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ROLE-PLAYING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: A TASK-BASED APPROACH TO SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Mrs M. Praveena, PhD Research Scholar, Department of English, Kakatiya University, Warangal, Telangana
Prof. Damodar Gurrapu, Professor [Rtrd] Department of English Kakatiya University Warangal, Telangana

Abstract:

Language instruction pedagogy encompasses not only the imparting of linguistic knowledge but also the facilitation of personal growth and development among students. The teaching method known as Task-based language teaching (TBLT) advocates for the incorporation of tasks as a fundamental element in language instruction. This is due to the fact that tasks offer more effective settings for stimulating learner acquisition mechanisms and fostering the acquisition of a second language. The approach of Task-Based Language Teaching has garnered interest from scholars of second language acquisition. This methodology was initially coined and subsequently refined by researchers and educators in second language learning as a response to other pedagogical approaches dominated by teachers and focused on form. The utilization of role plays as a pedagogical tool involves immersing students in either a natural or simulated setting, where they are presented with a particular scenario or circumstance that necessitates the enactment of various roles. This paper provides a concise overview of task-based teaching as well as a brief historical account of role-play. The present study centres on the necessity of implementing task-based language teaching in educational settings, particularly emphasizing role-play as an instructional approach. This method is deemed effective in fostering the development of multiple skills among students, including but not limited to a more comprehensive understanding of assigned tasks or roles, enhanced perception of others' behaviour leading to the cultivation of empathy, teamwork, improved communication, interpersonal skills, and management proficiency.

Keywords: English Language, Role-Play, Second Language, Task-based Teaching.

Introduction

English has become the most indispensable language in the world. The majority of individuals from diverse nations across the globe utilize it as a means of communication. The field of English has consistently been a subject of particular interest.^[1] Task-based language teaching has emerged as a noteworthy and effective innovation in the realm of second language instruction. This approach has garnered significant interest from both practitioners and researchers in the field.^[2] A task is an undertaking that requires the utilization of language, with the emphasis being placed on the end result of the activity rather than on the language employed to attain that outcome.^[3]

The utilization of role-play as a pedagogical strategy has been found to be efficacious in creating a dynamic and engaging learning environment, stimulating learners' curiosity, and enhancing language acquisition outcomes. The significance of role play in English language instruction lies in its ability to provide learners with a platform to hone their communication skills in diverse social settings and roles.^[4] Moreover, it affords students the opportunity to exercise their creativity and to empathize with alternative perspectives. Stephen D. Hattings^[5] has noted that role play is an optimal activity for students to exercise their creative use of English. The purpose of this activity is to simulate a conversational setting that students may encounter, providing them with an opportunity to enhance their communication abilities through practice.

What is the rationale behind utilizing a task-based approach?^{[6][7][8]}

The alignment of tasks with the practical language requirements of students is highly feasible.

- ✚ Tasks provide a conducive environment for the acquisition of a second language, as effective learning of a second language is facilitated through communication.
- ✚ Tasks provide occasions for emphasizing linguistic form.
- ✚ Using a task-based approach increases students' chances of being intrinsically motivated.



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- ✚ The utilization of a task-based approach allows educators to assess the progress of students in acquiring the skill of communicating in a second language.

