



Articles

Teaching Speaking Skills through Role Play at Elementary Level: An Analysis

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A B S T R A C T

English has won the status of International language. The quality of our expression depends on our use of speaking skills. The importance and value of speaking English have been accepted worldwide. In Pakistan, Teaching English was mainly focused upon reading and writing skills. But in today's world, listening and speaking skills have become much more important than in the past. Recently, the value of role-play in the classroom situation has become mandatory to make the teaching-learning process easy, attractive, and interesting. The implementation of role-play was expected to be an effective way to improve the learners' speaking skills. So in the present study, the focus is on this matter whether the use of role play can be beneficial in bringing a positive change in the teaching-learning process of speaking skills for elementary level learners. The collective problems of the teachers and students during speaking English were the main focus of the study. 360 students and twenty teachers of Bahawalpur region participated in this study. Pre-test, post-test, and questionnaire were used as a tool to collect the data from the respondents. The findings of the study showed that there was a significant difference between pre-test and post-test results. It was suggested that speech practice with the help of role play should be encouraged at the elementary level.

I. INTRODUCTION

Paradoxically it seems as if English language runs like blood through the veins of nations worldwide. To have good communication skills in English is a burning desire for most of people. Communicative competence in the target language is more demanded now than ever before. Usually, the educational system at the secondary level follows the medium of instruction in the mother tongue. In Pakistan, the students have to study English as a compulsory subject from K.G to graduation level. The value of English language is internationally accepted. It's a storehouse of world knowledge. It is a medium of international communication and also a custodian of standard terminologies. To get advancement in higher studies, the solidity of English language is admirable. Considering the state of this language, it has been a challenge for its teacher. It is very

important for an English language teacher to have full command on it. English speaking ability is very important for people interaction where people speak English every day and everywhere. Speaking is considered a critical skill from a foreign language learning perspective. It is because of the assumption that the main source of success in learning a language is the ability to speak that language. Foreign language learners may have different reasons for learning the foreign language; however, the main thing is to communicate fluently because his language capabilities assess everyone.

Speaking is one of the important skills that students should master in order to communicate in English fluently and clearly. Speaking involves interaction with one or more participants (Harmer, 2001:271). This means that effective speaking also involves a good deal of listening. Speaking takes place

everywhere and has become part of our daily activities. Speaking is the most difficult skill to be learned by students, among the four skills.

In speaking activities, there are two reasons why speaking skills is difficult for the students. The first cause is that students lack motivation in learning English. Another reason is caused by the inappropriate techniques used by the teacher in teaching speaking skills. Whereas teaching English as a foreign language requires effective learning methods, techniques, language games, or activities that promote speaking skills. The significance of four basic skills for this language cannot be denied. Reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills must be taught simultaneously to get outstanding results. Speaking skills is not only needed in offices, banks, and hospitals in fact in all over the fields present in today's most dynamic world.

Different techniques can be used by language teachers in class to improve the speaking skills of students at the secondary level. To overcome this situation, there is an effective way that teaching speaking skills can be done through various activities that can promote speaking skills. One of them is by using role play activity as a technique in the teaching and learning process. Role-play is also a modern technique that can be resulted in impressive grades. According to the need of the topic, students' involvement not only makes them motivated but also has deep-rooted effects. The current study will divulge the Excellency of role-play in learning highly impressive speaking skills. It will be salutary for both the teacher and the learner, generally for all and especially for the secondary level. Role play is very important in teaching speaking skills because it allows students to practice communicating in different social contexts and in different social roles. It also allows students to be creative and put themselves in another person's place for a while.

Role-play technique is the way to teach speaking by setting up the students in the situations in pairs or groups. This means putting two or more students together and giving them a handout sheet, which they can first read and study, take time to look-up unknown words, and ask their friends about meanings and pronunciation. Then, give them a little more time to practice speaking, with everybody in the room reading aloud to get a feel

for the role they will be playing and get used to the words sounds, phrases, and rhythm of the language. (David Holmes, 2004:134).

By using role play activities in Teaching speaking, the students may improve their knowledge in speaking skills. On the other hand, they will be able to express their ideas or their feelings by using English. Furthermore, it will become an easy way for them to master English as an international language for international communication.

