THE IMPORTANCE OF ROLE-PLAYING IN ESL TEACHING

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Tell me, I will forget, Teach me, I may remember, Involve me and I learn

ABSTRACT

This article is aimed at discussing the significance of role-playing in the ESL teaching process, presenting some data regarding its history and some positive sides developing productivity in the classroom environment. Some challenges encountered by both teachers and learners are going to be considered and given several suggestions on how to deal with them successfully. Incorporating role-play into the classroom creates a positive language learning atmosphere and arise learners' interest in language learning and makes the learning process a lot of fun.

KEYWORDS: *Real-Life Scenarios, Speaking Skill, Challenges, Expanding Outlook.*

INTRODUCTION

Role play is one of the most effective techniques that is applied to the classroom to develop students' language learning skills. Mostly, it is based on enhancing the speaking skill of the students as a part of practice, yet it is useful to improve other core skills such as writing.

Looking back on its history, Dr. J. L. Moreno designed the first known role-playing technique in 1910. Nevertheless, it was not widely used until 1930. Other researches on the effectiveness of role-playing date back to the early 1970s.

According to Rashid and Qaisar (2017), role-playing activity is useful for students to develop their critical thinking skills and allow them to apply their acquired knowledge in different real-life scenarios.

Role play has the advantage of facilitating peer-to-peer interaction, associated with positive learning outcomes for students as social and motivational benefits (Kodotchigova, 2002).

Role-playing is effective in achieving positive learning outcomes in three major learning domains: affective, cognitive, and behavioral (Rao D and Stupans, Maier HW). By taking the role of another person, students feel empathy and it can lead to express self-reflection. In terms of the cognitive domain, students put the theory they have learned into practice through role-playing.

There are several benefits of using role-playing activity in teaching and now we are going to mention some of them one by one.

Development of four core skills of the language

By incorporating role-playing activities into the classroom, teachers can develop their students' language learning skills. For example, students write the scenarios themselves based on the topic they are given and it surely brings about the development of writing skills. Interaction with their peers while writing the drafts is an efficient way of enhancing speaking skill. If students are given ready-made scenarios, they need to read them thoroughly to comprehend the main idea of that text which is good for the reading skill. While observing other groups' role playing learners need to use their listening and comprehension skill. Therefore, it is said that role-playing is a technique in which students put the gained knowledge into practice.

Improvement of social skills

As role playing activity requires working more than two people, it is widely accepted to work in sub-groups in the classroom. Undoubtedly, students get into communication while working in a group, and they learn how to collaborate, to listen and accept other's opinion. Furthermore, students boost their critical thinking in a group which is an absolutely useful skill in all walks of life.

Based on real-life scenarios

Learning a language can be straightforward when teaching is done connected with real-life situations. For example, if teaching materials are taken from the daily life of people, it is much more memorable for students as they are acting out the familiar situation. Additionally, scenarios based on real-life can help students how to manage harsh situations, how to overcome challenges in their further life, in turn it develops their language skill.

Available in multiple fields

Language learners are able to practice language in various academic contexts by means of role playing activity. To illustrate, there are different scenarios related to medicine, information technology, physics and others. By this way, students learn several useful phrases and collocations in related areas while communicating in English, which can be a good advantage to them in their future careers.

Feeling the culture of another nation

Role play is such a technique that creates a language learning atmosphere. It aids in learning the language with its culture. With distinct scenarios, students gain valuable information regarding

the life of other people, interesting customs and traditions and also it is a much more engaging way of learning a language compared to other traditional methods.

Appeal to different learning styles

There are mainly four learning styles, visual learning by different images, and auditory learning by listening, tactile learning by touching and kinesthetic learning by doing. However, role playing activity provides an opportunity to learn by watching, listening, and doing; all of them are included in one technique. Thus, it is much more engaging for all students.

With its advantages, there are also some challenges while applying this technique in the classroom.

Sato (2001) claims that the major challenges in implementing role-play in foreign language classroom are play acting, chaos in the classroom, the lack of grammar work, and lack of chances to participate. Yet, these problems can be solved with the help of the teacher. By way of illustration, the teacher should give enough explanation regarding the grammar rules that can be used in this activity and try to urge them not to make a noise at the beginning of the activity, and encourage them to participate actively by saying them to give incentives to those who take part active. One of the challenges of organizing the role play activity in the classroom is time-consuming. It takes more time in order to make it successful. Dividing the roles and writing the scenarios are the ones that require more time. However, if the teacher chooses the topic correctly, that is to say, proper to the level and age of the students, it will not be a big problem. Moreover, involving the whole class at the same time is tough work for teacher. It is absolutely difficult to achieve the active participation of all students in the class. Nonetheless, it is possible if the teacher divides students into sub-groups in a mixed way. For example, all the active and extrovert students should not be in the same group, otherwise, other groups include only passive and reserved ones and they may not perform well. Therefore, it is teacher's responsibility to create groups rationally.

Tips to implement role playing successfully:

- The topic should be chosen wisely and the roles should be as real to life as possible. In that case, it is highly possible to achieve a successful performance.

- The teacher should create a comfortable environment in which students can feel free.

- Related words and phrases ought to be provided during the process. The teacher may act as a walking dictionary monitoring the class and offering help. In this way, students learn the language in a natural way.

- When it comes to correcting mistakes, it is not recommended to correct errors on the spot as it might result in demotivating and losing their concentration. Instead, taking notes of common mistakes during the performance and dealing with them in the further classes can be accepted as a good way.

To conclude, implementing role play in the classroom enables students to use the language in a natural environment with a lot of fun. Students can learn the language in multiple contexts; they can broaden their horizon and also feel a pinch of the culture of another nation. It is an engaging and efficient way of learning the language.

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