

Role-Play: An Interactive Activity to Enhance the English-Speaking Skills of undergraduate Students

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Abstract: Improving fluency in English is one of the critical academic challenges of Indian engineering graduates. The student's frequently come across various difficulties in practicing English speaking. The most commonly found problem with every engineering graduate in speaking English is the impact of the mother tongue on English. Another reason is the lack of motivation to practice using English in their everyday conversations. Most of the students are shy feeling and afraid of participating in conversations with their peer members in English. Likewise, many factors may cause difficulties in engineering students' interactive skills explicitly the students' learning environment, learning sources, their interest, including the techniques used in teaching English. Numerous ways can be used by engineering students to enhance their speaking skills in English. The role of English teachers is also equally important in the teaching-learning processes of English speaking skills. The teaching techniques used by the English teacher should create interest in students to practice their speaking. One such kind of technique is role play, which is so interactive, interesting, and fun way of learning English.

Key Words: Engineering graduates, English speaking skills, Role-play activity

1. Introduction

Speaking is one of the most fundamental skills of human beings, as we do it constantly; we can examine the processes involved in our day-to-day life. Many factors are involved in the speaking ability of a person, such as a vocabulary, structure, grammatically arranged sentences. Speaking is the ability, which is the assimilation of many subsystems. Including all these factors in speaking in English is a challenging task for engineering graduates. Yet it is the unavoidable skill they need to master. "Encouraging talking is sometimes viewed as very simple. Business language schools around the globe recruit individuals which no preparation to educate discussion. Albeit talking is normal, communicating in a language other than our own is definitely not simple." (Bailey, 2003: 48)

There are many teaching techniques and media available to enhance the English speaking abilities. Role-play technique is very appropriate and interesting for improving students' speaking skills. According to Bailey in Nunan (2003: 57); "Role-plays are additionally incredible exercises for speaking in the generally protected environment of the classroom. In a role-play, learners are given specific roles in the specific language. For instance, one learner plays the role of a traveler calling the police to report his wallet taken. Another participant plays the role of a cop attempting to help the traveler document a report. Role-plays offer students to work on communicating in the target language before they should do as such in the real-time situations."

Through role-plays, the students pretend to be or act a character in a particular situation. It increases their learning interest and enthusiasm. It is an effective activity in which learners are supposed to use English imaginatively and it stimulates a discussion among students in which students get a chance to exercise and enhance their English speaking skills.

2. Literature review:

How to Impart Speaking skills?

The prime responsibility of English teachers while teaching young engineering students is, they have to keep one fact in mind that every classroom is a combination of students with diverse abilities, observations, expectations, knowledge, motivation level, and even diverse learning strategies. Thus, the English teachers have to use various methodologies and provide as many opportunities as possible to mark the entire classroom find something to hold on to, to develop and grow.

Speaking

Mastering the speaking skills is one of the most crucial characteristics of second language learning. During learning, the success of learning is measured through the ability to interact with others in English conversations. Bygate cited in Nunan (1991: 40) proposes that; "Oral conversations can be portrayed as far as schedules, which are ordinary (and subsequently unsurprising) methods of introducing data schedules contain frequently repeating kinds of data structures, being either be interpretive or evaluative."

Skill

Each person who was brought into the world on this planet should have an expertise. It tends to be grown typically as long as individuals live in this world. It is generally enhanced through individual experience or training. Individuals can improve their abilities as long as they need to learn a lot. As per Advanced Learner's word reference of current English (Hornby, Gatenby, and Wakefield), Skill is the "capacity to accomplish something expertly and well".

Skill must be enhanced continuously if one wants to grow be an expert. Skill concerning communication includes;

- the capacity to articulate phonological highlights of the English language plainly
- Skills in utilizing fitting mood, word pressure, and inflection designs
- An satisfactory level of English familiarity
- Interpersonal and transactional abilities
- Skills in the administration of collaboration;
- The ability to take part in short and long speaking sessions
- The ability to convey meaningful sentences
- Conversational speaking and listening skills
- The ability to know about and negotiating the aimsof conversations
- Using proper conversational fillers and formulate

3. Role-Play

Role-play is a speaking activity with a great scope for interaction, in which students put themselves into somebody else's shoes, or they stay in their shoes and assume themselves in an imaginary situation and enact a role.

Porter-Ladousse (1987: 3), defined "Role-play exercises range from profoundly controlled guided discussions toward one side of the scale to ad libbed show exercises at the other; from basic practiced exchange execution to exceptionally complex mimicked situations."