The Nature of Speaking Skills

Speaking is one of the skills that have to be mastered by students in learning English. Richards (2008:19) states that we tend to be getting something done in speaking, exploring ideas, working out some aspects of the world, or simply being together. If the students can speak English fluently, they can easily communicate and explore their idea. Speaking English well also helps students access up-to-date information in science, technology, and health. Good English speakers will be in a strong position to help their country's economy, social and development.

In addition, speaking is one of the most difficult aspects for students to master. The students have to master all components of speaking skills in order to speak clearly and fluently.

Speaking is a productive skill in the oral mode. Like the other skills, it is more complicated than it seems at first and involves more than just pronouncing words.

According to Chastain (1998), speaking is a productive skill that involves many components, such as grammar, strategy, sociolinguistics, and discourse; for him speaking is more than simply making the right sounds, choosing the right words, or getting the constructions correct (pp. 330-358).

Speaking is probably the language skill that most language learners wish to perfect as soon as possible. Speaking is more frequently used than writing. The main function of spoken language is to socialize individuals. On the contrary to writing, spoken language is produced and processed in real-time, the speaker and hearer have limited time to plan and produce what they want to say and understand what they hear. Speech is generally used in face-to-face conversations; it is temporary, spontaneous,

and variable. Spoken language is supported by body languages such as gestures or facial expressions (often called non-verbal communication).

We teach speaking as learners consider this particular skill one of the most important and most challenging skills. Speaking communication is the most common way of building interpersonal relations. Furthermore, speaking is important if we want to get things done, find out information, and give instructions.

Importance of Speaking Skills

Although not a set curriculum is there in most educational institutions, speaking skills have been found to be a fundamental skill necessary for a learner's success in life. Learners often evaluate their success in language learning on the basis of how well they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency. Matin claims (2011:p.237) someone's fluency in speaking measures his/ her proficiency in that language.

Students who can translate their thoughts and ideas into words are found to be more successful in school. Without developing good speaking skills, the student has to suffer lifelong consequences because of their inability (Wilson 1997; in Smith, 2003: p.3). The ability to speak English also plays an important role in developing reading and writing skills. As Rivers says, when we read and write, we use what we know of the language orally (1968: p.20).

Speaking skill is required everywhere, from simple conversation to formal public speaking. As Wilson (1997: p.9) argues, talking can be used to connect with others, explore and understand the world and reveal oneself. In Bangladesh's perspective, fluency in speaking English is needed for professional purposes, like doing international business, diplomatic jobs, and higher studies (Matin, 2011: p.237). The young generation aspires to professional careers in dominant English communities where the most required qualities of candidates are presentation skills and fluency in speaking. After completing Higher Secondary education, at the tertiary level, especially at universities, students are encouraged to communicate in English, and most of the lectures are delivered in English. Besides students going abroad to pursue higher studies or earn a livelihood, speaking fluently is considered

the most advanced facility for them (Matin, 2011: p.238).

Balanced Activities Approach

The goal of teaching speaking skills is communicative efficiency. Learners should be able to make themselves understood, using their current proficiency to the fullest. They should avoid confusion in the message due to faulty pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary and to observe the social and cultural rules that apply in each communication situation. To help students develop communicative efficiency in speaking, instructors can use a balanced activities approach that combines language input, structured output, and communicative output.

Finally, In a balanced activities approach, the teacher uses various activities from these different categories of input and output. Learners at all proficiency levels, including beginners, benefit from this variety, it is more motivating, and it is also more likely to result in effective language learning.

The Nature of Role Play

Getting students to talk about their feelings is not always easy. Many issues are hard for them to talk about because they may be afraid of ridicule or dismissal. Students need to be given permission to play and explore.

Role-play can help them play with a personal problem. It allows them to be spontaneous by releasing creative energy. Role-play, on the other hand, can be quite a simple and brief technique to organize. It is also highly flexible, leaving much more scope for the exercise of individual variation, initiative, and imagination. Role-play is also included in simulation as well.

Role-play is a technique that involves students taking on a role and carrying out a discussion with each person playing their role. For example, the local council wishes to introduce a new system and location for dumping waste.

Some students play local councilors, others are local residents, others are members of an environmental organization, and others are managers and employees being asked to carry out the work. The teacher describes and sets up the situation. The students prepare in groups, those playing the same

roles prepare together. They then form new groups to carry out the discussion (Lucy Pollard, 2008: 36).

