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## TEACHING SPEAKING: SIMULATING REAL LIFE SITUATIONS THROUGH ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITIES

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**TEACHING SPEAKING: SIMULATING  
REAL LIFE SITUATIONS THROUGH  
ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITIES****ANNOTATION**

Speaking skill is often considered as the most important part of ESL teaching. People may often form judgments about our language competence from our speaking rather than from any of the other skills. It is one of the main skills and means of communication that a student of the philological profile must acquire in the process of mastering FL.

The present study analyses factors that cause problems in speaking and give a solution for them. Moreover, the author recommends role-play activities based on the communicative method and learner-centered approaches as an effective means in the English language teaching, gives examples of exercises and the variety of effective communicative methods that can be used in developing students' speaking.

The author describes the importance of using role-play activities for students to increase their speaking skills at Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages. As some researches have analyzed, using role-play activities is very useful and has a positive effect, moreover it has a good impact on students' creativity to explore the language. The role-play activities can improve speaking skills and are considered an essential activity for developing students speaking skills at Samarkand institute.

**Key words:** teaching speaking, speaking skill, English, problems in speaking, solution, strategies and methods, role-play activity, recommendations.

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**ГАПИРИШГА ЎҚИТИШ: РОЛ ЎЙНАШ  
ФАОЛИЯТИ ОРҚАЛИ ҲАҚИҚИЙ  
ҲАЁТИЙ ВАЗИЯТЛАРНИ ТАҚЛИД  
ҚИЛИШ****АННОТАЦИЯ**

Гапириш маҳорати кўпинча инглиз тили ўқитишнинг энг муҳим қисми ҳисобланади. Кўпчилик тилни билиш даражасини гапириш қобилиятига қараб баҳо бериш мумкин. Бу филологик йўналишдаги талабаларнинг хорижий тилни ўрганиш жараёнида эгаллаши керак бўлган асосий кўникма ва алоқа воситаларидан биридир.

Ушбу тадқиқот нутқни ривожлантиришда муаммоларга олиб келадиган омилларни таҳлил қилади ва ечимларни топишга кўмаклашади. Бундан ташқари, муаллиф инглиз тилини ўқитишнинг самарали воситаси сифатида коммуникатив усул ва ўқувчиларга йўналтирилган ёндашувлар асосида рол ўйнашни тавсия қилади, машқлар ва талабалар нутқини ривожлантиришда ишлатилиши мумкин бўлган турли хил самарали коммуникатив усуллардан мисоллар келтиради.

Муаллиф Самарқанд давлат чет тиллар институтида талабаларнинг нутқ маҳоратини ошириш учун рол ўйинларидан фойдаланишнинг аҳамияти муҳимлигини таъкидлайди. Баъзи тадқиқотларда таҳлил қилинганидек, рол ўйнаш фаолиятдан фойдаланиш жуда фойдали ва ижобий таъсирга эга, бундан ташқари, Самарқанд институти талабаларнинг ижодига яхши таъсир қилади, рол ўйнаш фаолияти нутқ қобилиятини яхшилади ва нутқни ривожлантириш учун муҳим фаолият ҳисобланади.

**Калит сўзлар:** гапиришни ўргатиш, нутқий маҳорат, инглиз тили, нутқдаги муаммолар, ечим, стратегия ва усуллар, рол ўйнаш фаолияти, тавсиялар.

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays the main purpose of learning English, as lingua franca, is the ability to communicate in the multilingual world effectively with other users worldwide. With recent growth of English as an international language of communication, there is a clear need for many learners to speak and interact in a multiplicity of situations through the language, be it for foreign travel, business or other professional reasons. Thanks to these, language teaching and learning is of great importance in modern Uzbekistan. In line with these social needs and for the development of the country there a presidential decree №1875 was signed on December 10, 2012 – “On further improvement of the system of foreign language learning”. The Decree is a huge step forward to stable long-term cooperation in different spheres of economy, politics, science, culture and sport at the international level. Following the Decree a lot has been done in the modernization of FL teaching in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

It is certainly true that the success of acquiring English mostly depends on the methods, and techniques that a teacher uses during the lesson. Mentors and tutors are always in active search of new strategies and techniques for acquiring English and trying to find new ways to increase students’ ability in communicative competence, the major skills of which are: reading, writing, speaking and listening. Nevertheless, out of the four skills, the speaking skills seem intuitively the most important ones, the function of which is the ability carrying out a conversation in English. As Jack Ricard points out “The mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for many second or foreign language learners. Learners consequently often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of English courses on the basis of how well they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency” [Richards, 1990, p.125]. However, teaching speaking in real-life situations in the class is often neglected and students have little chance to practice communication. Therefore, teachers of English ought to provide students with opportunities to improve their speaking skills.

