ROLE PLAYS IN EFL CLASSES ON BALANCING TEACHER TALK TIME AND STUDENT TALK TIME

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Annotation: The paper states the essence of using role-play in teaching foreign language; the impact on students' talk; balance of teacher talk time, the role of the listener and speaker. Teachers' and students' roles, factors and categories of role-playing are justified in accordance with the linguists' viewpoints and research.

Students should make themselves understood when conversing and exchanging information using their current proficiency the fullest. Therefore, through well prepared communicative activities such as role-plays learners' are encouraged to experiment and innovate with the language. Hence create a supportive atmosphere that fosters their participation without fear or embarrassment. This will contribute to their self-confidence as speakers and to their motivation to learn more. Consequently, such kind of communicative activities, namely role-playing allow learners to practice using all of the language they know in various situations that resemble to real settings. Students work together to develop a plan, resolve a problem or complete a task. Role-playing is one of the tasks which create a situation for learners to actively interact in the language, thereby making language learning more meaningful.

Not only role-play encourages thinking and creativity, it also makes students develop and practice new language and behavioral skills. Moreover, role-play imitates life and this considerably expands the range of language functions used by the learners. According to Tompkins (1998), role-playing or simulation is a valuable method for foreign language learning. It gives the learners opportunities to act out various roles chosen to represent actual roles that would be in the field of situation. [6]. As Hattingh (1998, p.307) states: "role- play can stimulate a conversation
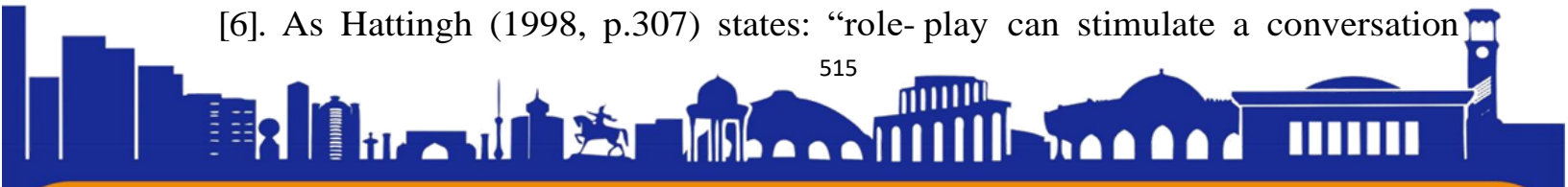
situation in which students find themselves and give them an opportunity to practice" [2]. When using role-playing, students are assigned roles and put into situations that may eventually encounter in the real-life outside the classroom. The relationship amongst the learners when they are acting out their roles develops their sociolinguistic competence, too. Learners have to use an appropriate language regarding the situation and the characters. Role-play is a good technique to measure interaction in foreign language classes. It has become a standard technique to test interaction in foreign language classroom, and in teacher and management training. It represents a shift of emphasis to more realistic conversation and communication. The activity ranges from telling a story to acting out a situation where participants have to improvise and create. This technique encourages interaction among the learners as they relate to each other through their new identified roles. Incorporating role-play in the classroom adds variety. It is an opportunity for a lot of language production and also a lot of fun. Real situations can be created and students can benefit from the practice. Role-play is considered as any speaking activity when the students put themselves either in somebody's shoes, or when they stay in their own shoes, but adding some more imaginary situations. This will enhance their motivation, and therefore their desire to act and learn more.

Traditionally, learner roles have been specifically defined in the role-playing method, either through verbal instructions or role cards. However, Kaplan (1997) argues against role-plays saying that they focus only on prescriptive themes stressing specific fields of vocabulary, as they do not capture the spontaneous, real-life flow of conversation [3].

Perhaps a better model for learner roles in the role-playing method is called "tapestry approach." According to this approach, learners should be active and have considerable control over their own learning. In other words, the students should participate in the selection of themes and tasks and provide teachers with details of their learning process. It is stated that each learner in role-playing comes out under the four following categories:

1. That of acting out a role that he has already performed in L1 and which he needs to perform in English, for example being a guest or host at a party.
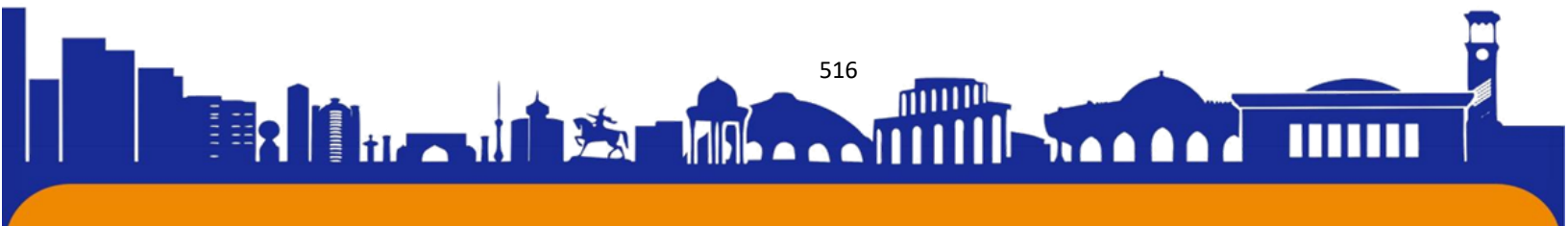
2. That of acting out a role that he has already performed in L1 but which is unlikelyto be performed in English, for example playing the role of a husband or wife.

3. That of acting out a role that he has not performed in his L1 but that he will need toperform in English, for example being a student abroad, or needing to participate inconferences and seminars.

4. That of acting out a role he has not performed in the L1 and which is unlikely to beperformed in English, for example; being a policeman.