In playing their role for the first time, the students' will be nervous when they have to perform in front of others, especially the teacher, but with time, the more role-plays that they do, the more proficient and confident they will become.

In the end, they might actually get to like it, especially if they imagine themselves to be rehearsing for a role, just as they would if they were playing a small part in a movie or TV series. This is an attitude that the teacher should cultivate (David Holmes, 2004:134).

Speaking skills is one of the most important skills, and students must indulge in speaking English. The objectives of the present study were as follows:

1. To identify students' problems in speaking English.
2. To discover whether role play is effective way to overcome students' speaking difficulties.
3. To assess the impact of role play activities on students to perform better orally.
4. To prove the worth of role-play activities to meliorate the speaking skills.

In this investigation, the researcher attempted to give a tentative solution to the problems. The hypothesis could be stated as: the speaking skills of the elementary level students can be improved through role play activities.

II. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This research is experimental in nature which includes both experimental and control groups.

2.2 Population of the Study

Elementary level learners of Bahawalpur City were part of the study. This study's data were collected from the elementary level students in the academic year 2018-19. The study was limited to the Bahawalpur City only.

2.3 Sampling and Procedure

In this study, three hundred and sixty students of Govt. S.D. High School Bahawalpur and Workers Welfare School (Girls) Bahawalpur participated.

They were further subdivided into 180 males and 180 females. Ninety students were selected in the experimental group and the same number in the control group. The experiment lasted for four weeks.

2.4 Data Collection Tools

Test and questionnaires were the research tools used for this study. The questionnaire was delivered to the teachers about their teaching experiences. Their result was also collected on the same questionnaire as their performance.

III. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

RQ1: Does there exist any significant difference between the achievement scores of overall pre-test and post-test?

Table 1. Comparison between Overall Pretest Posttest Results

Tests	Mean	N	Std. D.	T – value	Sig
Pre-test	64.04	360	10.93	- 6.258	.000**
Posttest	66.21	360	8.64		

**p<0.01

According to table 1, a significant difference was found in students' achievement scores of pre-test post-test results. The mean achievement score of pre-test participants (M= 64.04, sd= 10.93) and post-test participants (M=68.21, sd=8.64) with (p value<0.05) shows that post-test group students had performed better than that of pre-test group. So the research question, "Is there exists any significant difference between the achievement score of overall pre-test and post-test?" answered positive. It revealed that role play activities have a positive impact in enhancing the oral proficiency of elementary-level students.

RQ2: Does there exist any significant difference between the achievement scores of the male group pre-test and post-test?

Table 2. Comparison between Male Group Pre-test Post-test Results

Test	Mean	N	Std. D.	T – value	Sig
Pre-test	64.26	180	10.61	- 3.793	.000**
Posttest	67.99	180	10.16		

**p<0.01

Table 2. depicted a significant difference in students' achievement scores of pre-test post-test results in the male group. The mean achievement score of pre-test participants (M= 64.26, sd= 10.61) and post-test participants (M=67.99, sd=10.16) with (p value<0.05) shows that post-test group students had performed better than that of pre-test group. So the research question, "Is there exist any significant difference between the achievement score of male group pre-test and post-test?" answered positively. It revealed that role play activities positively impact the speaking ability of the elementary-level students in the male group.

Ho3: Does there exist any significant difference between the female group's achievement scores pre-test and post-test?

Table 3. Comparison between Female Group Pre-test Post-test Results

Tests	Mean	N	Std. D.	T – value	Sig
Pretest	63.82	180	11.27	- 5.116	.000**
Posttest	68.43	180	6.81		

**p<0.01

Table 3. showed a significant difference in students' achievement scores of pre-test post-test results in the female group. The mean achievement score of pre-test participants (M= 63.82, sd= 11.27) and post-test participants (M=68.43, sd=6.81) with (p value<0.05) shows that post-test group students had performed better than that of pre-test group. So the research question, "Is there exist any significant difference between the achievement scores of female group pre-test and post-test?" answered positively. It revealed that role play activities positively impact the speaking skills of elementary-level students in the female group.

