudiantes de Educación Básica Superior con el uso de Plataformas Interactivas

RESUMEN

El objetivo del estudio fue analizar el uso del “*Role Play*” para mejorar la expresión oral de los estudiantes que cursan el Primer Año de Bachillerato. Después de algunas observaciones, se evidenció que es muy difícil para los estudiantes iniciar, mantener y concluir una conversación en el aula utilizando el inglés. Los resultados obtenidos tras el estudio demuestran que los factores más importantes para aplicar el “*Role Play*” en actividades que involucran expresión oral se descuidaron en las distintas etapas del proceso, por lo que los resultados no son los deseados. Se sugiere tomar cursos pedagógicos, ya que las debilidades detectadas en la aplicación de “*Role Play*” no afectaron solo al desarrollo del habla, sino a los objetivos de aprendizaje en general y también es recomendable mantener una mejor relación entre la teoría y la práctica, esto ayudará a mejorar el desempeño profesional del docente y el aprendizaje de los alumnos.

Palabras clave: *Juego de roles; Expresión Oral; Desempeño Docente; aprendizaje.*

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INTRODUCTION

Today the way of teaching foreign languages have adopted innovative approaches that consider students to be the principal character of the process. Everything is intended to do within the classroom is based on the students' needs, interests, age, level and background; therefore, it is the teachers' responsibility to promote meaningful contexts in which students can develop their communicative abilities in the target language, considering always their multiple realities. Nunan (2001) states, Role Play are one of the most suitable strategies for achieving the mentioned goal. For Arham, Yassi, & Arafah (2016), role play is a strategy categorized as skill orientation development, since when role playing students play an active role in their own learning and assume part of the responsibility to improve their communication abilities. For Doff (1993) Role play provides students a deep learning, since learning through role play involves all senses of human beings: cognitive, affective and motoric aspects which are used simultaneously as in real life situations.

A similar approach is stated in the national context; the new English National Curriculum sets the policies and strategies to be followed in order to help students build up their communicative language competence in its linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic components (National Curriculum Guidelines, 2014). These new conceptions are established in all of the components of the Macro, Meso and Micro Curriculum.

A clear example of what was aforementioned is that in the textbooks, for both public and private schools and high schools, there are many speaking activities which foster the development of students' communicative abilities. For instance, it is possible to find: information gap activities, simulations, dialogues, and role plays. The material for practicing speaking is vast and so the situations or contexts where students can rehearsal it; in consequence, with this entire staff available in their hands, it is supposed that students may have a good speaking.

Unfortunately, for most of the students, speaking activities result very complex. Along some observations to students at Primero de Bachillerato at Unidad Educativa "Miguel Ángel León Pontón", located in the city of Riobamba, Chimborazo province, it was noticed that it was difficult for students to maintain a basic dialogue.

The Unidad Educativa “Miguel Ángel León Pontón” is a public educational institution constituted with the mission of providing services of Educación Inicial, General Básica and Bachillerato Técnico Industrial, with specialization in machining and metal constructions, installations, equipment and electrical machinery; and, air conditioning. In the institution there are 3580 students who are technically formed under the responsibility of 146 teachers from whom 13 are English ones.

Role play in this English class was not more than a memorizing activity in which students repeated what was proposed in the work-book with no purpose and any emphasis in developing authentic communication abilities. In consequence, the benefits that many authors affirm that the use of role play has, are not gotten. In this context, the principal goal of the study was to analyze how this academic resource was being used when practicing speaking to determine the principal factors that obstruct the accomplishment of the desired learning goals.

To accomplish this goal, it was used the ethnographic method that facilitated the understanding of the research problem at its natural setting; for gathering the necessary data it was used a survey which was applied to the teacher and an observation. These facts place the study into the qualitative approach and within the English-teaching-methodology area.

The importance and pertinence of the study is determined by the qualified information which was gathered. Information may be beneficial for both teacher and students. Its feasibility was marked by the availability of the necessary scientific, technological, human and economic resources.

