

ROLE-PLAY: AN EFFECTIVE METHOD FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

РОЛЬОВА ГРА: ЕФЕКТИВНИЙ МЕТОД ВИКЛАДАННЯ ТА ВИВЧЕННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ В АУДИТОРІЇ З АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ

The paper deals with role play regarded as an effective and creative method for teaching and learning the communication competences as well as cognitive and affective skills in the English speaking classroom for undergraduate and postgraduate Humanities and Science students. By increasing motivation and refining critical thinking in the course of problem based learning, role play enhances students' self-confidence, self-esteem and credibility. Role model technique enables learners to become active participants of the meaningful, engaging, and purposeful professionally oriented educational process due to rehearsing theoretical knowledge obtained from the sphere they major in combined with the corresponding practical training of the expert roles in different contexts. Giving learners the possibility to be engaged in 'near real life' workplace-based activities, role play is quite beneficial in developing professional qualities required for their future employability. Role playing strategy can be successfully implemented for training students in the framework of EGP, EFL, ESP courses as well as English for Academics with the focus on advanced graduate attributes. The latter referring to the wide range of academic and technical skills reflect knowledge and abilities far beyond disciplinary content and specialist competencies which combine professionalism with critical thinking and creativity i.e. graduate attributes being of transferrable character and applicable in various situations of both professional and everyday environment.

Students are capable to adjust themselves to their future professional environment and immerse themselves into it while modeling various possible job-related tasks and simulating workplace experiences in academic settings as a result of their role play activities.

Thus, in spite of some disadvantages, role play, being of interdisciplinary character, has proved its effectiveness in facilitating learning across different areas of curriculum content, in developing desired professional qualities and in promoting lifelong learning.

Key words: *pedagogical approach, role play technique, job-related tasks, workplace experience, future professional environment.*

Дана стаття присвячена рольовій грі, що розглядається як ефективний та креативний метод викладання/вивчення і вдо-

сконалення комунікативних компетенцій, а також когнітивних і афективних навичок в англомовному класі для студентів бакалаврату, магістратури та аспірантури гуманітарних і точних наук. Підвищуючи мотивацію та покращуючи критичне мислення під час проблемного навчання, рольова гра зміцнює впевненість студентів у собі, самооцінку та довіру. Техніка рольової моделі дає можливість стати активними учасниками змістовного, захоплюючого та цілеспрямованого професійно-орієнтованого навчального процесу шляхом застосування здобутих теоретичних знань із галузі їхньої спеціалізації, у поєднанні з відповідним практичним навчанням через виконання ролей експертів у різних контекстах. Завдяки рольовому відпрацюванню потенційних професійних обов'язків та різних видів майбутньої фахової діяльності майже в реальних умовах робочого місця, рольові ігри сприяють розвитку якостей, необхідних студентам для їх майбутнього працевлаштування.

Стратегія рольової гри може бути успішно реалізована для навчання у рамках курсів 'Англійська мова за фаховим спрямуванням', 'Англійська мова як іноземна', 'Англійська мова для академічних цілей'. тощо з акцентом на широкий спектр академічних і технічних навичок, котрі відображають знання та здібності, які виходять далеко за межі змісту дисциплін і спеціалізованих компетенцій, поєднуючи фаховість із критичним мисленням і креативністю, і можуть застосовуватися в різних ситуаціях як професійного, так і повсякденного середовища.

В результаті власної рольової гри студенти здатні пристосуватися до свого майбутнього фахового середовища та зануритися в нього, моделюючи в академічному середовищі різноманітні можливі завдання, пов'язані з майбутньою роботою, та імітуючи виконання потенційних посадових обов'язків.

Отже, незважаючи на певні обмеження, рольова гра, маючи міждисциплінарний характер, довела свою ефективність у процесі викладання різних освітніх курсів та у розвитку бажаних професійних якостей.

Ключові слова: *педагогічний підхід, техніка рольової гри, службові завдання, досвід роботи, майбутнє професійне середовище.*

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The problem being regarded: the phenomenon of role playing can be regarded in methodology as an effective tool for teaching and learning a foreign language. The analysis of the most important features of role plays and their main types, their relation to the comprehensive skills of the learner and investigation of role plays in the context of behavioral modeling illustrates all advantages of using this approach as an effective method of enhancing the learning abilities of students. It would be also relevant to prove by means of comprehensive skills' analysis, clarification and

exemplification that the role play process co-existing with conceptualization, formulation and articulation is related to self-correction called also self-monitoring which is of vital importance in the communicative learning process.