By practicing communicative activities, students learn to communicate. Thus the role of the teacher changes and he/she no longer dominates the learning situation. The teacher defines the general frame of the role-play, but generally does not actively participate once the structure is set. In the same context Jones compares the teacherto the traffic controller, who helps the traffic flow, but does not indicate which way to take. Instead of having a traditional, teacher-centered classroom structure, the teacher keeps a relatively lowprofile and students are free to interact with each other spontaneously. Hence the class becomes more a learners-centered than a teacher-centered one. In addition, this reduces the learners' anxiety and facilitates their learning. Moreover, the teacher must keep learners motivated by stimulating their curiosity keeping the material relevant, creating a "tension to learn" [1].

Therefore the teacher in the classroom in the role-play context is simply the facilitator. He/she is there only to provide the help students may need to play actively in their own learning. Consequently the teacher in the classroom may have three possible roles:

1. A facilitator, he/she may feed the students with new language,

2. A spectator, he/she watches the role play and gives comments and advice at the end and,

3. A participant, it is sometimes appropriate to get involved in the role play, in order to boost shy performers, or provoke contradictions.

Through role-play, the teacher's task is less hard. It relieves him/her from the burden of trying to do the impossible; that is keeping all the learners active at the
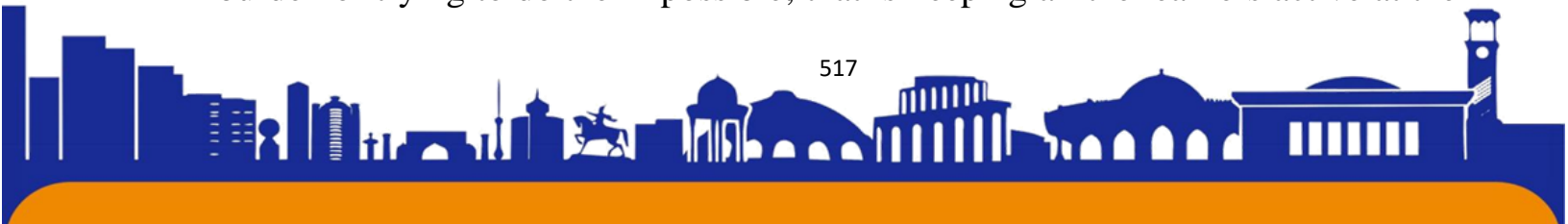
same time. When students are working in groups, the teacher's attention is divided and shared between them. It is stated that in drama activities there is no place for stereotyped responses, set-up discussions or 'free conversations'; interaction and enjoyment come from "imaginative personal involvement".

Porter-Ladousse's format applied to the role-playing procedures contains eleven factors. Various role-playing exercises are then described in terms of the following factors [4]:

1. Level indicates the minimum (and sometimes maximum) level at which the activity can be carried out,

2. Time may depend on whether students need to read articles, and reports,

3. Aim indicates the broader objective of each activity, such as developing confidence or becoming sensitive to concepts expressed in language,

4. The language students will need during the role-play, such as structures, functions, different skills, work with register or intonation patterns,

5. Organization describes whether the activity involves pair work or group work, and in the latter case, how many students should be in each group,

6. Preparation indicates anything that needs to be done before class,

7. Warm-up involves ideas to focus the students' attention and get them interested,

8. Procedure involves a step-by-step guide to the activity

9. Follow-up indicates activities that are done after the activity, perhaps as homework,

10. Remarks may be of general interest or may be warnings about special difficulties that may arise and,

11. Variations can be used with different types of classes or different levels.

Using drama techniques in teaching English as a foreign language is a useful and innovative method in language teaching. Role-play provides meaningful ways of learning the target language. It also provides a relaxed learning setting which lessens the learners' affective filter, thus their learning process is facilitated and they become involved in performing the task. Drama techniques improve
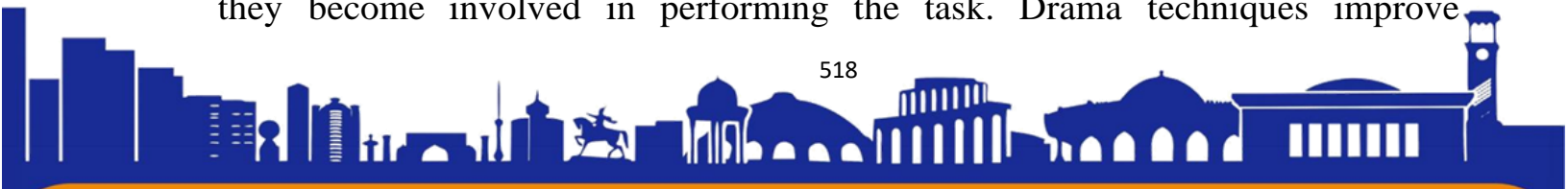
communication; heighten self-esteem, motivation, spontaneity, and shy students become more willing to talk. Consequently, teachers should be careful in the planning of these activities for a better efficiency. As far as real-life communication is concerned, learners are expected to fulfill certain tasks through the application of some drama activities to reach a better proficiency level.

These techniques should not be used in isolation, but in an integrated approach for language learning. They should be part and parcel of the communicative methodology encouraging students' positive attitudes in the language learning process and relevant to the student's needs. The tasks performed through drama techniques; here, role-plays help students to communicate meaningfully in the target language and put more emphasis on speaking and listening skills.

The teacher contributes to the construction of the text uttered by the various participants, in interfering with unexpected answers, or comments. We bear in mind that the purpose of the game is to learn anticipate needs, and face them in verbal answers and attitudes. Verbal skills do rely on non-verbal signs: faces, hands, movements of the body and sometimes postures that could impress the listener or the speaker since often interaction implies persuasion or convincing others.

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