OBJECTIVES

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To analyze how Role Play is used when performing speaking activities at Primer Año de Bachillerato at Unidad Educativa “Miguel Ángel León Pontón”

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To identify how Role Play is used when practicing speaking activities
2. To describe the tips to use Role Play in a proper way.
3. To contrast the observation results with the information obtained from the teacher's survey.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study frames itself to the qualitative approach since the use of Role Play was analyzed, with students at Primero de Bachillerato at Unidad Educativa “Miguel Angel León Pontón” and thus, determined the principal reasons why this academic resource was not being effective; in this context the method used was the ethnographic with its corresponding techniques, a survey which was applied to the teacher and observations to English classes where Role Play was used.

Qualitative. - Because it was analysed the use of Role Play with students at Primero de Bachillerato at Unidad Educativa “Miguel Angel León Pontón” and thus, determined the principal reasons why this academic resource was not being effective.

Descriptive research. - due to it was described why the use of Role Play with students at Primero de Bachillerato at Unidad Educativa “Miguel Angel León Pontón” was not being as effective as in other academic encounters, in this regard it was carried out with some observations and a survey to teacher.

Ethnographic method. - this method is considered one of the most useful for the educational field; since it shows real information, and help to directly explore the problem in its natural setting.

RESULTS

The results obtained after applying the survey to the English teacher and the observations carried out in some classes at Primer Año de Bachillerato at Unidad Educativa “Miguel Ángel León Pontón” helped me to identify and understand the principal reasons that obstruct the improvement of the students’ speaking skill when using Role Play. The data collection process followed a systematic dynamic marked by the specific objective of the study.

In the following pages, it is presented the results obtained from the survey and the observations, this information was analyzed and contrasted in order to achieve the first and third specific goals of the study. This interdependent analysis helped me to deeply understand the nature of the problem.

ANALYSIS AND			
OBJECTIVES	ITEMS	INTERPRETATION OF THE GATHERED RESULTS	CONTRAST WITH THEORY
Specific Objective To identify how Role Play is used when practicing speaking activities	Engage stage The topics catch students' attention	In the survey it was stated that for catching students' attention, it is necessary to propose topics that are related to their interests, likes and preferences. This fact appeared to be contradictory with the results obtained after the observations. It was noticed that basically the Role Plays that were performed in the class were those presented in the work-book. One of them was about "Going to the doctor", it was evident that this topic did not catch the students' attention and it seemed that they performed the activity because they had to. From my perspective, this kind of problem generally occurs since in work-books, the factors before mentioned have not been updated. It was affirmed that it is important to, before starting a task, foster students' imagination and make them think about the principal features of the activity. The results obtained in the observation denied this	Kuśnierek (2015) advocates that Role-play can be a very successful tool in the teacher's hands as its prime goal is to boost students' interaction within the classroom. For the author, role play is the perfect activity to catch students' attention and make them practice the language through activities that fits their interest and needs. Harmer (2012), for a Role Play to be success, it is necessary to bear in mind three vital elements: the engage stage, study stage and activate stage. The author explains that in the first phase the teacher's task is to attract and keep learners' attention and interest in the lesson. Students' minds have to be involved and emotionally connected with the lesson.
Specific Objective To contrast the observation results with the information obtained from the teacher's survey.	Role play are related to the students' lives Students decide about the principal features of the activity	appreciation. As stated before, the students did not have the opportunity to develop other activities apart from those presented in the work-book. In	

(characters, material, settings, etc.) consequence, they had only to memorize and repeat some dialogues; activities that do not have any relationship with the metacognitive process of imagination and reflective thinking.

The way how the role play may be carried out and the factors to be considered in the evaluation are discussed It was observed that before starting the Role Playing activity, the teacher encouraged students to “live the role and perform the characters as in real life” and tried to emotionally involve them in the class. But, when the students had to present the activity, most of them were only

stood and repeat the dialogues by memory. From my view, this occurred due to the topics to be role played were not interesting. In the survey, it was advocated that students have to be part of the organization of the Role Play. Along the observations, it was noticed the contrary; the teacher only gave the instructions and immediately the students had to develop the activity, as the dialogues were memorized, the role play was not applied correctly. I assume that this factor influence in the regrettable behaviour of students when doing role plays.

