

Role Play As An Approach In Developing Students' Communicative Competence

Ramla A. Ampatuan

PhD Applied Linguistic Student
University of Mindanao, Davao City
e-mail: ramz_0982@yahoo.com

Ariel E. San Jose, Phd

Lecturer, Professional School
University of Mindanao, Davao City
e-mail: arielsanjose74@gmail.com

Abstract

This study was conducted to examine the outcome of role play as an approach in developing the communicative competence of freshmen. Moreover, the focus of this study was on how the role-play as an approach was conducted; hence, necessary enhancement should be offered if needed. The information were gathered through Focused Group Discussion (FGD). Guide questions were prepared and validated; interviews were recorded, transcribed, interpreted and analyzed. Results revealed that role play as a type of communicative activity was a valuable classroom approach to assist students in developing their communicative competence and to provide the students an opportunity to practice the English language with fluency and accuracy. It was also discovered that role play was beneficial in developing students' communicative competence provided that it was not done too long. It encouraged students to express themselves; provided self-confidence and opportunity for practicing the rules of social behavior; and allowed learners to use their learned language.

Keywords: *role play, developing students, communicative competence, university of Mindanao, davao city*

1. Introduction

Students' involvement in the classroom discussion is vital in developing their communicative competence. With the spread and development of English language (Fang, 2010), it's now considered as widely used language of education worldwide (Gladday, 2011). The principle of this is the intensification of students' communicative competence.

In the Philippines particularly in the rural area, tertiary students mostly likely to used *carabao-English* as a means of expressing their thoughts during class hours. They found it difficult to share their ideas and opinions, thereby creating, some cases, a gap between communicative competence and actual performance in the classroom.

Huff (2012) and Fang (2010) found that traditional grammar-based methods are sometimes, accused of not designing a syllabus which meets students' productive and authentic needs and also for not applying suitable teaching pedagogy.

Therefore, in this action research I would like to measure and analyze how effective is role play method as communicative approach which includes using activities that simulates language used in real-life situations.

It will also be challenging to the part of the students to use their pre-existing knowledge of vocabulary and grammar working with a group. Students should learn how to use a language in their daily communication in order to demonstrate their mastery of the language.

Role play as communicative approach includes using activities that stimulates language used in real-life situations (Huff, 2012) and language learners can significantly improve their communicative competence by developing their ability to use communication strategies (CSs) or strategies for coping with face-to-face oral communication problems (Somsai and Intaraprasert, 2011).

Student exposure using the English highlighting the necessity to implement role play which enhance effective communication, it becomes the most important task for an English teacher to help students develop their communicative competence (Qing, 2011).

This current paper addresses the issue of role play in the CC121 Communication Arts course of the BEEd students in CFCST, its purpose is to suggest that the application of role play could increase students' awareness on proper grammar usage and help them develop communicative competence.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of role as an approach in developing the communicative competence of the CFCST 1st BEEd students in learning the course CC 121 Communication Arts. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How does-role play used as an approach in teaching communication arts?
2. How the role-play approach improves the participants' communicative competence?
3. What suggestions the participants could offer to improve this the role-play as an in strengthening communicative competence?

1.2. Theoretical Lens

This research sought theorists' assumptions that will emphasis on the effectiveness of role play as an approach in developing the communicative competence of the learners.

One of the earliest concepts of communicative competence was introduced by Hymes (1972). He believed that the ability to communicate properly should be cultivated in language teaching.

Role-play is the typical social communicative activity within a communicative approach. The rationales of communicative approach direct that composing and manipulating meaningful role-play activities within the framework of English classroom is to cultivate students' communicative competence is of vital importance. Within this pedagogical framework and methodology, small teams of students create characters, develop a story, write dialogues, and perform extended role plays based on various intercultural situations. This technique utilizes an active process of communicative pre-writing tasks, multidraft scripts, rehearsal, self-direction, performance, and peer feedback. This long-term process allows learners to develop expressive intercultural language skills which improve communicative competence and broaden international sensitivity. Take Family Album U.S.A. class performance as an example, the following will focus on extended role plays and how they could provide learners with an opportunity to develop overall communicative competence (Qing, 2011).

