

Enhancing English Language Learning Through Role-Play Activities

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Abstract: Making the students able to converse in the target language is one of the key objectives of teaching English as a foreign language. Students need to speak English proficiently to communicate effectively. Students that struggle to communicate in English will find it challenging to express themselves during class activities. In this case, role-play is an effective way of improving speaking skill of Law University students. Students get the chance to demonstrate proper language functions in the roles and situations they are assigned through role-play. The outcomes of the research demonstrated that the roleplay has a big impact on how well students talk.

Keywords: ESP, Law students, speaking skill, role-play.

Introduction

Currently, the aim of ESP learning is to express content in speech in addition to reading and understanding texts. Why a student should learn a foreign language is a crucial subject that should be covered in ESP classes. Business English, legal English, scientific and technological English, and other topics are the main areas of study for some ESP researchers, but all of these courses have a similar focus on the unique needs, deficiencies, and desires of their individual students.

Role acting is a powerful tool for encouraging discussion in the classroom. Students assist one another in learning and using comprehension techniques as they collaborate to understand texts. In order to work in groups, teachers assist their students. Teachers also demonstrate the understanding techniques. Role-play has a long history, dating back to the Greeks' use of theater as a teaching tool. Most likely, the first role-playing exercise was conducted when a teacher instructed a student to "act as though I am a customer and you are serving me." The student performed the part. The master took on the role of a prospective client. Play was used as a teaching tool when they discussed their roles later. In recent years, roleplaying has become increasingly widely used in education.

According to Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998), ESP is primarily intended for intermediate or advanced students and is probably suitable for adult learners, whether they are enrolled in a tertiary institution or working in a professional capacity.

The Constructivist Approach

The shift from teacher-centred to student-centred pedagogical approaches is a trend in evidence in many countries (Ministry of Education, N.Z., 2007; Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2009). These trends result in changes in the focus of instruction from a transmission curriculum to a transactional curriculum. The constructivist model very much informs this shift. In the curricular and pedagogical traditions of many countries, including Malaysia, a teacher transmits information to students who passively listen and supposedly acquire facts, whereas in the transactional curriculum, students are actually involved in learning to reach new understandings. A constructivist approach requires teachers to follow a pedagogy which provides learners with the opportunity to (i) interact with sensory data; and (ii) construct their own world (Hein, 1991). Vygotsky (1978) proposed that in social interaction between an adult (teacher, parent) and child (learner), scaffolding takes place when the adult provides guidance to the child

according to his or her needs (Storch 2007). Storch (2007) adds that scaffolding also occurs when learners interact with each other, either in pairs or groups, in a collaborative effort to resolve a language related problem. In role-play preparations, students work in small group, discuss the tasks given to them and collaboratively plan their role play performances. The teachers guide and facilitate the activities whereas the active role is played by the learners themselves. In constructivist classrooms, the paradigm shift from teacher centered to student centered approach is meaningful in the teaching and learning process.

Theory of learning

Learning activities are consequently selected according to how well they engage the learner in meaningful and authentic language use. These principles address the conditions needed to promote second language learning, rather than the processes of language acquisition. Johnson (1984) and Littlewood (1984) consider an alternative learning theory that they also see as compatible with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which is considered a skill-learning model of learning. According to this theory, the acquisition of communicative competence in a language is an example of skill development. This involves both a cognitive and a behavioral aspect as quoted from Littlewood (1984, p 74),

Role play activities also offer authentic interaction and communication that the students might not have experienced before. Students in this study engaged well in meaningful and authentic language use. This is explained by Johnson (1984) and Littlewood (1984) consider an alternative learning theory that they also see as compatible with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which is considered a skill-learning model of learning.

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