The historical background of role-play

The concept of utilizing play as a means of imparting knowledge can be traced back to ancient Greek civilization. It is plausible that the inception of role-play sessions can be traced back to a scenario in which a teacher instructed a student to assume the role of a customer service representative while the teacher played the role of a customer. The student performed their assigned part. The individual in question assumed the role of a potential customer. Corsini, Shaw, and Blake (1961) employed play as a pedagogical tool during their post-role discussion. Moreno, a psychiatrist from Vienna, conducted the initial scientific investigation of role-play, as documented by Corsini, Shaw, and Blake in 1961.^[9] The socio-metric measure, which examines interpersonal attraction as well as group membership in institutional settings such as reform schools, was developed by Moreno in 1946. The individual employed role-play techniques to achieve psychiatric objectives. The aforementioned theatrical productions are commonly referred to as psychodrama and socio-drama. According to Joyce and Showers (1981),^[10] the primary focus of psychodrama is the enactment of emotional and behavioral confrontations, with minimal emphasis on discussion and analysis. An alternative source of origin can be traced back to Germany during the 1920s, as noted by Corsini, Shaw, and Blake (1961)^[11] and Wohlking and Gill (1980).^[12] The pedagogical application of role-playing has increasingly gained prevalence. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the utilization of role-play experienced a notable surge, and presently, it has become a ubiquitous instructional tool in university curricula, as well as in corporate and industrial training initiatives.

The utilization of role-plays in the classroom is supported by various reasons.^{[13][14][15]}

There exist several compelling justifications for incorporating role-plays as a pedagogical tool within the classroom setting.

- ✚ Role-plays are a pedagogical tool that enables students to develop their ability to handle real-life situations and utilize commonly used expressions. This technique challenges students to think critically and respond spontaneously.
- ✚ Role-plays facilitate collaborative teamwork and effective communication among students by providing an opportunity to comprehend and internalize information beyond mere reading or recitation from a written source.
- ✚ Role-plays possess the adaptability to cater to the diverse needs of students, wherein they can employ specialized vocabulary to suit specific situations. This is particularly relevant as the acquisition of English language skills is often pursued with a predetermined objective in mind.
- ✚ Role-plays afford learners with increased responsibility in their learning, thereby fostering interaction.
- ✚ Role-plays provide students with an opportunity to assess their language proficiency and gauge their progress in learning the English language.

Engaging in role play has the potential to enhance the oral communication abilities of learners across various contexts, while also facilitating their ability to engage in social interaction. Role play can be beneficial for shy learners as it provides a sense of anonymity, allowing individuals who struggle with communication to feel more at ease. Moreover, it is widely acknowledged that the experience of enjoyment can enhance the process of learning, a sentiment that is shared by many students.

What are effective methods for incorporating role-play into teaching?^[16]

- ✚ It is recommended that the teacher adequately prepares the students for a role play by initiating a series of questions beforehand.
- ✚ The formulation of the inquiries ought to encompass the significant components of the simulated situation and the lexicon/colloquialisms utilized. Following the question and answer session, it is expected that the students will have gained a sufficient level of understanding and confidence regarding the necessary actions to be taken.
- ✚ Provide the students with a brief period of time to review the role cards and formulate essential phrases. The instructor is capable of providing assistance to the pupils in any area required.
- ✚ It is recommended that each role play be conducted a minimum of two times, with the students switching roles.



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- ✚ In collaborative settings, proficient students may perform the role play for the entire cohort.
- ✚ If necessary, the instructor may assume one of the roles.
- ✚ It is advisable to refrain from making any corrections until the completion of the role play.

Cards for Role-playing

The utilization of role play cards can prove to be a highly advantageous instrument. Role-play cards facilitate the process of assuming a designated persona or character and responding to a given stimulus or prompt in a manner consistent with that persona.

The significance of role-plays.^[17]

Engaging in role playing activities provides individuals with the opportunity to commit errors in a low-risk setting. Multiple solutions can be tested for highly practical problems, with prompt implementation. Furthermore, it satisfies fundamental principles of the pedagogical process, including learner engagement and internal motivation. A conducive atmosphere frequently leads to an individual's ability to perceive oneself from the perspective of others.

The active participation of individuals in role-playing activities can engender affective and cognitive connections with the topic under consideration. The utilization of role playing activities in a classroom setting can foster a feeling of communal belonging among participants.

Issues related to Role Playing.^[18]

One of the primary limitations of engaging in role playing is the potential for class members to experience feelings of insecurity. There may be individuals who exhibit adverse reactions towards engaging in a scenario that will subsequently be deliberated upon and potentially scrutinized by fellow classmates. Engaging in role playing activities requires a significant investment of time. The discourse within the classroom pertaining to a brief enactment lasting between five to ten minutes may surpass the duration of said enactment by multiple folds.