Tutyandari (2005) states that the role-play would seem to be the ideal activity in which students could use their English creatively and it aims at stimulating a conversational situation in which students might find themselves and give them an opportunity to practice and develop their communication skill.

Role plays differ from other case studies in the immediacy of the experience and students would find themselves in the role-play. In a case study, they read about situations and characters. One of the reasons role-play can work so well is because of the power of placing oneself in another's shoes. This provides opportunities for learning in both the effective domain, where emotions and values are involved, as well as in the cognitive domain where experiences are analyzed. Most of all, it really develops the communicative skills of the students (Ayaz and Shah, 2011).

It is also used in a communicative approach that will be apply in teaching and students may need the extra support of the teacher for it to be done

2. Method

This chapter presents the methods, participants and procedures used in this study. The presentation includes the research design, research participants, research instruments used, and gathering of information.

2.1. Research Design

This study used the descriptive qualitative research design. The qualitative method was used to determine the effectiveness of role play as an approach in developing communicative competence of the students. Specifically, the task-based role play was considered in getting the needed information from the two Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

2.2. Research Participants

The respondents of the study were the freshmen students from the different sections under the College of Education taking up Bachelor in Elementary Education. Specifically, only those BEEEd students who were taking course CC 121 Communication Arts during the Second Semester, School Year 2014-2015. Fourteen (14) students were randomly selected to join the FGD.

2.3. Research Instruments

This study used tape recorder to document the proceedings of the Focused Group Discussion. Moreover, the researcher used interview guide questionnaire validated by experts. The questions were based from the research questions.

2.4. Research Procedure

Participants were oriented with the objectives of the study with the use of FGD. Information gathered were transcribed, interpreted and analyzed.

3. Results

Presented in this section were the information gathered from the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) conducted among the fourteen (14) participants.

Table 1. Themes and Core Ideas

Themes	Frequency of Responses	Core Ideas
Extent of utilization of role play in teaching communication arts	General	Used as an approach in teaching communication arts subject.
	General	Used in group presentation
	Typical	Done every meeting in enhancing students' communication skills.
	Variant	Assigned respective group to perform.
Benefits of role-play in improving students' communicative competence	General	Helped develop and improve speaking skills and it provides self-confidence.
	Variant	Helped student to be participative in classroom discussions
	Variant	Expressed thoughts using the English language.
	General	Developed communicative competence by joining group in expressing ideas
Suggestions to develop this classroom approach	Variant	Boosted self-confidence. Improve communication skills by means of how to react to a particular situation.
	General	Instructor may provide additional situation that would really trigger the thinking of the students in understanding a particular topic.
	General	The members of each group should give their 100% participation.
	Variant	Students may be taught also how to make a comprehensive script
	Variant	The instructor may guide in making script and monitor who are not participating during the preparation of script.
	Variant	Students may be given ample time for our preparation on role playing.

The above table shows the consolidated responses of the participants reflecting the research themes and core ideas. On theme number 1, respondents in FGD 1 shares that role play is one of the instructor's techniques in teaching communication arts. Role play was done by group every meeting and it was very effective in learning a particular topic. While majority of the participants in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD 2) reveals that role play was done through group presentation with a given topic in between class hours. Twenty-three percent (23%) reveals that role playing was every meeting in order to enhance students' communication skills. While

twelve percent (12%) shares that the instructor assigned respective group to perform the role playing activity in class.

The participant's reaction on how role play as an approach improve students' communicative competence, 78% exposes that as an approach it helps develop and improve the speaking skills of the students. It also provides them with self-confidence when speaking in front of many people. While twenty percent (20%) shares that role play helps them to become participative during classroom discussions and they can express their insights or ideas using the English language.

Participants in the FGD 2 stress that role play as an approach develops the communicative competence through joining group activity expressing ideas together. Ten percent (10%) reveals that it boosts their confidence and improves the communication skills by means of reacting to a particular situation.

Employing role play as an approach helps the participants develop and improve their communication skills and they were given an equal opportunity to express their knowledge and ideas using the English language. It also boosts their self-confidence in dealing with other people and it helps them react accordingly in a particular situation.

Based on their suggestion on how to improve the role play as an approach in the classroom, 86% respondents in FGD 1 suggest that instructor should provide additional reserved situation that could trigger the students' mind. While 14% emphasize that students should be taught also how to make a comprehensive script. They further suggest that a ready-made script should be given because they found it difficult to make script especially if they belong to group with big number.