## AIMS AND TASKS OF THE RESEARCH

The given article investigates the importance of using role-play activities as a classroom technique in the formation and development of students’ speaking skills at Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages. The present study analyses factors that cause problems in speaking and gives solutions for them (being shy, language barrier, afraid to speak, making mistakes and etc.). The tasks aimed at:

- explaining the reasons of teaching speaking by the means of role-play activities;
- selecting materials for role-play activities;
- motivating students and encouraging them to speak;
- giving teachers directions how to use role-plays in better circumstances.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It is generally accepted that language acquisition without developing speaking skills is challenging. The importance of teaching speaking in English is considered as the initial demand of language learning. However, as researches and own teaching experiences show, oral skills have not always been viewed as a central issue in the English language pedagogy in Uzbekistan. Moreover, it has been found that the ma-

majority of learners have troubles with speaking, especially organizing their ideas in an appropriate way, delivering an oral report in front of an audience.

Many methodologists considered this skill as a priority in language teaching [Littlewood, 2007; Morrov, 1981]. As Ur mentions, speaking seems intuitively the most important, as it includes all other kinds of knowing and many learners are primarily interested in it [Ur,1999]. Azem&Dogar argued that Speaking is considered a productive skill in the oral mode. Unlike other skills, it is more complicated than it seems at first and involves more than just pronouncing words [Azem, M. &Dogar, M., 2011]. Similarly, Nunan says, that the ability to operate in a second language can be actually equated to the ability to speak that language [Nunan,1999]. In order to clarify what speaking is, he finds out some distinctions between speaking and writing. Firstly, speaking must be listened by other people. It is received temporarily and immediately. When we listen to other people, it has special aspects like stress, rhythm, and intonation. While speaking, the interlocutor gives an instant feedback to the speaker directly. By speaking activity, an orator or speaker have to pay attention to planning and editing by channel. In comparison, writing can be seen by readers. The writer uses punctuation as well to make others clearer in vision or reading the meaning. Written language is perennial and a reader can receive the information later than the time it was created. We can spend unlimited amount of time on planning and correct the mistakes in written speech. Finally, he came to the conclusion that “Speaking is a productive oral skill and it consists of producing systematic verbal utterance to convey meaning” [Nunan, 2003, p.48].Furthermore, McDonough says “Speaking is not the oral production of written language, but involves students in the mastery of a wide range of subskills, which, added together, constitute an overall competence in the spoken language” [McDonough, 2003, p.135]. Learners always communicate through speaking, though people can judge a language learning proficiency by their ability of speaking. Moreover, Brown says that “speaking a language refers to carrying on a conversation cannyly” [Brown, 2000, p.267]. He cites that people can be treated as successful learners when they show an ability to get wise goals through an interactive discourse with other language speakers.

The points above show that speaking skill is considered as an essential part of teaching FL. Thus, ability of easy communication in English in real-life situations is one of the indicators of quality of command of the language acquisition. When the speech has been automatized, we can “reach the top of the Hill”, we can easily speak and interact in FL.

## **PROBLEMS IN TEACHING SPEAKING**

Many scientists argued that students can learn to speak only by communicating; if that is so then fluency and accuracy are equally important goals of speaking practice [Scrivener, 2005, p.146]. This fact is quite important in mastering English as a means of communication. They should feel comfortable and confident during the activities [Tsui, 1996, p.149]. Only then, they can improve and develop their communicative skills. Nevertheless, as experiences of teaching English show, teachers come across many problems while teaching speaking.

Despite the fact that some students of Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Lan-

guages have learned English for more than ten years, they are unable to use the language fluently and accurately. The reason of these can be found in many causes. We have observed that many students are unprepared or unwilling to speak; they have no experience in participating imaginatively and exercising initiatively, because of their poor knowledge of the language and rigid formal training. Most of them are shy and very passive. There are many more reasons for students' unwillingness to speak during the lessons. It seemed more reasonable to give Ur's reasons for difficulties that she encounters in getting students to speak in the classroom [Ur, 1999, p.121]. As she mentions teachers are faced with the following problems while teaching speaking:

- Inhibition: Many students feel inhibited about trying to explain things in English in the classroom. They are worried about making mistakes, about their linguistic abilities learning that others may be more competent and proficient than themselves. In our mind, general anxiety, social anxiety and foreign language anxiety are presented in this student's experience.