For Arham, Yassi, & Arafah (2016) role play is a strategy categorized as skill orientation development since students not only practice the language but they develop some social skills such as cooperation and empathy. The authors affirm that when developing role play in the class, students play more active role in their own learning, and assume part of the responsibility to improve their communication abilities. Therefore, it results very important to involve them in the planning stage as well as in the decision making process.

	<p>Furthermore, the resources for the role play, for example the scenery or costumes to turn the activity more real were not considered. The students did not have the chance to propose something in this respect. The instructions always were, “practice your role, practice the activity and present it to the class.” I consider that this also affected to the optimum development of the activity.</p> <p>The importance of activating students’ previous knowledge before starting a new topic was highlighted in the survey but it was observed that this did not happen. The new topic and those previously developed were not related. In consequence, the opportunities to develop meaningful learning were avoided.</p> <p>It was also affirmed that introducing the grammar and vocabulary to be used in the role play is important. Effectively, it was observed that the teacher provided the necessary vocabulary to perform the activity and taught the grammatical features which had to be used. This issue is one of the positive factors observed in the application of role plays. It was also noticed that the typical use of</p>	<p>When students participate in the organization on role plays, they have the opportunity to personalize the activity and consider factors that real communication involves (Nunan, 2001).</p> <p>Livingstone (1983) tells that Students' level of language proficiency should be taken into consideration, in this way the teacher can know if the role play requires more profound linguistic competence than the students possess.</p> <p>Shaw, Corsini, Blake & Mouton (1980) highlight the importance of introducing the grammar and vocabulary to be used in the role play. This issue helps students to successfully develop the activity.</p>
Study stage		
The students’ previous knowledge is elicited		
Grammar and vocabulary is introduced before starting with the activity		

	<p>Role Plays obeyed to a mechanical process of memorizing, practicing and repeating dialogues without considering some authentic communication factors such as: intonation, rhythm, stress, and body language.</p> <p>In the same context, students were not encouraged to reflect about how they may use their previous knowledge with the new one, even when in the survey it was fostered the idea of relating the students' previous knowledge with the topics to be learned.</p>	<p>When students integrate their previous knowledge with the new one, they develop meaning, learning and are able to use this integrated patterns in future communication events (Shaw, Corsini, Blake & Mouton, 1980).</p> <p>At the beginning level, teachers might elicit the development of the role play scenario from students and then enrich it. Students have to be those who propose the roles they can perform according to their potentials as well as the different resources they need to make the role play more real (Sciartilli, 1983).</p>
Students reflect about how they can use the knowledge they already have and the one just presented	<p>The importance of making students decide and organize the roles they have to perform in the activity was recognized, since it helps to get them involved and eager to participate. But, the observation evidenced a different fact. The students did not have the opportunity to suggest about this.</p>	<p>Once the role play is finished, it is very useful to spend some minutes to ask questions about the activity.</p>
Students organize and assign the roles they will perform in the role play	<p>In all the classes which were observed, the monitoring process was not performed. From my perspective, this fact affects a lot to the accomplishment of the academic goals, since without monitoring; the problems going on cannot be understood.</p>	<p>It is also important to point out and correcting mistakes as a general feedback avoiding to specify who made the. If every mistake is analysed students will feel as there work was not well enough. It might also make the students get less confident and less willing to do the</p>

<p>The teacher monitors and helps students with the language they need for enriching the activity</p>	<p>Since monitoring was neglected, the opportunity to write down students' mistakes and speaking problems was abandoned too. In consequence, the evaluation, feedback, and reinforcement process were affected; Therefore, Role Plays did not have the</p>	<p>other role plays (Livingstone, 1983).</p>
<p>Activate stage</p>		
<p>The teacher takes notes about the mistakes students make to later correct them for the whole class</p>	<p>effectiveness desired. In all the classes which were observed, I could not notice that feedback was avoided. Even, students made lots of mistakes in their presentation, these inaccuracies were not communicated and therefore the students considered their presentations were perfect. It is broadly known that if</p>	<p>Horner & McGinley (1990) explain that Follow-up means asking every student's opinion about the role play and welcoming their comments. The aim is to discuss what has happened in the role play and what they have learned.</p>
<p>When the activity is finished, feedback is carried out to let students know their blunders</p>	<p>feedback is not carried out, reinforcement cannot be developed too. This happened in the class. From my point of view, if students do not know their weaknesses and the teacher does not communicate them, the students' level cannot be improved.</p>	
	<p>It was affirmed that discussing and reflecting about the pros and cons of these kind of activities is important. Along the observation phase any reflection could not be appreciated. In my view, this constitutes another factor that</p>	