IV. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

A significant difference was found in students' achievement scores of pre-test post-test results. The post-test group students had performed better than that of the pre-test group. It revealed that role play activities have a positive impact in enhancing the speaking skills of the elementary level students of Bahawalpur.

The students' achievement scores of pre-test post-test results in the male group differ significantly. The post-test group students had performed better

than that of the pre-test group. It revealed that role play activities positively impact the speaking skills of the elementary-level students in the male group.

A significant difference was explored in students' achievement scores of pre-test post-test results in the female group. The post-test group students had performed better than that of the pre-test group. It exposed that role play activities have a positive impact in enhancing the oral skills of elementary level students in the female group.

The present study dealt with teaching speaking skills through role play to the elementary level students of Bahawalpur region. From the analysis and interpretation of the information and data, the researcher has found that elementary-level students faced a big problem in speaking skills. The results of the tests supported the major findings of the present study. The obtained comparative percentages indicated the students' positive changing attitudes and motivation in learning speaking skills through role-play. Therefore, the result indicated a good finding in terms of the students' responses toward role play in learning speaking skills. These findings also indicated that most of the students showed positive attitudes and motivation as well as their active participation in the teaching and learning process. These findings also indicated that Teaching speaking skills through role play could improve the students' motivation, attitude, and interest in learning speaking skills, as it showed in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the findings showed the hypothesis that elementary-level students' speaking skills could be improved through role-play was true and clearly accepted.

V. CONCLUSIONS

English language is taught as a compulsory subject in Pakistani institutions from KG to bachelors' level. The importance of English language has been emphasized since the creation of Pakistan in all the education policies right first education conference 1947 to the last national education policy 2010, the importance of English has been properly recognized.

Clear and well-defined objectives set the right directions for the teaching-learning process. If objectives are not clear, the whole process is blocked. If the country has to survive honorably in the international community, its system of education

must be well defined. Elementary level teaching methodologies are promoting students' cramming skills to get high scores in the examinations. It does not fulfill all the requirements needed for learning English as a second language.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Teaching does not depend on the lesson program only. It is not confined to the teaching methodologies but, more importantly, the teacher who presents the lesson and uses various techniques to make the lesson more lively and enjoyable. The important factor is that the learning of students must be according to the needs. The student should not be confined only to the learning of English language skills as an examination point of view, but the language learning should be based on the four language skills, i.e. listening, reading, writing, and speaking, as these are the integrated units of the language. The researcher gives some suggestions for the improvement in language learning as follow:

- The teacher should promote interactive techniques while teaching English.
- The teacher should emphasize English as a medium of instruction in English classroom.
- The teacher should present the language in an enjoyable, relaxed, and understandable way.
- Students should be encouraged and motivated to learn all the language skills equally.
- Refresher courses for better Teaching for English language must be revised after a certain period of time.

The researcher suggests some more suggestions according to the result of the research finding that could be seen as follows:

1. Elementary-level English teachers are suggested to apply role play in teaching speaking skills since it is one of the best techniques to improve students' speaking skills. Furthermore, modification or development of the technique can be more beneficial for its implementation and get

better achievement for the students.

2. The students are expected to be able to maintain what they have already reached now. They are suggested to use the target language to communicate and interact in the classroom since it is a good way to help them to improve their speaking skills.
3. The other researchers are hoped to do better research on the technique which the researcher in this present study had applied; in addition, it is also expected that role play can be applied not only for teaching speaking skills but also for teaching other skills.
4. The institutions are suggested to improve the quantity of teaching and learning facilities such as books and media in the classroom. Those facilities are very important for the teacher and the students in the teaching and learning process.

Based on the current research findings, several recommendations can be derived as:

1. English is an interesting subject, not a mere name of rote learning, so it can be taught with different activities and some motivational tools to develop their interest in it.
2. Teachers should use and adopt new and innovative learning strategies like role play in their classes.
3. Teachers should motivate their students to participate in the class on an equal basis.
4. Role play activities can reveal students' hidden talents regarding speaking skills. It is a strategy that needs to be highly promoted in the teaching and learning process.
5. Role play activities will motivate and encourage reluctant students to listen and speak carefully.
6. Instant instructor feedback is very advantageous in this mode of learning. It is highly recommended. It keeps the learning process streaming throughout the day.

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