Developing EFL Students' Speaking Performance Using Role Play Strategy

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Abstract:

The aim of conducting this study is to demonstrate the effect of using the role-playing strategy in improving students' speaking skill. The population is all the male and female students from grade three at the intermediate schools in Iraq, the sample of this study is consisted 40 male students from grade three from Dar Al-Elm intermediate School for boys. The sample was divided intentionally to an experimental and control groups. Each one of the two groups were taught separately. The experimental group was taught the speaking skills using role-play strategy, while the students of the control group were taught the speaking skills using the prescribed method of the textbooks. A role-play strategy and a post achievement test were used to collect the data. The experiment was lasted for 20 lessons. Results showed that the scores of the experimental group students were better and higher than the scores of the control group students, which means that   of role-play strategy has positive impact in developing EFL students' speaking skill.

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تطوير أداء التحدث لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية باستخدام إستراتيجية لعب الأدوار

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الملخص:

الهدف من إجراء هذه الدراسة هو بين مدى تأثير استخدام إستراتيجية لعب الأدوار في تحسين مهارة التحدث لدى الطلبة. مجتمع الدراسة هو جميع طلاب الصف الثالث من المرحلة المتوسطة في العراق من الذكور والإناث ، وتكونت عينة هذه الدراسة من ٤٠ طالباً من الصف الثالث من مدرسة دار العلم المتوسطة للبنين. تم تقسيم العينة عمدًا إلى مجموعة تجريبية وضابطة. تم تدريس كل مجموعة من المجموعتين بشكل منفصل. تم تدريس المجموعة التجريبية مهارات التحدث باستخدام إستراتيجية لعب الأدوار ، بينما تم تدريس طلاب المجموعة الضابطة مهارات التحدث باستخدام الطريقة التقليدية المقررة في الكتب المدرسية. تم استخدام إستراتيجية لعب الأدوار واختبار التحصيل اللاحق لجمع البيانات. استمرت التجربة لمدة ٢٠ درسًا. أظهرت النتائج أن درجات طلاب المجموعة التجريبية كانت أفضل وأعلى من درجات طلاب المجموعة الضابطة ، مما يعني أن استراتيجية لعب الأدوار لها تأثير إيجابي في تنمية مهارة التحدث لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: لعب الادوار ، مهارة التحدث، اداء التحدث

1. Introduction

Speaking can be defined as "sharing meanings with others verbally and non-verbally to perform different situations." (Chaney 1998 cited in Rahimy and Safarpour 2012, 50). Similarly, (Afdillah 2015,) argues, "Speaking skills is important as other language skills as. The fact that people in any society have many tasks and jobs that they want to perform by communicating with the surrounding people, so people have a strong desire to learn the speaking skill to achieve their daily goals as well as to get jobs and everything they need" (p.8).

(Afdillah 2015, 7) adds, "Speaking skill is a good and direct way to express people's thoughts, opinions, and feelings towards others by using words to deliver messages to be expressed. Through the skill of speaking, people communicate with each other to accomplish their work and achieve their goals."

As for (Dorathy and Mahalakshmi 2011, 23-21), "The role-

playing strategy is a strategy through which, students talk among each other to play a virtual role in order to create an atmosphere similar to that of native speakers of the English. Trying to use the words, they have learned and put them into useful sentences to express real situations that they encounter in their daily lives."

According to (Rayhan 2014, 2) "speaking is just as important to a person's daily activities and experiences as the capacity to see and move. Additionally, speaking is the most organic form of communication."

As stated by (Krebt 2017, 863), "The skill of speaking is an important skill in the language teaching process as well as in language learning. For a long time, learners remember conversations and activities they had learned previously. So speaking skill helps them how to express themselves in front of others."

As for (Littlewood 2002, 49) who argues, "By using role-playing strategy, students can replay what happens to them in real and everyday life situations (that happen to them outside the classroom). Accordingly, the role-playing strategy helps build students' interest and motivate them to learn the language and to speak, thus enabling them to speak fluently in the English language."

1.1. Role Play Categorization
a. Fully scripted role-play,
b. Semi-scripted role-play and,
c. Non-scripted role-play.

As for the first type, it means, "Every word is given to the students, every student must memorize and understand and then play their part completely" (Harper-Whalen and Morris 2005). Thus, this type of the role-play aims at making the target language easy to understand and memorized.

In terms of the third type, according to (Dickson 1989) and (Pi-Chong 1990), "in this type of role-playing strategy, students can create mini-talks based on words, materials, or situations to fill in any gaps in less controlled and structured assignments that may include dialogues, key information, contexts, and objectives."

According to (Davies 1990) who argues, "Unscripted role play offers excellent opportunities to use knowledge of methods in particular circumstances. Students can also expand on their ideas and beliefs, construct language at their level, and act out various scenarios based on their comprehension. As a result, role-play, which

occasionally entails the use of unique abilities, may be useful for middle to upper level pupils."

1.2. The Problem

Developing the communicative competence of the learners is a major problem. Communicating using grammar and vocabulary alone is not enough for successfully communication. Thus, learners face difficulty to perform or start a successful dialogue with English speakers. In Iraq, the problem is that the emphasis of teaching is only on grammar. No focus paid to other language skills, i.e., speaking (Saeed 2015, 91), (M. Amin 2017, 579-580), (Fattah and Saidalvi 2019, 1140).

Based on the researcher's experience as teacher of English, he found that students are unable to use language successfully, thus, they cannot speak fluently. Consequently, to help student practice language successfully, teachers should apply many techniques and strategies, such as, role-play, to motivate learners study and learn language.