As Qing (2011) says, "Role-play is defined as the prediction in real-life circumstances with social actions" (p. 37).

Simulation:

Role-play and simulation both are different exercises yet they are reflected to be regular exercises that are much of the time directed simultaneously and they supplement one another. Role-play in a reproduction exercise is the place where students pick counterfeit roles to showcase a circumstance in a fixed setting. The students can showcase the allocated roles to tour the circumstance, relate their abilities and to encounter the circumstance according to another perspective, and excite and acknowledge feelings. Simulation is an awesome critical thinking activity where students bring their lead, insight, and thoughts to the given assignment.

Assuming Imaginary people:

Role-play gives freedom to the students to become anybody they want for a short duration! The chief minister, Prime-minister, the king or the Queen, a Business tycoon, a film star or a sports person, the options are ceaseless!

Learners may also respond to the views of others. The teacher can split the class into two teams and conduct a debate. Students can act in favor or against the given situation or topic by expressing their views.

Assuming Imaginary situations:

Through role-play, students get an opportunity of getting into an imaginative world and experience the situation. Situational language for multiple settings may be triggered and trained through role-playing. ‘the Cash counter in a bank’, ‘checking in at an airport’, ‘Complaining about the lost property at the police station’ are all possible.

Role or a character is well-defined as an individual whom an artist embodies in a movie or drama, whereas role-play is a technique of imitation in specific types of performing or fantasizing to be another person who contends with completely new circumstances. It is most commonly utilized in training programmes, language acquisition, and psychoanalysis.

Regarding this Gillian Porter Ladousse exemplified that when students mirror a character, they assume the part of another person in a given condition. Role-play is something that gives a protected picking up setting where students are just about as shrewd and vivacious as plausible.

Crooked opines that, there is a slight consent on the conditions applied in the role-play and simulation. Some of the conditions that are regularly applied correspondently are simulation plays, discussions, games, group activities, role-play, and role-play simulation.

Simulation is a larger concept compare to role-play. Simulations are multi-faceted, extensive, and comparatively unyielding events. Whereas, role-play is a quite simple, very flexible and short-term technique to organize which, gives great scope for the workout of student’s distinction, inventiveness, and imagination. On the other hand, role-play is also involved in simulation as well.

While characterizing role-play, Donn Byrne remarked that role-play is a piece of dramatization activity. Later he characterized that essentially there are three terms to incorporate the dramatization exercises. They are an emulate, reenactment, and role. He characterized these three terms as follows:

- a. Mime:** the members perform actions by communicating their feelings through gestures and facial expressions without using words. It is also called a dumb-show.
- b. Role-play:** the members interact with each other in imaginary situations and act according to the given role.
- c. Simulation:** It implicates role-play as discussed above. Nonetheless, for this action, the members generally confer an issue of a particular situation that has been given to them.

Both simulation and role-play are frequently used in English language classrooms to enable the students to enhance their communicative skills. However ‘Mime’ is more suitable as a language activity. It is very helpful in teaching non-verbal communication. For example, if any student mimes and action, the other students try to guess what it is.

4. Key benefits of role-playing:

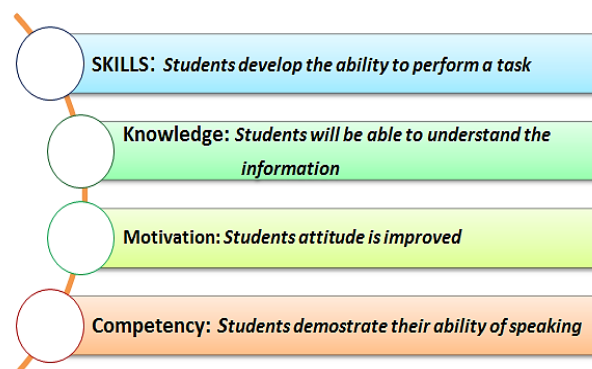


Figure 1:

Skills:

- It helps students develop English language and communication skills
- When the students collaborate with others and work in a team they develop social skills
- Students develop not only develop speaking skills but also listening skills

Knowledge:

- Students develop the ability to analyze and comprehend the scenario.
- It allows students to act out and develop a sense of real-time situations.
- Helps students understand the attitudes and behavior of peer members and exchange their knowledge.
- It develops the students' awareness of themselves and others.

