

ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITIES AS ONE OF THE TECHNIQUES FOR DEVELOPING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS (FOR ECONOMY STUDENTS)

Micaela ȚAULEAN, PhD, Associate Professor,
Faculty of Philology,
Alecu Russo Balti State University

Rezumat: Autorii analizează tehnicile de joc de rol și de joc de afaceri în procesul de predare a limbii engleze studenților-masteranzi la cursul de „Comunicarea și corespondența de afaceri”. Articolul descrie beneficiile tehnicii joc de rol/ joc de afaceri pentru dezvoltarea abilităților comunicative în limba engleză. Autoarea articolului oferă unele exemple de utilizare a metodelor „joc de rol” și „joc de afaceri” la orele de curs.

Cuvinte-cheie: competență comunicativă, joc de rol, joc de afaceri, activitate comunicativă, abor-dare centrată pe persoană, proces de comunicare, activitate profesională, parteneri de discurs.

Mastering a foreign language in everyday life, as well as in socio-cultural and especially in professional lives is one of the prerequisites for MA students from Economy department having a high level of communicative competence.

The development of technology nowadays has influenced English language teaching. Instead of technology, the development in science and economics require to use English as media to communicate among specialists around the world.

Therefore, teaching oral communication in a foreign language class within the framework of a learner-centred approach is one of the topical issues that aim to develop foreign language communicative competence, i.e. the ability to carry out interpersonal, intercultural communication by means of the English language under study.

The process of learning a foreign language is essentially a model of the communication process. To create a learning process as a model of the communication process means - to model the basic, or important parameters of communication, which include:

- *The personal nature of the communicative activities of the subjects of communication;*
- *Partner relationships in the process of communication;*
- *Situations as a form of functioning communication;*
- *The content basis of the communication process;*
- *The system of speech that would ensure communicative activity in communicative situations.*

Pedagogical activity takes place in communication with students and cannot take place outside of communication. Hence, the main components of future specialist's readiness for his/her professional activity are motivation and competence in communication.

The students often find some problems in practising English speaking. The problem frequently found is that their native language causes them difficult to use the foreign language. Other reason is because of motivation lack to practice English in daily conversation. They are also too shy and afraid to take part in the classroom conversation. Many factors can cause the problem of the students' speaking skills namely the students' interest, the material, and the media among others including the technique in teaching English. There are many ways that can be done by the students to develop their ability in speaking English. The appropriate method used by the English teacher also supports their interested in practising their speaking.

The MA students from Economy department are required not only to be proficient in scientific and economy fields, but also be able to present and to defend their ideas, suggestions, proposals in public or at negotiations. They are required to be able to analyse and summarise facts as well. Therefore, teaching English to business students requires an appeal to creative thinking and to the organisation of their thinking activity. The learning process should seek to ensure that learning activities take place in an environment of direct communication and play.

Some methodologists (Nunan, Freeman) state that the traditional teaching of ESP has generally focused on the delivery of language information through reading comprehension, writing, vocabulary and grammar exercises neglecting the need to integrate it with skills.

However, the others (Johnson, Keith & Morrow), believe that interactive teamwork, critical reading and writing, communication skills, negotiation, presentations are some of the vital soft skills for today's academic and future work environment.

One of the techniques that can be used by the English teacher is role-play activity. Role play is very important in teaching speaking because it gives students an opportunity to practice communicating speaking in different social contexts and in different social roles.

According to Stephen D. Hatting, "*the role play seem to be the ideal activity in which students might find themselves and give them an opportunity to practice and develop their communication ability*" [4, p. 165].

The methodological literature distinguishes two types of plays: role play and business play. Role plays are the subject of many scholars (L.S. Vygotsky, B.D. Elkonin, C. Livingstone, etc.). All role-plays are reduced to two main types, which differ from each other in the level of the role-players' autonomy (set/unset situation and plot development), by control subject (teacher/student self-control), by nature of roles (own, status and position roles/fictitious characters):

- **Communicative situation - role-playing games** (aimed at developing communication skills on everyday topics);
- **Professional (business) games**, imitating the situation of the characters' work activities.

