

EFFECTIVENESS OF ROLE PLAYING ACTIVITIES AS A MEANS OF INTERACTIVE LEARNING IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Abstract: *This article highlights the effectiveness of implementing role playing activities in teaching foreign languages to young learners. The use of role playing activities in the English classroom offers an effective way of practising a new language in a meaningful and memorable context.*

Key words: *young learners, primary education, role playing activities, learner-centered approach, communicative competence, language acquisition, language skills, communicative activities*

English has become an international language and its range of functions is increasing everywhere including Uzbekistan, because dynamic processes in all spheres and successive reforming need acquiring one or two foreign languages. The old, traditional approach to language teaching contrasts sharply with the communicative approach. This approach concentrates on issues outside the real-life experiences of the young learners and it emphasizes the rules guiding the use of the target language, creating little or no provision for young learners to actually use this language to communicate on matters related to their daily life experiences. In other words, what the young learners acquire through this approach is simply the bookish knowledge of their target language.

And what is communicative approach? It is an approach to language teaching that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of study.

Role playing as a teaching methodology is the conscious acting out and discussion of the role in a group, as it is one of a whole gamut of communicative techniques which develops fluency, promotes interaction in the classroom and increases motivation.

Larsen-Freeman pointed out in her book "Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching" that "*Role-plays are very important in the Communicative Approach because they give young learners an opportunity to practice communicating in different social contexts and in different social roles.*"

According to Brown, "*role-play minimally involves giving a role to one or more members of a group and assigning an objective or purpose that participants must accomplish.*"

Role-play is not only a type of simulation activity that allows young learners to be creative in the classroom but also it could be viewed as a type of problem-based learning, it is distinctive in that young learners act out the given scenario in "real time." Role play exercises give young learners the opportunity to assume the role of a person or act out a given situation. These roles can be performed by individual young learners, in pairs, or in groups which can play out a more complex scenario.

Role plays engage young learners in real-life situations or scenarios that can be "stressful, unfamiliar, complex, or controversial" which requires them to examine personal feelings toward others and their circumstances.

Role play exercises "*are usually short, spontaneous presentations*" and they can be effectively used in the classroom to:

- *Motivate and engage young learners*
- *Enhance current teaching strategies*
- *Provide real-world scenarios to help young learners learn*
- *Learn skills used in real-world situations (negotiation, debate, teamwork, cooperation, persuasion)*
- *Provide opportunities for critical observation of peers*

Ladousse offered a new understanding of role-play by redefining it as "*an educational technique, known to generate a lot of fun, excitement, joy and laughter in the language class as 'play' itself guarantees a safe environment in which learners can be as inventive and playful as possible*".

This idea of role-play, in its simplest form, is to give young learners opportunities to practice interacting with others in certain role.

There are usually **three stages** to doing a role play in class:

1. Teacher prepares the children for the role play by setting up the situation and making sure the children have the necessary language.
2. Children do the role play
3. Teacher observes them noting down comments in preparation

At this point, it is important not to interfere unless absolutely necessary.

Once the role play is finished, the teacher organizes reflection and feedback:

- **on the process** (*how the children did the activity*)
- **on the product** (*how it turned out*)

In practice, *the basic steps in preparing a role play* could be:

- ✦ *introduce or elicit and practice the language the children need;*
- ✦ *introduce the characters: here you might give the children a role card with the information they need to play their role;*
- ✦ *introduce the situation and present the children with the task;*
- ✦ *practice some typical dialogues in a more controlled environment;*
- ✦ *do the role play;*

✦ *feedback from the teacher and children: how did the children do the task and how well did they complete it?*

While doing role-play, the young learners have an opportunity to interpret their roles in the target language creatively. The teachers seldom interfere when the young learners make mistakes and this will decrease the anxiety of most shy young learners. Also since role-play is much like doing a mini-drama, the young learners know that they are not displaying their own personalities. Moreover, while doing role-play, the young learners who are better at acting than speaking can have a chance to participate. They can express themselves by both words and actions, which will allow them to engage in the class activity instead of sitting or standing still in a normal classroom.

The following role playing activities are used in teaching foreign languages to young learners in primary education, as they will teach them the basics of interacting with people and can be as simple or as complex as one wishes, depending on the situation. They are: going to the shop, at the market, at a birthday party, and etc.

Studies have shown that role-playing activities can be used effectively to improve young learners not only language skills, but also interpersonal and communicative skills. So, implementation of role playing activities in language teaching in primary education, is pivotal, as:

✦ *It enables young learners to learn and practice the target language in meaningful context*

✦ *It improves young learners' different skills needed for the language acquisition process*

✦ *It motivates young learners to be interested and involved in learning*

✦ *It creates low-anxiety learning environments for young learners*

✦ *It offers young learners a variety of experiences and improves their 4 language skills*

✦ *It helps to improve young learners' cultural and nonverbal behavior.*

The effective use of different types of role-playing activities can enable the teacher to provide young learners with the opportunity to practice the target language in a variety of meaningful contexts. By practising the target language in different roles, young learners consolidate and review their knowledge of word order, phrasing, and punctuation that contributes to the meaning of a written sentence. The use of role-playing in learning and practising a conversation not only consolidates the young learners' knowledge of certain vocabulary and grammar used in similar situations but also brings home to the young learners some aspects of behaviors, such as the skills of starting a conversation and the development of good human relations. Therefore, role-

playing clearly promotes effective interpersonal relations and social transactions among participants.

In Conclusion we want to say that role playing activities are also an essential part of the teaching and learning process in primary classes. It is a very thorough activity for applying integrated knowledge. Theory is easy to understand but we think it would be easier to put theory into practice with the help of role-playing activity. Through role-playing, young learners learn to assess, criticize and think about their individual teaching-learning process. It makes easier to understand the teaching-learning process regarding the difficulties that arise, moreover, it promotes the participation of young learners in their evaluation process, which is an important step towards a comprehensive education and has a more communicative perspective.

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