Motivation:

- These interactive sessions motivate the passive students.
- Create interest in learning
- Students feel comfortable with teamwork and support of others
- Students notice their capabilities during role-play

Competency:

- It gives insights into society like cooperation and competition
- It helps to adopt problem-solving and handling difficult situations
- It develops the creativity and imagination of students

5. Different steps of conducting role-play:

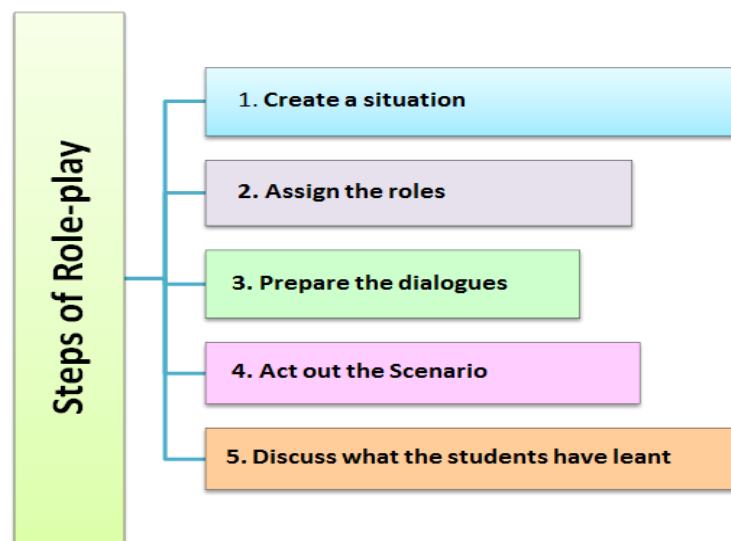


Figure 2:

- 1. Creating a situation:** It is the first step in conducting the role-play. The teacher has to carefully create a situation. Students should not feel difficulty understanding the situation and become panic. It must be simple and clear.
- 2. Assigning the roles:** The second step is to assign the roles to students. The teacher has to assign the roles according to the abilities of the students. Sometimes a few roles need much involvement and a few may not. Hence the teacher must have an idea of student's capabilities while assigning the roles to them.
- 3. Preparation:** The students have to be given time for their preparation like writing dialogues as per their role given and practicing. They need to analyze the situation and do proper practice before the presentation.

4. **Presenting the scenario:** During the role-play, the teacher has to assess the individual performance, their language, and expressions used. Body language plays the main role in role-playing. Students are to be given marks and feedback after the role-play.
5. **Discuss the learning experience:** After the role-play, the teacher has to enquire what the students have learned through the role-play, their difficulties, interesting things experienced. This final discussion gives them encouragement for further participation.

6. Types of Role Play

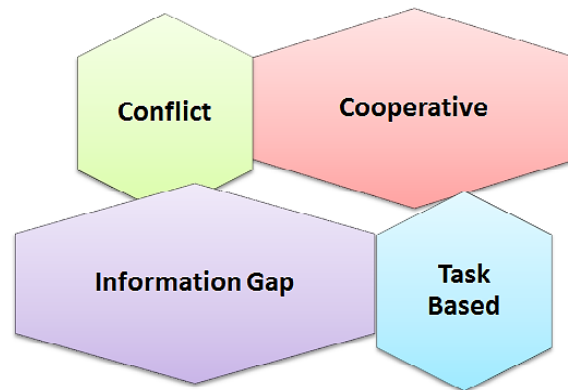


Figure 2:

6.1 The cooperative role-play:

The role-play takes the opposite tactic to compare to conflict role-play. In this role-play, the students have to work collaboratively for a common good.

Students plan an adieu party for the teacher, they discuss the arrangements to be done like giving an invitation to the principal and other teachers, deciding the food list, etc. in this role-play all the students have to play a cooperative role. These kinds of role-plays are very good for shy feeling students, which ease them and build relationships within the student group.

Role-play-1

Student: "Good morning, _____ sir.

Teacher: Hello, _____, please distribute these papers to all the students.

A few minutes later the teacher approaches the student

Teacher: "Why haven't you solved the given problem yet?"

Student: "I thought you wanted me to distribute the papers first".

Teacher: "I don't care what you think I said. I want to solve the given problem".

6.2 The conflict resolution role-plays:

In this kind of role-play, students are given a contradictory situation and are asked to deal with that as best as they can. These

situations might include asking a neighbor to low down the TV volume, attempting to change an airline ticket at a peak time, etc. In these kinds of role-plays, students' language skills are assessed under pressure. It improves the maturity and confidence levels of students.

