



Enhancing Language Skills Through Theatrical Role-Play

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Abstract

Role-play, a captivating and interactive pedagogical approach, greatly enriches the ambience in English language sessions by arousing students' curiosity and creating lasting impressions in language acquisition. The objective of this study is to investigate the successful utilization of role-play in language teaching, specifically identifying the essential tactics that optimize its advantages. The study determines that the efficacy of role-play in English lessons depends on four fundamental components. Initially, it is imperative to choose topics that are practical and relevant to the student's daily existence, as this will enhance their involvement and connection to the subject matter. Furthermore, teachers should impart the essential language structures and terminology to pupils, equipping them with the ability to utilize them proficiently during the role-play. Furthermore, the process of error correction should be approached with sensitivity and positivity, fostering a conducive environment for learning while avoiding any demotivation or reluctance to participate. Ultimately, the teacher's role should be flexible, allowing them to serve as a facilitator, observer, or active participant, depending on the educational objectives and the dynamics of the classroom. Incorporating role-play into teaching not only adds variety to instructional techniques but also brings a dynamic shift in pace, offering many chances for students to engage in language practice, improve their communication abilities, and get pleasure from the learning experience. This work enhances the field of pedagogy by providing practical techniques for integrating role-play into language curricula, which in turn promotes more captivating and efficient language learning environments.

The aim of instructing young professionals in a foreign language is to augment their proficiency in confidently expressing themselves in social contexts, enhance their aptitude for professional communication, and cultivate their ability to fulfil specific responsibilities in their future vocations. Participating in simulated role-plays that replicate various communication circumstances and distinct professional positions encountered by engineers might be advantageous for improving their language proficiency in the desired language. The objective of this presentation is to showcase the application of role-plays and theatrical techniques in different language teaching methodologies throughout history. The objective is to delineate the fundamental characteristics of these operations and give the results of a needs analysis.

Keywords: Role-play, innovative strategy, needs analysis, theatre tactics, classroom activities, student involvement etc.



Introduction

Most language instructors strongly feel that integrating role-plays and theatre tactics into classroom activities helps improve students' involvement and interest. This technique also promotes the assimilation of recently learned knowledge by fostering active engagement in problem-solving and the exploration of alternate answers. Young individuals must ensure they are well-prepared to meet the challenges of our ever-changing world and adjust to the realities of living in a diverse and multicultural community. While commercially available resources can be advantageous, teachers often feel the need to complement them with supplementary assignments and activities. In certain specialized areas of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), such as English for Engineering, the improvement of oral communication skills seems to be rather neglected. Engineers often report unhappiness with their capacity to comprehend and produce spoken language, even while they feel competent in reading and creating written technical materials. Simulations that are carefully developed to match the specific communication situations and various responsibilities that engineers may face in their profession might be advantageous in improving their skill level in the desired language.

This study presents a concise historical survey of the utilization of role-plays and theatre techniques in different language teaching methodologies over time. Subsequently, it outlines the fundamental attributes of these endeavours, drawing from the specialized literature. The results of a needs analysis are also presented. An analysis was conducted to collect data on the language learning requirements of the target demographic, comprising engineering students and professionals. In addition, the investigation sought to ascertain the popularity and efficacy of role-plays in English for Specific Purposes.

Role-plays and drama tactics have been continually employed in language training throughout history, although their usage has varied and been implemented through different methodologies.

According to language pedagogy theorists such as Richards and Rodgers (1986) and Bárdos (2005), even in the time when the grammar-translation approach was dominant, some educators made efforts to bring new and creative techniques. An example of this is F. Gouin (1880), who acknowledged the advantages of physical exercise in facilitating memorization. He employed the Gouin series, often known as the action series, which primarily emphasized the usage of verbs. The actions must be completed and described simultaneously.

In the late 1800s, the natural approach emphasized the importance of oral practice more than grammar and translation exercises. Berlitz, founded in 1892, advocated for the principles of interactivity, contextualization, and physical involvement. From his viewpoint, it is more favourable



to showcase rather than interpret; it is more impactful to participate in activities rather than give clarifications; it is more advantageous to inquire rather than give a lengthy speech; and instructors should reduce their speaking duration, enabling students to have more chances to express themselves. The main principle of the direct technique was to use the target language and intentionally avoid using the native language. As a result, it was considered essential and inevitable to use demonstrations, gestures, and imitation. In the audio-lingual technique, role-plays, drama, and physical exercise gain importance since they enable the practical application and investigation of language usage in a particular environment.

