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USING ROLEPLAYING AS AN INTERACTIVE METHOD TO BOOST SPEAKING IN EFL LESSONS AT UNIVERSITY

This article explores the potential of role-plays to improve oral interaction skills among junior English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners enrolled in a higher language education program. The study is grounded in the theoretical foundations of interactive foreign language teaching technologies and the concept of communicative competence. The analysis revealed that role-plays when implemented strategically, can foster a supportive learning environment and promote the development of oral interaction subskills. Key recommendations for incorporating this interactive method include: (1) selecting engaging and relevant topics that resonate with students' potential real-world experiences to heighten motivation and engagement; (2) utilizing role cards with clearly defined objectives and providing pre-task input on relevant vocabulary and grammar to empower students and reduce performance anxiety; (3) encouraging small group discussions before role-playing activities to create a safe space for practice and foster collaboration among learners; and (4) regularly incorporating role-playing into the curriculum to contribute to the ongoing development of speaking fluency, particularly dialogues, and collaborative communication skills. The article also presented sample activities designed for university-level EFL learners, covering topics such as introductions, making complaints, and personal experiences. These examples illustrate the practical application of the discussed method within the English as a foreign language lesson. In conclusion, this study's findings suggest that the role-playing method aims to enhance oral interaction skills among EFL learners in higher education settings. By incorporating the recommendations outlined in this article, instructors can create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that fosters effective communication skill development. Further research is needed to explore the possibilities of using other interactive methods to develop EFL communicative competence in English as a foreign language lesson in higher language education students.

Introduction. The status of English as an international language in Ukraine and the transformations in higher education emphasize the relevance of ensuring high-quality training for higher education students in foreign language education. According to the English Language Curriculum for Universities [5], the goal of foreign language learning is defined as the formation of communicative foreign language competence (CFLC). One of the components of CFLC is speech competence (displaying competence), which involves perfect mastery of four types of speech activity: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Speaking is the most important and challenging skill to develop when learning English as a foreign language (EFL) [11]. Thus, EFL speaking as a communicative skill and means of communication is an important type of speech activity and one of the main goals of teaching the course "Practice of Oral and Written English Speech" in higher linguistic education.

Theoretical background. According to Scott Thornbury, spoken (oral) interaction as a type of speaking is much more challenging for EFL students to cope with. In interactive activities (spoken interaction), the language user acts alternately as a speaker and a listener with one or more interlocutors to construct conjointly through the negotiation of meaning following the cooperative principle of conversational discourse [16]. Interactive activities include transactions, interviews, practical goal-oriented cooperation, casual conversations, discussions, debates, etc. Reception and production strategies are employed constantly during interaction. There are also classes of cognitive and collaborative strategies concerned with managing cooperation and interaction such as turn-taking and turn-giving, framing the issue and establishing a line of approach, proposing and evaluating solutions, recapping and summarising the point reached, and mediating in a conflict [10].

One of the ways to boost oral interaction skills is the use of interactive technologies, as «they solve several tasks in the EFL lesson, including the formation of sustainable motivation for foreign language activity based on the systematic use of "living" materials, discussion of current problems, etc.» [2, p. 473]. Role-plays are one of the game-based situational interactive methods [4] to teach dialogical speech/ dialogue/ oral interaction [1, p. 333], which could be effectively used at the initial stage of training in higher linguistic education. Therefore, the article aims to characterize the interactive method of "role-playing" and, considering the hands-on experience of working in a higher language school, to demonstrate the possibilities of its use for the development of foreign language skills of junior students studying EFL.

Methods and materials. In the process of the research, a complex of interconnected theoretical methods was used: analysis, synthesis, and systematization of facts, phenomena, and processes – to determine theoretical approaches, features of organizing EFL speaking and oral production instruction through role-plays; comparative method – to clarify the essence of scientific definitions and the conceptual field of research; method of designing and evaluation of information relevance – to identify stages of implementing role-plays in EFL lessons to design and implement the authors' role-plays aligned with the course "Practice of Oral and Written English Speech"; empirical methods: scientific consultations, conversations with colleagues, pedagogical observations. The research materials include scientific and pedagogical sources (educational and methodical literature, teaching materials, electronic sources of the Internet, etc.).

It is worth noting that Tetiana Koval defines interactive foreign language teaching technologies (IFLTT). According to the researcher, they «represent an organization of foreign language communication among learners that involves, by learning objectives and individual learner characteristics, the most effective integrated application of methods, techniques, tools, and forms of instruction to achieve a pre-planned and appropriate level of

CFLC» [3]. Furthermore, the researcher defines the characteristic features of IFLTT in higher education institutions which include: active participation, collaboration, communicative and situational nature of learning activities; the development of learners' reflective skills, attention span, imagination, and creative thinking; fostering systematic and logical thinking, as well as curiosity, cognitive independence, and persistence in achieving the set goal [3].

