

Role Play: A Means of Dialogue for Learning English Language

Chauhan PM

Assistant Professor of English, Department of English, Government Engineering College, Palanpur, India

Corresponding author: Chauhan PM, Department of English, Government Engineering College, Palanpur, India, Tel: 02742220005; E-mail: tocprashant@gmail.com

Received date: May 15, 2015, **Accepted date:** October 21, 2015, **Published date:** October 27, 2015

Copyright: © 2015 Chauhan PM. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Introduction

Role play is a speaking activity. It can be classified as one of the communicative methods of foreign language learning. It allows you to imagine a role of somebody else in a specific situation. So you act and behave accordingly. By playing the role of "somebody" you enter in to his world. Thus you are exposed to the varieties of situations in the class room. It prepares you for the communication in a different social and cultural environment. It is really a useful learning experience for the learners like you. This activity provides you with more opportunities to "act" and "interact" with your friends in the English language. In this way you can improve speaking, listening, and understanding in the English language. As a result, you can learn from both from playing a role and watching others.

Advantages of Role Play

Following are some of the benefits of using role play in the language classroom:

- It is fun.
- It prepares you for real life needs of communication by imitating real life situations. In this way, it bridges the gap between the classroom and the outside world.
- It can strengthen learning and gives the opportunity to discover your own level of mastery in the English.
- It makes you feel that you are using the English language for a communicative purpose. It thus contributes to your confidence in your ability to use English.
- It allows you experiment with the English language you have learned so far.
- It strengthens the level of creativity as you create dialogues for this.
- It offers a good listening practice.
- It provides an environment for understanding behaviors, expectations, and attitudes related to the target situation or culture.
- It enables you to develop different skills like group work skills, negotiation skills, problem-solving skills, decision-making skills, English language skills, ability to look at an issue from different perspective and collaborative learning skills.

Let's now look at the procedure of carrying out the activities of role play in the class room.

The procedure of role playing described here draws on Ladousse's [1] format applied to "The Island Game," a simulation described by Crookall and Oxford [2]. Ladousse presents procedure of 11 factors in role plays. These factors include level, time, aim, language, organization, preparation, warm-up, procedure, follow-up, remarks and variations. Thus the activities of role playing can be described in terms of these factors.

Level shows the minimum level at which the activity can be performed. Time may depend on the content. Aim indicates the objective of each activity like developing confidence in language. Language shows the language you will need like functions, structures, different skills. Organization indicates whether the activity involves pair work or group work, or the size of each group. Preparation shows anything that is to be done before class. Warm-up indicates the ideas to attract the students' attention and get them interested in the activities. Follow-up means activities that are carried out after the activity like homework. Remarks may be made of general interest or comments about any difficulty in the activity. Variations may be used with different types of levels or different classes.

Let us understand how this procedure can be carried out in the class room. The example given here is the application of Ladousse's 11 factors' procedure to Crookall and Oxford's [2] "Island Game." The "Island Game" is both an extensive ice - breaker and collective decision-making activity which can help develop a variety of skills in the English language. The situation is one in which a group of students has been stranded on an island. A volcano may erupt in 30-60 minutes, so an escape plan must be executed fast. There are lifeboats to carry all to safety on neighboring islands, but an overall group consent must be sought on who will go where, with whom, etc. The procedure is shown below:

Level:

Advanced

Time:

1 1/2 hours for the main game, 1 hour for follow-up

Aim:

Ice breaking, developing skills in decision making and cooperation.

Language: Language skills are employed to expose things about oneself, express agreement and disagreement, persuade, defend a point of view, elicit cooperation, analyze data, and make judgments. Different skills are enhanced such as listening, understanding directions, initiating, speaking, writing and reading.

Organization: Small groups of 3-7 students.

Preparation and Warm-up

Students must not talk. They are given information on lifeboat numbers and capacities, neighboring islands, etc. Each student must complete a "personal profile" with accurate information on sex, age, nationality, background, employment, practical skills, etc., and with the top three preferred islands indicated.

Procedure: The group makes decisions to reach a consensus. The teacher makes sure that everyone stands up and moves around. Changes can be made when a group seems to have made a decision

"too easily." The time till the volcano explodes is written on the board from time to time.

Follow-up: Small groups rank order and discuss the five main factors that led to their decisions about forming groups, choosing islands and escape boats, etc.

Variation: Each group develops a society on its new island, complete with a political structure. They draw up a set of guidelines, or constitution, for the community.

Other examples of role play can be taken in brief from Ladousse [1]:

- What do I look like? Students, in turn, try on props and accessories such as a white coat, glasses, wig and hat. The other students comment on their changed appearance. Follow-up discussion can focus on uniforms we wear in our daily lives.
- Picture role plays. Students identify with persons in photographs, write his/her imaginary biography, and interview each other in their roles. This provides practice in simple past tense.
- Neighbors: May I borrow? Students practice making polite requests. They are given picture cards showing cooking ingredients

that they either need or have a lot of. They explain what they are cooking, and must borrow ingredients from each other.

- Group improvisation. Two students improvise a scene, and others join and leave the improvisation, tying their roles and exit into the improvisation. As with the "design competition," this follows the unstructured, "divergent" model.
- Role switching. Students role play persons in a conflict. On the teacher's signal, roles are switched. Discussion can center on how strong emotions are expressed in different cultures.

The role play activities should be included with other language learning activities adapted to the needs and level of learners. If you follow this procedure, it can be a worthwhile experience in the language learning.

References:

1. Ladousse GP (1987) Role Play. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
2. Crookall D, Oxford RL (1990) The Island Game. In: Crookall D, Oxford RL (eds.) Simulation, gaming, and language learning. Newbury House, New York 251-259.