Research and publications review: looking at the periods of role play development we have come to the conclusion that role playing reached the top of the mountain in the 20th century and incorporated activities depicted first in different types of 'fighting fantasy' games based on fiction replaced then for

role playing. Role playing became a popular technique in the classroom in general and English classroom in particular as a part of a larger methodology called 'active learning techniques'. Later the nature of role playing was reconsidered by the researchers in the direction of activities designed for the course of studies that increase student involvement in the learning process, which promotes a deeper understanding of and engagement in course content [4; 6; 8]. The research regarding role-playing publications in recent years was mainly concentrated on the benefits of role-playing, its structure, types and motivation. J. Clawson, for example, says that role-plays can activate the class to a very high level quoting the famous adage expressed by John Locke 'I have always thought actions of men the best interpreters of their thoughts' [2]. Many scientific articles address an action research study based on the implementation of role-playing teaching techniques to enhance English speaking skills of students in different settings [10; 13; 1]. Besides Social Science, and Humanities role playing strategy can be successfully implemented for training undergraduate science students in the framework of EGP, EFL, ESP courses as well as English for Academics [12; 14] with the focus on advanced graduate attributes. The latter referring to the wide range of academic and technical skills reflect knowledge and abilities far beyond disciplinary content and specialist competencies which combine professionalism with critical thinking and creativity i.e. graduate attributes being of transferrable character and applicable in various situations of both professional and everyday environment. Fitria Eka Wulandari (Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo Sidoarjo, Indonesia) illustrates the benefits of using role playing strategy to the students of Science Education [3]. Some scholars investigate the technique of role playing from the perspective of advantages and disadvantages of using it in the English classroom [9].

Issues requiring further consideration: In spite of the fact that there are many investigations in the field of role playing methodology still more consideration should be given to social and emotional skills with an effective approach of role playing to help students get independence, cooperative behavior, peaceful attitudes to peers in the English classroom. It is also very much related to the use of role playing in the context of role play and behavioral modeling connection, the latter being firmly based upon the psychological principles of imitation, guidance, feedback and reinforcement. In this case a role play is a tool that can be used to practice skills such as customer service, assertiveness and coaching, plus many others while teaching English for Specific Purposes class.

The aim of the article: the objective of this paper is to prove that role playing is deeply embedded in language through the fundamentals of role plays,

investigation of role plays in connection with the comprehensive skills of the learner, advantages and disadvantages of applying this technique in the EGP and ESP class, its relation to the behavior modeling, all this leading to the conclusion that role playing may be beneficially used in second language acquisition.

The main body. In order to understand how role-playing works, let us first come to the definition of this technique.

Collins Cobuild dictionary gives the following definition of role play: Role play is the act of imitating the character and behavior of someone who is different from yourself, for example as a training exercise. The fact that participants must act out a role of a given person is very educational because students can see themselves from totally different perspectives, for example from the perspective of an old person, woman, man and so on [5]. According to G.P. Ladousse, students carrying out a successful role play in a classroom has much in common with a group of children 'playing school, doctors and nurses, or Star Wars. Both are unselfconsciously creating their own reality and, by doing so, are experimenting with their knowledge of the real world and developing their ability to interact with other people. In this situation there are no spectators. This 'playing' role will build up self-confidence rather than damage it' [6, p. 5]. Ladousse's definition of role plays shows that this type of a classroom activity is perceived by students as a kind of play, not learning and thanks to this fact students learn subconsciously.

Rozmel Abdul Latiff, Zarina Othman and Khaidzir HJ Ismail in their article 'E.X.P.E.R.T. Role Play Technique for Workplace Readiness' propose "E.X.P.E.R.T" Role Play Technique consisting of the six workplace learning events or phases of work-based activities: (1) identifying a role of an expert whom the learners want to be associated with; (2) requiring learners to discover the relevant knowledge, skills and behavior as well as qualities and personal characteristics of the expert role chosen; (3) practicing in different situations desirable traits, expected appearance and emotions of the role chosen; (4) reinforcing the expert roles defined in different contexts; (5) shaping the learners' mindset on the concept of being relevant and respected; (6) learners experiencing the feeling of establishing themselves as talents who are sought after by employers [4].

Let us also have an insight into the benefits role plays have on language learning. Thornbury points out that: "Speaking activities involving a drama element, in which learners take an imaginative leap out of the confines of the classroom, provide a useful springboard for real-life language use. Situations that learners are likely to encounter when using English in the real world can be simulated, and a greater range of registers can be practiced than are normally available in classroom talk. For example, situations

involving interactions with total strangers or requiring such face threatening speech acts as complaining and refusing, can be acted out with relatively low risk. Formal language that would not normally occur in the classroom context can be practiced. Moreover, role plays suit the temperament of certain learners, who may feel uncomfortable 'being themselves' in a second language" [13, p. 96].

As it was mentioned above, many students feel embarrassed when they have to talk about themselves. Role plays help them to feel more secure and, as a result they achieve better results. Another important argument in favor of introducing role plays in the language classroom has to do with increasing students' motivation. It is not uncommon for the students to be bored with the subject matter because the way it is presented is not attractive which results in low students' motivation. Role plays can solve this problem because if they are introduced in an interesting way, they can grasp students' attention and motivate them to work.