An important component of interactive teaching technologies is the teaching method. It should be noted that D. Brown's definition of "method" — a generalized set of classroom instructions aimed at completing linguistic tasks [9, p. 16] — does not fully coincide with the generally accepted definition of this concept in Ukrainian foreign language teaching methodology, both in its broad sense (a direction in teaching) and narrow sense (a way of teaching language aspects or types of speech activity). Therefore, an interactive teaching method is a way of collective interaction among participants in the pedagogical process through conversation and dialogue, during which their interaction takes place with the aim of mutual understanding, joint problem-solving of learning tasks, and the development of learners' personal qualities. According to Tetiana Koval, the most common traditional methods for organizing interactive learning, which are used in foreign language teaching in higher education, are: verbal methods — conversation, dialogue; visual methods — interactive demonstration; collaborative learning methods — pair work, small group work, "carousel," etc.; collaborative group methods — "case study," "brainstorming," problem-solving, "jigsaw," etc.; situational learning methods — role-playing games, simulation games; discussion-based learning methods — discussion, debate, etc.; and research methods — the project-based learning, etc. [3].

The definition and key characteristics of the "role-playing" method are given below. Tetiana Koval defines role-plays as interactive situational game-based methods, and simulation methods [3]. Scott Thornbury underlines that speaking activities involving a drama element provide a useful ground for real-life language use. A distinction is made between role-plays and simulations. Role-plays involve the adoption of another person when students have to pretend to be a celebrity or an employer. Information about their roles is usually supplied in the form of role-cards. In a simulation students «play» themselves in a simulated situation: they might be stuck in a lift or phoning to arrange an outgoing. Drama is the more general term, which comprises both role-play and simulation, as well as other types of activities, such as play-reading, recitation, and improvisation [16]. Modern researchers describe role-playing «as one of the most advised activities in TBLT, which includes a variety of other activities. Role-playing game is an effective way to teach foreign languages to develop students' communicative competence» [14, p. 280].

According to Adam Blatner, role-play is a technique that allows students to explore realistic situations by interacting with other people in a managed way to develop experience and try different strategies in a supported environment. Students, who practice role-plays, become more interested and involved in a lesson as they attempt to apply knowledge to action, solve problems, and look for creative solutions. Students manage to improve a range of abilities, such as initiative, self-confidence, group or pair work, and communication in general [8]. However, methodologists point out some practical disadvantages of implementing role-plays, which are related to their implementation. It is stated by Adam Blatner that students don't always take the scenarios seriously. Therefore, an activity becomes a distractor for learners because they consider it as a funny game, but not a learning process. Another drawback is the time since role-plays take up almost a whole lesson if to include guide planning and the follow-up. Although the researcher underlines the importance of warming up a class before starting a role-play, since it is an improvisational activity, students need to feel safe before performing. It makes it important to focus on a speaking activity in general and role-play in particular [8].

Scott Thornbury defines principles of good speaking tasks that underlie his favourite activities, which include: 1) repetition – e.g. of the same questions or the answers, or both

questions and answers; 2) interaction – students not only have to speak but they have to listen and respond to one another; 3) support – activities are supported in a secure framework, e.g. a script or a text so that the anxiety often associated with spontaneous speaking is reduced [15]. Role-plays follow the above-mentioned principles as they could be repeated with a different partner, students interact with their partner, and the support is provided in role-play cards and the lead-in stage as a part of a basic model for teaching productive skills by Jeremy Harmer.

Teaching productive skills effectively involves a structured approach: lead-in (topic engagement), task setting (clear instructions and demonstration), monitoring (support and guidance), feedback (content and language focus), and follow-up (reinforcement or repetition). Initially, a lead-in engages students with the topic, activating prior knowledge or setting the context (e.g., discussing tourism experiences before a debate, or considering check-in conversations before a role-play). Task setting clarifies the activity, often with demonstrations and checks for understanding. During task monitoring, teachers provide support and guidance. Post-task feedback addresses both content and language, emphasizing positive achievements. Finally, follow-up activities or task repetition can reinforce learning [12].

A structured approach to speaking instruction, as outlined by Christine C.M. Goh and Ann Burns involves a seven-stage cycle designed to enhance communicative competence. These stages include: (1) a lead-in to focus learners on the activity; (2) input and planning support; (3) the performance of the speaking task; (4) analysis of language, skills, and strategies; (5) task repetition; (6) learner reflection; and (7) teacher feedback. This cyclical model emphasizes both fluency development and focused attention to language and strategic competence [11].