Role-playing involves a certain number of characters and a problem situation. Each participant in the game organises his or her speech and non-speech behaviour during the game, depending on the behaviour of the partners and his or her communicative goal.

Role-playing can consist of *a single communicative act* (such as: introductions, greetings, etc.) and *a complex communicative act* consisting of a series of simple ones united by the situation and a common communicative purpose.

Role-play is any speaking activity when you either put yourself into somebody else's shoes, or when you stay in your own shoes but put yourself into an imaginary situation. The students can "become" anyone they like for a short time - The President, the Queen, a millionaire, a pop star and others. "For and Against" debates can be used and the class can be split into those who are expressing views in favour and those who are against the theme.

The teacher can use interviews, TV talk shows, panel discussions, debates, and conversations in which students take roles of famous or infamous people past or present or even well-known characters from literature. The topics for discussion can be controversial or humourous, for instance, consider Bill Gates and Alexander Graham Bell discussing communications technology; or, as Richard-Amato suggests, Henry VIII being interviewed about divorce. These ideas can be used effectively to help mainstream ESL MA students with topics being covered at the course of "Business communication and correspondence".

The first business game was developed in Leningrad, Russia in 1932 by M. M. Birshtein. It was called an organisational and production test. But due to a number of reasons the business game did not get serious development and application at that time and was revived only in the USA in 1957, where it was conducted with the use of a computer. In Russian methodology, business games became the object of research and development in the 60s.

According to Verbitzki A., the business game is „*a form of recreating the object and social content of the future activity of a specialist (economist, engineer, accountant, etc.), modelling those systems of relations which are characteristic of this activity as a whole*" [5, p. 13-15].

A business game can include a range of active learning methods: discussion, brainstorming, case studies and guided activities. The business game can be used to solve complex tasks of learning new material, consolidation and creative abilities' development.

The technology of a business game includes the following stages:

- **Preparation stage** (development of the scenario, plan of the game with a clear presentation of the characteristics of the actors).

- **Explanation stage** (introduction to the game is carried out, work mode is defined, main goal is formulated. Pre-prepared packs of materials, instructions, rules are issued, additional explanations are given).
- **The conducting stage** (directly – conducting the game, playing out the situation, fulfilling certain roles).
- **Analysis and synthesis stage** (exchange of opinions, analysis of mistakes, summarizing the lesson).

We use role-play and business games while studying the following topics at the course of Business communication and correspondence” with MA students: *Applying for a job, Job interviews, Recruitment, Company Structure, Business Etiquette, At the hotel*, etc.

For instance, while working with the topic “At the airport” we study the new vocabulary and useful phrases/ expressions such as: *I’d like to make an airline reservation. Round trip ticket. I’d like to change my reservation. I’d like to check-in my luggage. I have only my personal belongings, etc.* After studying some dialogues between a travel agent and a buyer or between two passengers at the customs or at the check-in counter, the teacher suggests role-playing for small groups of students:

a) You’re buying a ticket to your destination. Ask the booking-clerk about the type of ticket you would like, time of departure, number of the platform, etc. Speak with your partner.

b) You bought a return ticket to Galway, but you have just noticed that it is a one-way ticket, although you paid for a return ticket. Try to change your ticket.

c) You’re checking in, the security after some important questions about your luggage ask you to place it on the scale and to open your case for examination. Your luggage is 6 kilos overweight.

d) You’ve missed your flight to Washington and need to book a new ticket for another day. Choose the day, the time and discuss the possible traffics of the flight.

Another example refers to the topic “Applying for a job. Interview”.