The interpersonal dynamics among group members play a pivotal role in determining the efficacy of role-playing activities. Occasionally, it may manifest as a detrimental element. Instances of prior interpersonal challenges among group members may manifest in the classroom setting and potentially undermine the efficacy of role-playing exercises. In addition, in the event that the group comprises individuals of varying social standing, there is a possibility that they may exhibit hesitancy towards participation due to apprehension of potential humiliation in front of their peers who may possess greater intelligence or popularity.

The challenges associated with this approach are significant, yet they are not impossible to overcome. Furthermore, the limitations of the scope of the subject matter should not preclude us from engaging in the exploration of role-playing. The prospective advantages of the approach swiftly outweigh the challenges that appear conspicuous during the preliminary phases of preparation.

The function of a teacher in the educational system.^{[19][20][21]}

Several potential roles for teachers include:

Facilitator- It may be necessary for the teacher to provide students with new language. When the rehearsal time is deemed appropriate, it is advisable to introduce new language during this phase. During the process of role-playing, students may encounter difficulties in finding appropriate words and phrases. During the practice phase, the instructor is afforded an opportunity to provide the suitable language input. This may require the instructor to serve as a type of "lexicographic resource," overseeing the class and providing aid as needed.

Spectator- The instructor observes the enactment and provides feedback and guidance subsequently.

Participant- sometimes, it may be suitable to actively engage and participate in the role-play scenario.

Error correction- There exist multiple strategies to rectify errors while engaging in role-play. Frequently, it is not suitable for the instructor to promptly intervene and rectify each error. This has the potential to significantly reduce motivation. Certain students prefer to receive immediate correction following a role-play exercise, as it allows for the retention of the language in their memory. The group can collaborate to correct sentences containing errors that are displayed on the board.



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Self Correction- Provided that the necessary recording equipment is available, students may be afforded the chance to revisit the role-plays through audio or video recordings, thereby enabling them to engage in a reflective analysis of the language employed. Individuals may possess the ability to readily identify their own errors.

Peer Correction- It is possible for peers to identify and rectify errors made by their fellow students. Students may be instructed to actively listen for exemplary language that they could potentially incorporate into their own speech or writing, as well as identifying any errors they come across. It is important to ensure that peer-correction remains a constructive and beneficial experience for all parties involved. Taking note of prevalent errors and addressing them in subsequent classes can help maintain student motivation by avoiding immediate or post-role-play corrections. Engage in negotiation with students and inquire about their preferred method of receiving corrections.

Conclusion

In summary, the integration of role-play within the educational setting provides diversity, a shift in tempo, and prospects for extensive language generation, as well as enjoyment. Incorporating it as a regular component of the course rather than a singular occurrence can be deemed essential. The incorporation of interactive and engaging activities in the classroom setting can foster a positive and stimulating learning environment. Additionally, such activities can provide a platform for reserved students to express themselves more confidently. Furthermore, the integration of real-world topics and materials can expand the scope of language learning opportunities within the classroom. Moreover, students who are bound to visit an English-speaking nation are provided with an opportunity to practice their English language skills in a secure setting, in addition to the aforementioned reasons. Authentic scenarios can be generated, providing students with valuable opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills. Errors can be committed without significant repercussions. Engaging in role-playing activities has the potential to enhance an individual's self-esteem, foster a positive classroom atmosphere, promote active involvement, and cultivate a sense of assurance. Research suggests that children who participate in creative learning activities exhibit enhanced learning capabilities, better retention of acquired knowledge, and a greater inclination to apply their learning beyond the confines of the classroom. The utilization of role playing methods provides an alternative means of engaging students in their personal learning journey, with the aim of enhancing their self-perception, assessing their conduct, and reconciling it with actuality.

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