However, as stated in the article «Role Play to Improve ESL Learners' Communication Skills: A Systematic Review», «the major issue with any role-playing activities or simulation is that teachers must accept that there will be some degree of unpredictability and instability when conducting role-play activity in classrooms. Students can get out of hand, and they will have to act quickly to restore order in the classroom.» [13, p. 887].

Results and discussions. Based on the authors' hands-on experience, several recommendations for practice and further research emerge. Firstly, role-play topics should be engaging and relevant to students' potential real-world experiences. Secondly, utilizing role cards with clearly defined perspectives, emotions, and objectives for each participant is advised. Pre-task input focusing on relevant vocabulary, grammar, and idiomatic expressions can enhance student confidence. Collaborative pre-role-play discussions within small groups can foster a supportive learning environment. Finally, regular implementation of role-play activities is recommended to promote speaking skills development and enhance student collaboration.

Here are some sample activities designed by the authors of the article to implement in EFL lessons at the university presented in the coursebook «Practical Course of English as a Foreign Language» [6; 7].

Sample roleplay 1
Coursebook topic: Dream team [7, p. 40]
Topic: Introducing yourself
A. What phases will you use to introduce yourself? What might people talk about when they meet for the first time?
B. Work in pairs. Do a role-play «Introduction».
Student A, Student B: Take on the role of the famous person marked on your card. Search the internet to find some facts to introduce yourself better, if necessary.
Your task is to introduce yourself to the other famous person and have a small talk with him/ her. Introduce yourself by saying Hello, I'm... Nice to meet you. Let me introduce myself, Pleased to meet you ..., Where are you from? What do you do? etc.
Repeat the activity with different cards or tell the class who you met.

Famous people: Oprah Winfrey, Justin Bieber, William Shakespeare, Lesia Ukrainka, Beyoncé, Elon Musk, Bill Gates, Kylie Jenner, Margaret Thatcher, Marie Curie, Florence Nightingale, Jane Austen, Boris Johnson, Diana, Princess of Wales, Emma Watson, etc.

Sample role-play 2

Coursebook topic: Go on a shopping spree [6, p. 38–39].

Topic: Making a complaint and apologizing

A. Which functions and conversational formulas from the grid can be used by a customer and a sales manager? Why/ why not?

Function 1: Making apologies	*Function 2: Accepting apologies*
I do apologize for...	*That's all right.*
I must apologize for...	*Never mind.*
I apologize for...	*Don't apologize.*
I'd like to apologize for...	*It doesn't matter.*
I am so sorry for...	*Don't worry about it.*
We shouldn't have...	*Don't mention it.*
It's all my fault.	*That's OK.*
I'm ashamed of...	*I quite understand.*
Please, forgive me for...	*You couldn't help it.*
Excuse me for ...	*Forget about it.*
I'm terribly sorry for...	*Don't worry about it.*
Pardon me for this...	*No harm done.*
Please, forgive me for my....	
Please, accept my apologies for…	

(From https://www.myenglishpages.com/english/communication-lesson-apologizing.php)

B. Read the tips from https://www.writeexpress.com/apolog01.html and https://young.scot/get-informed/national/six-steps-to-making-a-successful-customer-complaint. Which tips are useful for an angry customer? Why/ why not?

C. Work in pairs. Do a role-play «The Angry Customer». Use the suggested functions and tips.

Student A: You are the sales manager of a small firm. You receive a telephone call from an angry customer who bought a smartphone from your company but is not happy with it. They are now threatening to take their story to a consumer watchdog and to the trading standards representative. Your objective is to resolve the issue with the minimum damage to the company (financially and in terms of our reputation). Plan your response and have a talk with the customer.

Student B: You are an angry customer who bought a smartphone from a small company but you are not happy with it. You are now threatening to take your story to a consumer watchdog and to the trading standards representative. Talk to their sales manager to resolve the issue with the maximum profit to you.

Sample simulation 3 «Reunion party»

Coursebook topic: Together forever [6, p. 162]

Topic: Personal accomplishments and failures

A. You are invited to a school reunion party. You decide to go along and see your old schoolmates and friends. Before you do, decide on the following: How successful has this year been for you? What are your accomplishments? What haven't you managed to achieve yet? What personal changes have you come through? What are some interesting things that have happened to you since you left school?

B. Try to speak to everyone. Whose life has changed a lot? Use the prompts 1-6.

1) Express surprise	*2) Paying compliments*
Is that you,…?	*You look wonderful/awesome/great!*
What a surprise!	*What have you done to your hair!*
You haven't changed!	*I have to admit I'm jealous of your…*

Look at you!
I can't believe my eyes!

3) Making observations

You've lost/put on weight!
You've dyed/cut your hair
You've changed your image!
Another you!

4) Small talk

How is it going?
How are you faring?
Fine! Fantastic!