At first, we are working with the new vocabulary connecting to the topic: *application form, board or panel interview, employment agency, job vacancies, reference, temporary job/ permanent job/ current job (present job), etc.*

The expressions connecting to the topic of the lesson we suggest to study in the dialogues. For example such phrases as: *to be eligible for medical and dental insurance, to check applicant’s professional skills immediately, to check applicant’s professional skills immediately, to make a good impression on someone, suitable person for a particular job, to shake hands, to get in touch with you in a day, etc.*

Without good vocabulary mastery, students will face difficulties in their study and also when they do not know how to enrich their vocabulary, students often gradually lose interest in learning, therefore the activity “Matching the words/ word-combinations” is necessary to practice with students as the next step. For example,

Match these word-combinations with their Romanian/ Russian equivalents:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) to make a good impression on someone | a) o oportunitate de a-și demonstra abilitățile/ возможность продемонстрировать мастерство |
| 2) career objective | b) a face o impresie bună asupra cuiva/ произвести хорошее впечатление на кого-либо |
| 3) to shake hands | c) se obișnuiește să se evite discuțiile/ принято избегать обсуждения |
| 4) opportunity to demonstrate skills | d) poziția dorită/ желаемая должность |
| 5) it is common to avoid discussing | e) un candidat potrivit pentru un anumit post/ кандидатура, подходящая на определенную должность |
| 6) company you are going to work in | f) testarea imediată a competențelor profesionale/ немедленно проверить профессиональное мастерство претендента |
| 7) some rules of behaviour | g) anumite reguli de comportament/ некоторые правила поведения |

The teacher suggests the following business games:

a) *Looking through the advertisements of jobs, you have found one, which seems to be convenient for you. You make a call to the staff office. After answering some questions of your education and job experiences, you get to know about the salary and are asked to send your resume per email.*

b) *Recently you've sent your resume to the factory. At last, you are called by the staff-office. Your background will be clarified, and then the da-ta of applying will be set.*

c) *You have a permanent job at school. However, you are looking for the temporary job at the office for the half day. You can type well, are responsible and creative. The interview starts...*

As an active learning method, role-playing and business games fulfil several functions at once:

- they promote teamwork skills,
- they develop creative thinking,
- they develop independence in the search for new knowledge and its application in practice,
- they shape ideas about ethical professional relationships in a team.

Thus, such activities help to assess new social relations in an organic connection to the ethics of professional work and relationships. Larsen Freeman explained that role plays are important in the communicative approach because they give learners an opportunity to practice communicating in different social contexts and different social roles.

In conclusion, role play is a technique which can develops students' fluency in target language, it promotes students to speak or interact with others in the EFL classroom, it increases motivation and makes the teaching and learning process more enjoyable.

References:

1. NUNAN, David. *Practice English language teaching*. New York: McGraw-Hill companies, 2003. 353 p.
2. JOHNSON, KEITH & MORROW. *Communication in the Classroom*. England: Pearson Education Ltd, 1983. 152 p. ISBN-10: 0582746051
3. FREEMAN, Larsen. *Techniques and Principle Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. 318 p. <https://acasearch.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/techniques-in-language-teaching.pdf>
4. HATTINGS, Stephen D. *Role play*. Cambridge: Blandwell, 1993.
5. ВЕРБИЦКИЙ, А.А. *Активное обучение в высшей школе: контекстный подход: метод. пособие* / А.А. Вербицкий. – М.: Высшая школа, 1991. 207 с. ISBN 5-06-002079-7
6. *ДЕЛОВОЙ АНГЛИЙСКИЙ ЯЗЫК = Business English* [Текст]: учебно-методическое пособие / сост. Н.А. Швец, И.Н. Кузьмина, Ю.Ю. Хлыстунова; Алтайский государственный гуманитарно-педагогический университет им. В.М. Шукшина. – Бийск: ФГБОУ ВО «АГПУ», 2018. – 116 с. – 50 экз. ББК 81.43 Д 29 http://www2.bigpi.biysk.ru/nir2016/file/kiya_02_02_2018_12_21_59.pdf
7. *ДЕЛОВОЙ АНГЛИЙСКИЙ ЯЗЫК: учебное пособие* / А.П.Андрюшкин. – М: Издательство торговая корпорация Дашков и К, 2008. -332 с. ISBN 978-5-91131-738-6

Internet sources:

<https://www.audioenglish.org>

<http://am-en.ru>