Participants from FGD 2, seventy percent (70%) reveal that the member of each group should be given their 100% participation and collaboration. While 20% accentuate that instructor should guide the students in making script and make a monitoring schedule to check who are thoroughly participating and who are not during the script preparation. Ten percent (10%) suggest that students should be given enough time for script preparation.

4. Discussion

This chapter discusses role play as an approach that helps develop the communicative competence of the students in teaching English subject. As a type of communicative activity, role play as an approach is vital in helping the students to have a meaningful and comprehensive interaction and provide an opportunity to practice fluency and accuracy while using the English language. It furthers boost the self-confidence of the participants, it helpful for them to express their ideas, they were given the opportunity to talk in the class and practice using the English language in some situation while observing proper usage of grammar.

Based on the focus group discussion, a participant reveal that role play is an effective approach in learning communication arts. It could be supported by the claimed of Qing (2011) that it is a typical social communicative activity within a communicative approach. The rationales of communicative approach direct that composing and manipulating meaningful role-play activities within the framework of English classroom to cultivate students' communicative competence is of vital importance.

Within this pedagogical framework and methodology, small teams of students create characters, develop a story, write dialogues, and perform extended role plays based on various intercultural situations. This technique

utilizes an active process of communicative pre-writing tasks, multi-draft scripts, rehearsal, self-direction, performance, and peer feedback.

Participants believe that their instructor employ the use of role play in their course by encouraging them to speak the English with fluency and accuracy. Through introducing situational situations as basis in the role play, participants really understand the lesson. It helps them put their selves on track and they felt that they belong to the groups who have all the right to express what they feel and what is in their ideas.

Students begin by imitating the episode plots. Since students have the freedom to choose their own characters, a high level of interest will be maintained. Role play can consolidate learning and allow students the opportunity to discover their own level of mastery over specific language content. By stimulating reality, they allow beginning students and EFL students to feel that they are really using the language for a communicative purpose. It contributes to students' confidence in their ability to use English. It heightens students' self-esteem and improves their ability to work cooperatively (Richard-Amato, 1996).

The participants were satisfied using the approach claiming that role play does not only improve their communication but as well their writing skills. But one of the participants was not satisfied due to reason that it is time consuming. The detailed teaching of role is categorized into three steps: presentation, comprehension, consolidation, and utilization. For a long story, a teacher usually postpones the third step to the second teaching class. Which support the claimed of one of the participants that role playing is time consuming.

They suggested that instructor give time limit for each group from script writing to presentation. Some suggested that a ready-made script should be provided in order to cope up with the time allotted for class hour.

Based on the findings, the researcher concludes that role play is beneficial approach in developing students' communicative competence provided that it is not too long. It encourages students to express their selves and provide self-confidence and an opportunity for practicing the rules of social behavior and used language they have learned. Lastly it allows students to express who they are and improve their communication skills.

5. References

- Ayaz, M., & Shah, M. A. (2011). Perspectives of Students Regarding Role of University Teachers in Prompting the Students to Enhance Their Classroom Attendance. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 12(9), 1523-1527.
- Fang, F. (2010). A discussion on developing students' communicative competence in college english teaching in china. English Language Center, Shantou, Guangdong, P.R. China. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, Vol. 1, No. 2. Academy Publisher Manufactured in Finland.
- Gladday, A. E. (2011). *Strategies for enhancing the communicative competence for students with learning disabilities*. Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies. University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria.
- Huff, C. (2012). *Action research on using role play activity in an adult ESL level-one class*. Hamline University. Saint Paul, Minnesota.
- Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. *sociolinguistics*, 269293, 269-293.
- Qing, X. (2011). *Role play – An effective approach to developing overall communicative competence*. Cross-Cultural Communication.
- Somsai, S. & Intaraprasant, C. I. (2011). Strategies for coping with face-to-

face oral communication problems employed by thai university students majoring in english. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies* Volume 11 (3).

Tutyandari, C. (2005). Breaking the Silence of the Students in an English Language Class. In *53rd TEFLIN International Conference, Yogyakarta, Indonesia*.