5)Talking about yourself

I'm living in….
I've started to study…
I've got married…
I've just changed….
Here is a photo of….

6) Keeping the conversation going

Do you remember playing a joke…
Do you know what happened to…
Have you seen …
Who is that? I have forgotten the name…

Conclusions. This article investigated the potential of role-playing activities to enhance the development of oral interaction skills among junior EFL learners enrolled in a higher language education program. The study drew upon theoretical keystones of interactive foreign language teaching technologies and the concept of communicative competence.

The analysis revealed that when implemented strategically, role-plays can foster a supportive learning environment and promote the development of various communication skills. Key recommendations to implement this interactive method include: 1) engaging and relevant topics: by selecting role-play scenarios that resonate with students' potential real-world experiences, instructors can heighten motivation and engagement; 2) structured approach: utilizing role cards with clearly defined objectives and providing pre-task input on relevant vocabulary and grammar can empower students and reduce performance anxiety; 3) collaborative learning: Encouraging small group discussions before role-playing tasks can create a safe space for practice and foster collaboration among learners; 4) regular implementation: Regularly incorporating role-playing activities into the curriculum can contribute to the ongoing development of speaking fluency and collaborative communication skills.

The article also presented sample activities designed for university-level EFL learners, covering topics such as introductions, making complaints, and personal experiences. These examples illustrate the practical application of the discussed method within the EFL lesson.

In conclusion, this study's findings suggest that the role-playing method holds significant promise for enhancing oral interaction skills among EFL learners in higher education settings. By incorporating the recommendations outlined in this article, instructors can leverage the power of role-playing to create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that fosters effective communication skill development. Further research is needed to explore the possibilities of using other interactive methods to develop EFLCC in higher language education students.

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РОЛЬОВА ГРА ЯК ІНТЕРАКТИВНИЙ МЕТОД РОЗВИТКУ МОВЛЕННЄВОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ В ГОВОРІННІ НА ЗАНЯТТЯХ З АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ЯК ІНОЗЕМНОЇ У ВИЩІЙ ШКОЛІ

У статті досліджено потенціал використання рольових ігор як ефективного методу розвитку умінь англомовного говоріння, зокрема діалогічного мовлення, в студентів молодших курсів, які вивчають англійську мову як іноземну в закладах вищої освіти. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена зростаючою роллю англійської мови в Україні та трансформаціями, що відбуваються у вищій освіті, які вимагають якісної підготовки фахівців з іноземної мови. Метою статті є характеристика інтерактивного методу «рольова гра» та демонстрація можливостей його застосування для розвитку іншомовних навичок студентів молодших курсів.

У роботі використано комплекс взаємопов'язаних теоретичних методів: аналіз, синтез та систематизація наукових джерел для визначення теоретичних підходів до організації навчання усного мовлення за допомогою рольових ігор; порівняльний метод для уточнення сутності наукових дефініцій; метод проєктування та оцінювання інформаційної релевантності для розробки етапів впровадження рольових ігор на лабораторних заняттях з практики усного та писемного мовлення. Емпіричну базу дослідження склали педагогічні спостереження, консультації з колегами та аналіз практичного досвіду.

У статті розглянуто визначення та ключові характеристики інтерактивних технологій навчання іноземних мов, особливу увагу приділено методу рольової гри як одному з ефективних засобів розвитку іншомовної комунікативної компетентності. Проаналізовано різні підходи до визначення поняття «рольова гра» та її відмінності від симуляцій. На основі аналізу наукової літератури та практичного досвіду авторами сформульовано рекомендації щодо ефективного використання рольових ігор на лабораторних заняттях з англійської мови, зокрема: вибір цікавих та релевантних для студентів тем, використання карток з чітко визначеними ролями та завданнями, проведення підготовчих вправ для активізації необхідної лексики та граматики, створення сприятливої атмосфери для спілкування та співпраці.

У статті також представлено приклади рольових ігор, розроблених авторами для студентів, які вивчають англійську мову як іноземну, що охоплюють такі теми, як знайомство, висловлення скарг та обговорення особистих досягнень. Ці приклади ілюструють практичне застосування методу в освітньому процесі. Результати дослідження підтверджують ефективність використання рольових ігор для розвитку діологічного мовлення студентів-початківців. Запропоновані рекомендації можуть допомогти викладачам створювати динамічне та цікаве навчальне середовище, що сприяє розвитку комунікативних вмінь. Перспективи подальших досліджень вбачаються у вивченні можливостей використання інших інтерактивних методів для формування іншомовної комунікативної компетентності студентів.

Ключові слова: інтерактивні технології навчання, рольова гра, англомовне говоріння, діалогічне мовлення, лабораторне заняття з англійської мови як іноземної, іншомовна комунікативна компетентність, вища лінгвістична освіта.