In his work, Bárdos (2005) describes humanistic tactics as dramatizing methods. These techniques are based on personality-centered and psychological theories that highlight the comprehensive development of the language learner's full personality. Asher (1982) devised a methodology called Total Physical Response, wherein students are compelled to physically react to instructions provided in the target language. Asher acknowledged the necessity of incorporating physical exercise and emotional elements into the process of acquiring language. Gattegno's (1972) quiet manner approach integrates theatrical components, including the teacher's bodily motions, gestures, and facial expressions. The teacher's tacit acts are intended to be apprehended by the pupils in the target language. Curran's (1976) community language learning (CLL) method highlights the importance of emotional factors, such as mutual trust and a peaceful environment, in supporting the process of learning. Lozanov (1979) suggestopedia emphasizes the creation of a stress-free atmosphere where pupils feel confident and relaxed. This style heavily incorporates elements of theatre, games, music, and songs.

Games, role-plays, dramatic techniques, group debates, and simulations have become more popular in learner-centred communicative language training (Bárdos 2005). This method promotes learning by allowing individuals to gain knowledge through firsthand experience and exploration in interactive settings that are specifically designed to create gaps in information and problem-solving scenarios. Language instruction role-plays can incorporate a range of dramatic elements and tactics. According to Wilga Rivers, the use of theatrical techniques enables students to apply their knowledge in a practical way, which is a skill that cannot be easily obtained by explanation alone (Rivers, 1983).

Employing theatrical methods allows students to acquire new knowledge and develop a wide range of skills through active engagement and personal investment. Drama in education (DIE) is a teaching method that uses "as if" games and has had a substantial influence on language learning.

Prominent theorists contend that theatre in school endeavours to enhance communication aptitude



and general character. This is accomplished by employing diverse scenario games or role-plays. While a formal audience may not be present, the presence of peers is essential for cultivating self-confidence and promoting cooperation abilities in kids. Moreover, this empowers individuals to speak with greater efficiency in practical situations. These exercises can be viewed as practice sessions, in which participants actively participate in speaking and completing different tasks while being the focal point. By engaging in this activity, individuals cultivate the readiness and ingenuity necessary for many societal responsibilities and everyday situations. Participating in theatre events can improve the self-awareness and comprehension of human behaviour among persons engaged in and contributing to a community. These practices can facilitate the development of innovative thinking, concentrated and meticulously planned work procedures, and a concise, logical, and persuasive communication style. They possess the capacity to partially counterbalance the passivity induced by the proliferation and widespread influence of mass media. Drama games facilitate a collective experience where individuals may freely express themselves and receive recognition, while simultaneously improving their capacity for decision-making and problem-solving.

The main common goals of theatre in education and the use of role-plays in language teaching are to promote individuality and develop effective communication practices. Thus, theatre in education can be a significant asset for language teachers who are looking for creative ideas for role-play sessions.

Drama as a Literary Genre

Drama, as a form of literature, offers an interactive platform for English language learners to improve their speaking abilities by engaging in role-playing activities. Interacting with dramatic texts facilitates vocabulary expansion by introducing students to diverse and sophisticated language within a specific context, hence enhancing comprehension and memory. Dramatic role-play enhances pragmatic language abilities by providing students with opportunities to apply language in authentic situations, so enhancing their ability to communicate effectively. Furthermore, engaging in theatrical performances improves verbal fluency and fosters self-assurance. Engaging in role-plays necessitates learners to engage in lengthy spoken communication, which serves the dual purpose of practising newly acquired vocabulary and grammar while gradually diminishing speaking fear. The immersive quality of theatre enhances the learning experience, fostering active participation and facilitating the development of language abilities. Incorporating drama into ESL programs through role-play has the potential to revolutionize the conventional language learning experience, enhancing its effectiveness and enjoyment for students.

Objective: Executing the *Chandalika*

Activity in an English as a Second Language (ESL) Classroom



Objective:

The objective of this study was to assess the efficacy of employing the Indian drama *Chandalika* by Rabindranath Tagore in a courtroom argument structure to improve English language proficiency among students learning English as a second language (ESL).

Activity Description:

The focal point of the event revolved around a courtroom sequence inspired by *Chandalika*, featuring prominent characters such as Prakriti, Ananda, Mother, and a judge. Students were allocated specific parts and actively took part in a simulated legal proceeding, where they used the language of the play to argue in favor of their character's position. A total of 20 English as a Second Language (ESL) students, aged 18 to 21, were involved in the study. The study took place over four weeks within a high school English class. The students were organized into groups, with each group enacting a scene from the play. This was followed by a guided discussion focusing on the ethical concerns and language used in the play. Pre- and post-activity tests were administered to quantify alterations in language proficiency, self-assurance in public speaking, and involvement with the text.