This strategy may help students to speak fluently through creating interaction among students, which enable students to imagine themselves in a real-life situation, which are identical with those in the real world. Role-play strategy enables students to interacting and re-acting the situations among each other using target language to improve their speaking, listening, and understanding.

More importantly, (Huang 2008) argues, this strategy contributes to creating a positive atmosphere for students by helping them simulate real situations that occurred in a real English language community so that they can use the language exactly as the native speakers of English used it. Accordingly, this strategy brings vitality into the classroom and helps students learn to use language in a more realistic and practical way.

1.3. The Aim

The aim of this study was to demonstrate the effect of role-playing strategy on developing and improving the speaking skill of intermediate school students.

1.4. Hypothesis

Statistically, the teaching method, the role-play strategy, has an effect on experimental group students' mean scores.

1.6. Definitions:

1. Role-play Strategy: (Richards 2006, 21) states, "It means a classroom activity that is given to students during the lesson to enable

them to practice the language through role-playing."

2.   **Speaking Skills:** it is a main skill that used by students to communicate with others. This skill can be defined as "one of productive skill which, used in class among students to form meaning and includes the formation and reception of words between the interlocutors" (Brown 2001, 21).

3.   **EFL Students:** Iraqi intermediate school learners.

2.   **Literature Review**

(Khasbani and Seli 2021) concluded that the experimental group students' mean scores improved significantly due to using the role-play strategy Accordingly, the role-playing strategy motivated the students towards speaking in the English language and thus improved their verbal performance.

In the same vein, (Idham et al. 2022) claimed that the students are now able to communicate fluently after a massive using of role-play strategy. Accordingly, the researchers concluded that role-playing strategy is much better than the old traditional method to enhance learning the speaking skill.

Moreover, (Alzboun et al. 2017,), came to the conviction that, the use of the role-playing strategy is very useful and beneficial, and contributed to the development of students' speaking skills through sharing dialogues among each other. Besides, through using English practically, benefiting from the strategy that helped them playing the role of the native speaker of the English language.

Similarly, (Neupane 2019,) concluded that the improvement had been achieved in students' speaking skills after using role-play strategy. In the same vein, Krebt (2017) concluded that using role-play affected positively on the students' speaking performance.

As for (Yuliana et al. 2014), they considered that teaching the speaking skill to students achieved great success, and the students obtained very high scores in the post-tests. And that is exactly what (Krisdiana et al.' (2018) study found, they discovered that role-play raised the level of students and gave them the ability to raise their scores in the tests, and this is an evidence of the effectiveness of role-play in developing students' speaking skill.

Furthermore, (Afdillah 2015,) confirmed the study hypothesis, which, suggests that using role-playing strategy is a good way for teaching students speaking skills.

Rayhan (2014) discovered that using the role-play strategy had a

positive effect on improving students' speaking skill. The role-play method contributed to improving the students' oral abilities, giving them confidence in using the language, and contributed to raise the level of teamwork among them, sharing ideas, and conversations.

(Blatner 2009) showed that role-play enabled students to act approperatly when they were exposed to critical situations, this was because it helped them acting and behaving real-life situations. This contributed to the improvement of the students' conversational language.

3. Data Analysis and Results

Results showed that there is an equivalence and homogeneity in students' speaking level regarding speaking skill before starting the experiment.

TABLE 1

PRE-TEST RESULT

Groups	N.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	20	27.4	7.2	1.79
Control	20	26.2	7.1	1.76

Table 1 reveled the pretest results of both groups. It is clear that the experimental group scored 27.4 whereas the control group scored 26.2. Statistically, this shows that both groups have equal speaking proficiency in the pre-test.

Table 2 shows posttest groups' results.

TABLE 2:

POST-TEST RESULT

Group	N.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	20	34.1	11.1	2.28
Control	20	30.2	10.0	2.06

The score of the experimental group students was 34.1 and 11.1 as a Std., whereas the control group score was 30.2 and 10.0 Std. Statistically, in comparison with table 1, it is clear that there is a development in the experimental group students' level of speaking performance on the posttest after applying the new method. The experimental groups scores 27.4 on the pretest and scored 34.1 on the posttest. The increase is 6.7 which is statistically regarded an acceptabl

e and a good development.

Table 3 displays differences of both groups' means scores.

TABLE 3

POST-TEST ACHIEVEMENT

	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Post test	.45	.51	2.24	37	0.03	6.7	3.11

By comparing table 1 and 2, statistically, there were significant differences between them. Table 3 explains these differences (F. 45), (Sig.51), (T value 2.24), (Std. Deviation 37), (Mean Scores Difference/ increase 6.7), and (Std. Error Difference 3.11).

Based on these results, it is statistically significant at $\alpha < 0.05$ as the substantial variations between the two groups' scores when the (t) value reached 2.25.

Therefore, according to Table 3, the Alternative Hypothesis (Ha), which says, "Statistically, the teaching method, the role-play strategy, has an effect on experimental group students' mean scores." is answered and approved. As a result, there were substantial differences in students' mean scores due to method of teaching.

4. Conclusion

Role-Play strategy developed the speaking performance of EFL students. It improved the fluency and ability of EFL speakers. Role-play strategy provides EFL students with opportunity to practice classroom activities instead of memorizing dialogue.

Because by using role-play enable students be familiar with exercises happening in his/her daily social life. To cut long short, role-play motivates students to develop their speaking ability more than learning speaking skill using traditional method.

5. Recommendations

Based on the results, the researcher recommends;

1. Teachers of English language should utilize role-playing for teaching the four language skills.

2. Teachers should encourage students using role-play for improving fluency.

3.   Curricula designers should integrate role-play activities in EFL syllabus.

4.   EFL teachers should be trained how to use and develop using this strategy in classrooms.

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