Let us look at the advantages of role plays from another angle. Many times, we face some conflicts in our life. Acting out a role play connected with a certain real-life problem may be a good way of learning how to cope with people who do not have the same opinion as we have [11]. It should be said that role plays are excellent for understanding human behavior. People do not understand other people because they are not in their shoes. Playing a role of somebody else gives us the answer why people behave in a certain way.

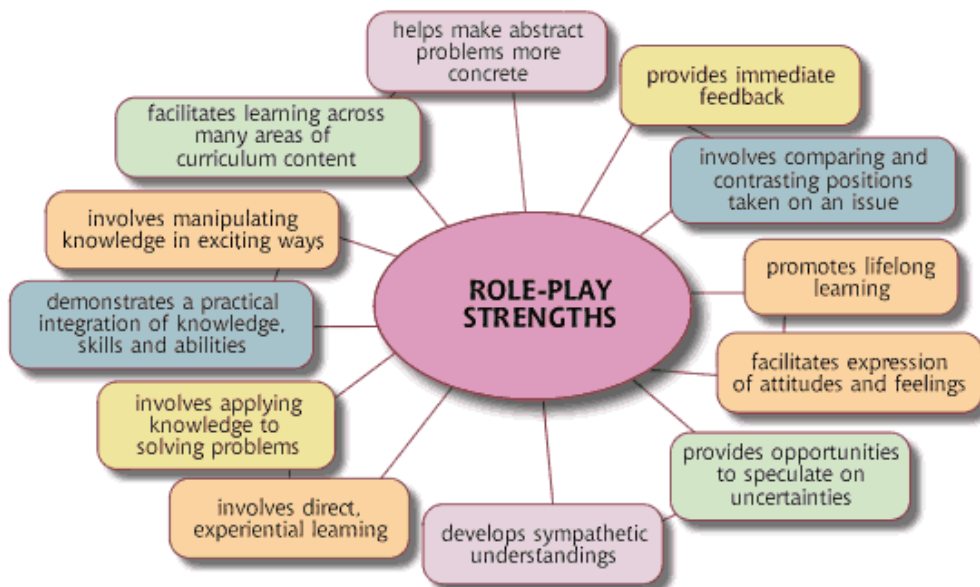
'Role play technique has shown its capability to stimulate and deepen authentic learning which demanded learners to be knowledgeable, linguistically productive, imaginative, creative and inventive

<...> This is another key feature of the role play technique, that is, it has the capability to simulate work-place experiences in an academic setting' [7, p. 142].

Thornbury summarizes the advantages of role play usage in such a way, 'Role plays are potentially highly language productive; they can be adapted to different levels of proficiency and for different topics, and they allow learners to experience autonomy in the speaking skill. They also have the added advantage of requiring few or no materials, and hence can be set up spontaneously and in most teaching context' (pic. 1) [13, p. 98].

The above diagram may help us to understand how useful role plays are in language teaching. There are twelve things enumerated in the diagram but role plays incorporate even more than this. It is important to add that role plays may be one of the most interesting and absorbing ways of learning a language. The most important thing to remember is to use role plays in such a way so as to bring the most satisfactory effects. The article 'Role play as a teaching method to improve student learning experience of a bachelor degree programme in a transnational context: an action research study' by Zheng Feei Ma (University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK) reads that the perceptions of students of the role play on their learning experience is 'a very useful teaching strategy to help students to demonstrate the practical use and apply to real life situations after learning different theoretical perspectives'[9] simulating work-related situations before they have to face the real world.

It is also very critical to analyze the role play in relation to the comprehensive skills of the learner. Teaching comprehension skills: listening, speaking, writing and reading is not easy. Role play can help to develop all of them in the following way: listening extends when



Pic. 1. Role play strengths

students exchange information, share feelings, enjoy themselves while having a good time. Speaking is very useful to produce hundreds or thousands of words daily. Some factors should be taken into consideration when teaching oral skills and they are: accuracy and fluency, vocabulary (rich/ poor), grammar mistakes, accent, pronunciation, intonation, and effective communication. Reading is necessary to understand every single word. Students are taught what is important in the text. Different approaches to reading should be practiced, namely, the division concerning reading for pleasure and reading for information.

Fundamental levels when talking about writing are building sentences and ability to create clear and correct clauses. What is more, getting the grammar right, having a range of vocabulary, punctuating meaningfully, using the conventions of layout correctly, spelling accurately, and so on.

All of these things are necessary to use English correctly and fluently in everyday communication or in formal situations.

Conclusion. The present article has attempted to consider the technique of role playing as a perfect tool for teaching and learning English. The phenomenon of role playing has been defined from different perspectives such as linguistics, methodology, psychology and sociology. The division of role plays into different types has been presented and investigated according to the various methodological approaches involved. Effective ways of setting up role plays have been described.

The focus was also put on comprehensive skills such as: listening, speaking, writing, reading and their relation to role play. The basic techniques by which the role play can help to develop and improve all the comprehensive skills have been mentioned.

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