Results:

An examination of the scores before and after the test showed a significant enhancement in the students' capacity to understand and use the language of the play. The vocabulary tests indicated an average rise of 22% in the accurate utilization of terminology specific to the context of the play. Pre- and post-activity self-assessment surveys conducted by students indicated a mean rise of 30% in their self-assurance levels about public speaking. The essays made by students regarding character motivation and thematic elements of the play exhibited improved analytical abilities, as 85% of students displayed a heightened level of involvement and comprehension of the text. Furthermore, the collection of observational notes and student feedback revealed a noticeable rise in collaborative interactions among students, emphasizing a greater display of helpful and inclusive behavior during group discussions.

Conclusion:

The activity demonstrated its efficacy in enhancing language proficiency and fostering active involvement with literary works among ESL learners. The organized debate style facilitated the exploration of intricate language and concepts in a dynamic and participatory environment, hence enhancing the students' overall learning experience. The enhancement in oral communication abilities was especially remarkable, indicating that engaging in role-play within a theatrical setting can be an influential method for fostering self-assurance and effective communication skills in individuals learning English as a second language.



Implications:

Integrating drama-based exercises, such as the courtroom drama from *Chandalika*, into ESL classrooms can greatly improve language acquisition, foster critical thinking skills, and boost student confidence. This study emphasizes the need to include traditional literary works in language learning courses to promote a more captivating and all-encompassing educational experience.

Activity 2

Language Activity: *Silence! The Court is in Session!*.

Objective:

Engaging in a role-playing activity of a crucial moment from Vijay Tendulkar's play *Silence! The Court is in Session* improves both English language skills and the ability to think critically. This study aimed to assess the efficacy of using a mock trial involving the character Miss Benare to enhance language proficiency and critical thinking among ESL students.

Activity Description:

The focus of the exercise revolved around simulated legal proceedings carried out by the characters in the play. Miss Benare, a schoolteacher, is subjected to trial by her colleagues in a lighthearted but progressively more intense and revealing manner. The scene presents a wealth of meaningful conversation and profound interaction between characters, providing valuable perspectives on societal matters and the inner workings of individuals' minds.

A total of 20 ESL students participated in this study, conducted over three weeks in an adult education center. Students were allocated specific roles from the play and provided with scripts modified to suit their language proficiency levels while retaining the original work's intricacy and subtlety. During the planning process, an in-depth examination of the characters' backgrounds and the socio-cultural environment of the play was conducted.

The students were assigned several roles, including Miss Benare, Mr. Kashikar (the judge), Mrs. Kashikar, and other supporting characters. They practiced their roles, emphasizing how they presented their lines and engaged with one another. Each group enacted the simulated court case scene, focusing on character development and dialogue delivery. After the performances, students participated in a conversation about the play's topics, including societal judgment, personal autonomy, and gender prejudice. They discussed their reflections on the social issues addressed in the play and their own experiences while acting the roles.

Results:

Students demonstrated a substantial enhancement in their capacity to comprehend and articulate intricate concepts in the English language, with a 25% increase in fluency and understanding as



assessed through pre- and post-tests. Upon analyzing their oral communication, it was determined that 80% of the students could actively and thoughtfully interact with the play's themes and connect them to present-day matters. The observational data revealed a significant degree of involvement during the preparations and performances, as students actively engaged in discussions about their parts and the consequences of the play. Feedback surveys indicated that students perceived the activity as beneficial in cultivating empathy and fostering a more profound comprehension of diverse societal roles and demands.

Conclusion:

The Silence! The Court is in Session mock-trial activity demonstrated its efficacy in enhancing English language proficiency and promoting a more profound understanding of intricate social matters among ESL learners. The mock trial scenes served as a highly successful instrument for improving both linguistic and analytical proficiencies. The activity showcased the possibility of utilizing Indian English drama in educational environments to integrate language acquisition with critical social investigation, thereby enhancing both language skills and critical thinking abilities.

Implications:

Integrating drama-based exercises, such as the mock trial from *Silence! The Court is in Session*, into ESL classrooms can significantly improve language acquisition, foster critical thinking skills, and boost student confidence. This study emphasizes the need to include traditional literary works in language learning courses to promote a more captivating and all-encompassing educational experience.

Conclusion

Incorporating role-play activities centered around dramatic texts like Rabindranath Tagore's *Chandalika* and Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session* into ESL instruction provides a versatile educational method that significantly enhances the learning process. These plays have demonstrated that engaging in dramatic role-play not only aids students in improving their language skills but also fosters critical thinking, deepens cultural knowledge, and promotes empathy. The exercises described illustrate the effectiveness of drama in engaging students in profound and meaningful learning experiences that surpass traditional language teaching methods. This approach allows students to explore complex themes and enrich their mastery of the English language with subtlety and depth. By integrating the study of literature with practical language use, incorporating role-play in ESL classrooms emerges as a highly beneficial method that should be more widely embraced in educational settings.



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