- Nothing to say: In some cases students complain that they cannot guess what to produce in FL.

- Low or uneven participation: Only one participant talks at a time, or he she dominates the group while others speak very little or not at all. In a large group each member gets very little talking time.

- Mother-tongue use: When students work in pairs or groups they just end up chatting in their own language. The use of mother tongue is easier than speaking in a FL.

### **SOLUTION OF PROBLEMS**

How a teacher could avoid these problems and help students to develop their speaking skills in these situations? We have analyzed the methodological literature relevant to this question.

Speaking is a very complicated skill and covers external and internal aspects. Brown points out that for external factors speaking requires much more practice and students' embarrassment and shortage of stimulation may bring negative effects into the learning process [Brown, 2000, p.270]. They need more practice speaking during the lessons. As for the intrinsic problems, speech is fluent and students need to learn all the aspects of the language. Furthermore, they have to know informal words and reduced forms including contractions, elisions or reduced vowel, phonological features of speech sound in English. Macaro points out that language learning mostly depends on students' behavior. Effective speakers do not hesitate for too long when they cannot think of how to say something in a foreign language. Most of them try to find solutions to the problems. In these way they are involved in the interaction with others in L2 [Macaro, 2001, p. 538]. To know certain ways of reinforcing in foreign languages is a good ability while communicating in English. Therefore, we also consider that a student's motivation and inspiration is the initial factor of successful language learning.

Ur suggests: "Good speaking skills in classrooms are ones where learners talk a lot, participation is even, motivation is high and the language is at an acceptable level" [Ur,1999, p.120]. If students do not learn how to speak or do not get any opportunity to speak in the language classroom, they may soon get de-motivated and lose interest

in learning. Therefore, as we can see, teachers of English need to be aware of motivation, which is a consideration in determining whether students are willing to communicate: the more meaningful the materials and tasks are for students' involvement, the better the outcome will be. Therefore, motivation is a very important feature that promotes the development of speaking skills.

Scott Thornbury, in his book *How to Teach Speaking*, suggests that the teaching of speaking depends on having a classroom culture of speaking and that classrooms need to become 'talking classrooms'. In other words, students will be much more confident speakers if this kind of speaking activation is a regular feature of the lesson [Thornbury, 2002].

Realistic classroom speaking activities could be seen as an opportunity for rehearsing the things students may want to do outside the classroom, but in a safe environment, where mistakes can be learned from, rather than lead to difficulties and embarrassment. For achieving the goal, it is necessary to define adequate methods and techniques in developing 'speaking lessons'. As teaching practice shows, communicative activities form communicative freedom for students and possibility of independent realization of their creative potential at the lesson.

Communicative activities include any activities that encourage and require a learner to speak with and listen to other learners. Efficiency of this activity is based on putting the students in conditions under which they will have to communicate and exchange opinions on the topic set by the teacher at that moment. Moreover, as it was analyzed during the lessons of English, we have concluded, that a **ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITY** is one of the helpful techniques for a short-term oral fluency improvement for the philological profile students of B2 level.

### **THE NATURE OF A ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITY**

To make students speak fluently in English, we need to apply the language in real communication. Therefore, teachers of English mostly should set up activities properly to develop students speaking skills. Jeremy Harmer points out that there are 3 main reasons for teaching speaking:

- speaking activities provide rehearsal opportunities;
  - speaking tasks show how well students are doing and what problems they are experiencing in a language;
  - speaking activities help students to become autonomous language users
- [Harmer, 2010].

This means that if a teacher provides students with some speaking activities, it will help them to use words and phrases fluently without very much conscious thought.

There is no one single method that can be used in teaching speaking. Many scholars point out that the integration of all four skills (speaking, reading, listening, writing) and usage of informational communicative technologies can raise the effectiveness of teaching communication in a foreign language. Therefore, in order to improve students speaking skills, we can only suggest the required method that could help in the teaching process.

One technique that can be considered effective to stimulate speaking skills is

ROLE-PLAY activities. There are various definitions for this technique. This issue was given in Ladousse work “The word ‘role’ is they play apart (either their own or somebody else’s) in a specific situation. The word ‘play’ means the role is taken on in a safe environment in which students are as inventive and playful as possible. A group of students carrying out a successful role play in a classroom has much in common with a group of children playing school, doctors, and nurses” [Ladousse, 1989, p.103]. Another methodologist points out that role-plays can describe a variety of activities by involving students in ‘simulated’ actions and circumstances [Marzuk, 2005].