affected the development of the students' speaking skill.

Reinforcement is applied on the issues students show weaknesses and some strategies to overcome those are given

At the end the pros and cons of this kind of activities are discussed

		Harmer (2012) sustains that for a correct usage of Role Play, it is necessary to bear in mind three vital elements:
Specific objective 2	The engage stage, study stage and activate stage	The engage stage, study stage and activate stage. The author explains that in the first phase the teacher's task is to attract and keep learners' attention and interest in the lesson. Students' minds have to be involved and emotionally connected with the lesson. The author explains that in the first phase the teacher's task is to attract and keep learners' attention and interest in the lesson. This was the first factor omitted by the teacher, she did not do anything to catch students' attention; on the contrary, by only using the topics proposed in the work-book the students' turned to get bored and so their engagement was weak. This made Students' minds not to be involved and emotionally connected with the lesson.
	Learners need to study the new language Learners carry the activity out	Then, in the second phase, learners need to study the new language; it may be grammar or vocabulary exercises. Having known the new item, students are given a possibility to activate both the new language and the language they already know. One positive factor observed in the application of role plays was the introduction of new vocabulary and

grammar, therefore the students know which words to use and how. But a negative issue in this stage was that the new vocabulary presented was not related to what students already know, so they did not have the opportunity to meaningfully acquire the topic.

Having been engaged, being presented the new language and having practised it, **learners try to activate it and carry the activity out**, this is the third phase. When the role play is being prepared, there are other factors that the teacher has to bear in mind, for example Budden (2004) explains that the teacher may discover that students lack words or phrases and may need new language to successfully develop the activity, Kingen (2000) states that the teacher need to be always evaluating the class and offering help when it is necessary, and give remarks and advice at the end of the performances (Kuśnierek, 2015) teacher has to walk around the classroom listening to the students talking and putting down the mistakes that should be later discussed (Porter-Ladousse, 1987) as part of the feedback, reinforcement and reflection process (Nunan, 2001). Unluckily, most of these issues were omitted by the teacher in the application of role plays, in consequence, this negatively affected to the academic process and the learning goals were not accomplished.

When the application of role plays fits Harmer's suggestions, learners develop fluency in speaking this is affirmed by Kowalska (1991) since role playing involves a wide range of language functions that help students focus on: the communication of meaning rather than on the appropriate use of language. If used appropriately, role plays help learners be able to use speaking in any social situation (Porter-Ladousse 1987: 7).

For a good application of role plays Budden (2004) explains that the teacher should be a facilitator, in this regard discover students' language need and be a kind of a "walking dictionary", it is also important to be always evaluating the class and offering help when it is necessary. Another vital teacher's role is to watch the role-play and then give remarks and advice at the end of the performances.

DISCUSSION

- Some pedagogical courses should be taken, since the weaknesses detected in the application of role plays did not affect only to the speaking development but to the learning goals in general.
- To effectively apply Role Play, it should be considered all the issues involving the pre, while and post stages of an activity or a class.
- It is recommended to keep a better relationship between theory and practice; it will help improve the teacher's professional performance and students' learning goals.

CONCLUSIONS

There were issues such as catch student attention, contrast previous and new knowledge and let students organize the role play which are not properly applied in the pre, while and post stages and so the results are not the desired.

The most important factors such as feedback, reinforcement and reflection to apply Role Play accurately in speaking activities were neglected.

The information gathered through the application of the survey and the observations evidenced that there was no relation between what was believed about Role Play and how it was used when practicing speaking.

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