Example:

Role-play-2

Student 1: "Hello buddies! Let's plan an adieu party for our English teacher.

All the students: "Yah, that's a wonderful idea to show our love respect towards him"

Student 1: let's list out the arrangements to be done.

- *Preparing invitation cards*
- *List of guests for the programme*
- *List of food items*
- *Gift for the teacher*
- *Programme organizer*
- *Arranging a photographer*

Anything else friends.

Student 2: Nothing else, I would like to responsibility of ordering invitation cards.

Student 3: I will order the food as I know manager of famous caters of our town.

Student 4: Ya I was about to say that, and then I will buy a gift for the teacher.

Student 5: I will talk to photographer

Student 6: if it so I will act as a programme coordinator.

Student 1: ok we have to make this adieu party a memorable one for our English teacher

The scene can be planned in a classroom. One person plays the role of a teacher and another plays the role of a student. The teacher is going to assign a task to the student (i.e. distributing the papers). The student distributes the papers. The teacher then comes back and tells the student to do another task (finish the given problem) in a tone of voice that annoys the student.

Conflict resolution technique

Self-instruction examples:

"Be calm."

"Relax."

"He forgot what he asked me to do."

"Talk to him and ask him what exactly he wanted you to do."

"Don't worry about this; you can do both the tasks given."

Resolution statement:

"Sir, I was confused by your instructions; I thought I was supposed to distribute the papers first, which would you like for me to do first?"

6.3 Information-gap role-play

These role-play aides in filling the gaps in the students' awareness. Students need to embroil in the circumstances like responding to inquiries from client care, requesting plan subtleties, making a library card, or

questioning a robbery suspect are all information gap type circumstances. The time circumstance based role-plays are easy to set up yet may require more detailed arrangements. They give a brilliant method to rehearse question and answer designs and set up the students for genuine experiences.

Example:

Role-play-3

Student A:

You are a guest staying at a hotel. The hotel website says it is a luxury hotel, but in your room the sheets and towels are dirty, the bathroom is too small, the street outside is very noisy and ... (you decide two more problems). You want to change to a better room and you want a discount. Talk to the receptionist and solve the problem.

Student B:

You are a hotel receptionist. There is a guest staying at the hotel who complains about everything, even when there isn't a problem. You can move a guest to a different room, but you can't change the price of a room. Talk to the guest and solve the problem.

Look at the information on your role card and talk to your partner. Find a solution to the problem.

Source: www.Britishcouncil.org/learnerenglishteens.comhttp://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org.cn/zh-hans/node/576

6.4 Task-based role play

For these role-plays the students require to complete a set activity such as checking into a hotel, giving directions to an unknown person, ordering a meal at a restaurant, or getting the phone number of a person of interest. They are very useful for supporting students to practice real-life survival English skills and building students' confidence to function in real situations.

Example:

Role-play-4

CARD-1

You are a customer

- You are looking for gifts for two people
- Your father and a friend
- Ask for the varieties of gifts
- Ask for suggestions
- Ask for the prices/ discount
- Ask him/her to wrap the gifts
- Thank him/her

CARD-2

You are a clerk

- Offer the help to customer
- Inform him/her what is on sale today
- Suggestions: A bottle of perfume for father, a pair of shoes to a friend
- Price details
- Guide him to the bill desk
- Thank him/her for the shopping.

Situation: you are in a shopping mall and have 15000/- to spend.

Questions the teacher has to ask himself while planning role-play:

- What kinds of grammar points and language structures do I want my students to use during role-play, and will this role play integrate them naturally?

- Do I have an idea of what I want to see occur in the role play?
- Do my students have the social and language skills to manage?
- What instructions should I give to the students to make them understand their roles?
- Is the planned situation appropriate for the status, age, and level of the learners in a particular group?
- What am I expecting from my students from the exercise and how can I highlight this through feedback?

7. Conclusion:

Integrating role-play into the English classroom provides the students a variety of learning opportunities to improve their English speaking skills with added fun and entertainment. Though there are ample techniques available in training speaking skills role-play is a kind of different interactive activity that makes English language acquisition stimulating and more effective. The support and the instructor's motivation help the students to have a chance to mirror their considerations in English, improve jargon, pick up tuning in, social abilities, and furthermore improve innovative reasoning abilities. Subsequently role-plays can be accepted as a fundamental piece of the English language educating and learning process.

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