Many scholars argue its effectiveness, so it can develop students’ interpersonal skills, creativity, they feel more confident. According to Harmer “Role-Plays simulate the real world in the same kind of way, but the students are given particular roles – they are told who they are and often what they think about a certain subject. They have to speak and act from their new character’s point of view” [Harmer, 2010, p. 125]. In Brown's view point it is a very popular communicative activity that gives an opportunity to rehearsals so that students can map out what they are going to say. Moreover, it has an effect of lowering anxieties during their actions [Brown, 2004, p. 174].

Referring to the mentioned statements, we can conclude that this technique:

- simulates the real world that students have to speak and act from their new role;
- very flexible, playful and inventive that students could show their individuality and enjoy the process;
- from a psychological point of view, it could overcome the language barriers.

### **ADVANTAGES OF ROLE PLAYS**

Many students need to be trained to communicate in FL by some techniques that lead to effective performances in real-life situations. Role-play activities are considered as the best way to communicate effectively in different social situations. Researchers state that a role-play has many advantages that help students achieve their objectives in speaking English. Methodologists mention the following advantages for using this technique in the classroom:

- through a role-play activity we can train students in speaking skill in a variety of situations;
- students freely express their opinions, ideas and act as users of a target language;
- role-play helps to develop phonetic, grammatical and syntactical abilities;
- role-play is very fun, students like this technique, and are very active during it. Thus, enjoyment leads to better acquisition of the language learning;
- it promotes fluency and accuracy in students’ speech. Moreover, students are highly motivated during such classes.

### **CHOOSING MATERIALS**

It is generally accepted that choosing materials for role-play activities is an essential process of teaching. Mostly teachers and tutors use authentic materials in order to make the classroom interesting. Gover mentioned that “Authentic materials are anything a native speaker of English would hear or read or use can be described as authen-

tic: theatre programs, newspapers, magazines, poems, songs, brochures, information leaflets, menus, news broadcasts, films on video – the list is endless. Because authentic materials are not designed for the EFL students, they are not graded for level, although some are obviously more difficult to understand than others” [Gover, 1995, p. 82].

There are several types of roles in role-play activities:

1. The role that corresponds to a real need in students’ life.
2. The role that students play themselves in a variety of situations.
3. The role that they have experienced directly themselves.
4. Fantasy or imaginary roles.

The usage of all above mentioned types of role-plays should create a classroom environment with the help of authentic materials that promote students’ oral language competency. To achieve the goal of the lesson in specific topics, teachers should give a task for students’ collaboration. This can occur when students complete a task through questions-answers in a manner of a role-play technique.

### SUGGESTIONS

Literature review and own observations show that role-play activities are thought not in appropriate way. Teachers supposed to be more active and should develop students’ language skills by giving them an opportunity to feel free during the lesson.

For that reason, the writer would like to share some effective suggestions for teaching English by this technique. There are some steps that promote effective way of planning a lesson by means of role-playing:

**Step 1.** Choose an appropriate method that suits your class level(CLL).

**Step 2.** According to your topic find out authentic materials (TV, radio, newspaper materials, news and etc.).

**Step 3.** In order not to face difficulties organize activities properly (Before the classes organize relevant lesson plans).

**Step 4.** At the beginning of the lesson give an explanation of the aim and the outcomes of the activity.

**Step 5.** Be sure that students have fully understood and have the information they need.

**Step 6.** Present new vocabulary.

**Step 7.** Encourage and motivate them by giving the roles they like before the activity.

**Step 8.** Give them a chance to communicate in different social contexts and roles in real situations.

**Step 9.** During the activity observe as a spectator, after offer commands and advice by giving feedback.

**Step 10.** Ask students’ opinion about their roles and what would they prefer to act next time.

### CONCLUSION

This paper reviewed speaking skills as a priority in languages teaching. Moreover, that is an essential part of a language learning that ease communication in English in real-life situations. There a variety of methods and techniques that a teacher

should apply during his/her speaking lesson properly. The literature review has considered a role-play very helpful in increasing students' communicative abilities.

The findings of the paper indicate that a role-play activity is an effective technique in teaching speaking. Many students come across some problems like self-esteem, low motivation, anxiety, nothing to say during the classes of speaking. The paper showed that in order to avoid these problems teachers should motivate their students with a variety of activities that encourage them and overcome difficulties in their communication. Thus, teachers should follow some suggestions in order to plan appropriate lessons. The author recommends some steps to give learners opportunities to speak English through using activities that help them to speak and motivate them.

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