

ENHANCING STUDENTS' SPEAKING COMPETENCE THROUGH ROLE-PLAYING ACTIVITIES

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Abstract: This article investigates the effectiveness of role-playing activities in enhancing students' speaking competence in English as a Foreign Language classrooms. Speaking is a crucial skill for many learners, the article explores how interactive, context-based role-play can foster communicative confidence, fluency, and accuracy. Additionally, there are explained a number of important benefits of this method to develop young learners' speaking abilities. The study concludes that role-play serves as an engaging and effective pedagogical tool for promoting authentic communication and developing learners' speaking competence.

Keywords: role-playing, speaking competence, communicative approach, EFL, learner engagement

TALABALARNING OG'ZAKI NUTQ KOMPETENSIYASINI ROLLI O'YINLAR ORQALI KUCHAYTIRISH

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Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqola ingliz tilida o'quvchilarning nutq ko'nikmasini oshirishda rolli o'yin texnikasini qo'llashning samaradorligini o'rganadi. Nutq ko'p o'quvchilar uchun muhim mahoratdir, maqolada interaktiv, kontekstga asoslangan rolli o'yin muloqotchanlik, ravonlik va aniqlikni qanday oshirishi mumkinligi to'g'risida ma'lumotlar berilgan. Shuningdek, o'quvchilarning nutq qobiliyatini rivojlantirish uchun ushbu usulning bir qator muhim afzalliklari izohlangan. Maqolada rolli o'yin ingliz tilida muloqotni rivojlantirish va o'quvchilarning nutq qobiliyatini o'stirish uchun qiziqarli va samarali pedagogik vosita bo'lib xizmat qilishi ilmiy asoslab berilgan.

Kalit so'zlar: rolli o'yin, nutq kompetensiyasi, kommunikativ yondashuv, EFL, o'quvchilarning ishtiroki

УКРЕПЛЕНИЕ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ УСТНОЙ РЕЧИ СТУДЕНТОВ С ПОМОЩЬЮ РОЛЕВЫХ ИГР

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Аннотация: В данной статье рассматривается эффективность использования ролевых игр для развития навыков говорения на английском языке у студентов. Говорение является важным навыком для многих студентов, и в статье представлена

информация о том, как интерактивные, контекстно-зависимые ролевые игры могут улучшить коммуникативные навыки, беглость и точность речи. Также объясняется ряд важных преимуществ этого метода для развития навыков говорения у студентов. В статье научно обосновано, что ролевые игры могут служить интересным и эффективным педагогическим инструментом для развития навыков говорения на английском языке и развития навыков говорения у студентов.

Ключевые слова: ролевая игра, речевая компетентность, коммуникативный подход, английский как иностранный язык, участие студентов

Speaking is one of the most essential skills in language learning, as it allows learners to communicate and express their thoughts effectively. Role-play, as an interactive classroom technique, provides students with real-life scenarios that enhance fluency and confidence. This study focuses on exploring how role-play activities can improve learners' speaking competence and how teachers perceive their effectiveness. Language serves as a fundamental means of communication, enabling people to share and exchange ideas. Since communication relies on spoken interaction, speaking skills hold vital importance for any language learner; without speech, a language becomes no more than written symbols. Various techniques exist to enhance learners' oral abilities, and role-playing is considered one of the most effective. Integrating role-play into classroom practice can enrich the learning process by providing diversity, engaging activities, and opportunities for fluency development. Nevertheless, some educators still underestimate its value, believing it to be disruptive and unsuitable due to potential discipline issues. Therefore, the present study seeks to explore teachers' perceptions of role-play activities and their contribution to improving students' communicative competence.¹

Among the four essential language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—*speaking* holds a particularly central role in communication. Language, at its core, is a tool for expressing ideas, building relationships, and exchanging knowledge. As Yale (2006) observes, without speech, language is reduced to a written code, and genuine communication cannot take place. This highlights why speaking ability is often seen as the most practical measure of language proficiency. Learners who are able to speak with confidence are not only better equipped for academic and professional situations, but also for meaningful everyday interactions.

The theoretical foundation for this focus on speaking is found in the concept of *communicative competence*. Hymes (1999) first introduced the idea, explaining that knowing a language involves more than just grammar; it also requires knowing how to use language appropriately in different social contexts. Building on this, Canale and Swain (1998) identified four interrelated components of communicative competence: **grammatical competence**, or knowledge of the language system; **sociolinguistic competence**, or sensitivity to cultural and contextual norms; **discourse competence**, which involves creating coherent and connected speech; and **strategic competence**, which refers to using strategies to maintain communication when difficulties arise. Taken together, these components underline the fact that speaking is not a simple skill, but one that integrates knowledge, context, and strategy in real time.

One effective way to foster communicative competence is the use of **role-play activities** in the classroom. Role-play is grounded in interactive, learner-centered approaches to teaching, and it

¹ Taken from: *The Importance of Role-Playing Activities in Developing Students' Speaking Competence*, International Journal of Innovation and Scientific Research, Vol. 66, No.1, 2023.

allows students to simulate authentic situations that mirror real-life communication. Huang (2008) explains that such activities give learners opportunities to experiment with language in a safe environment, encouraging spontaneity and creativity while reducing the fear of mistakes. Unlike traditional drills, role-play promotes engagement at both the cognitive and emotional levels, which makes practice more memorable and meaningful.

Role-play also fits naturally within the framework of **Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)**. According to Willis (1996) and Ellis (2003), tasks should reflect the kind of problem-solving and goal-oriented communication learners are likely to face outside the classroom. In this way, role-play serves as a communicative task, whether it involves ordering food in a restaurant, negotiating a purchase, or participating in a job interview. Each scenario pushes learners to mobilize their linguistic resources in purposeful, authentic ways.

The benefits of role-play can also be explained through **sociocultural theory** (Vygotsky, 1997). Learning, from this perspective, happens through social interaction. When students participate in role-play with peers, they are operating in their *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)*—a space where they can attempt tasks slightly beyond their current ability with the help of guidance or collaboration. This dynamic not only strengthens accuracy but also builds fluency and confidence over time.² Role-play offers a number of important benefits for developing young learners' speaking abilities. One of the most significant advantages is its contribution to **fluency**. When students act out real-life situations, they practice using language more quickly and naturally, without pausing too often to think about grammar or vocabulary. This helps them become more confident speakers in authentic communication.

Another key benefit is the growth of **confidence**. Many children are shy or hesitant to speak in a foreign language, fearing they might make mistakes. Role-play provides a safe and supportive environment where learners can express themselves freely. Over time, this reduces anxiety and helps them overcome the fear of speaking in front of others. Role-play also encourages **creativity**. Since students are placed in different scenarios, they learn to form sentences independently and use language in flexible ways. This stimulates their imagination and helps them apply classroom knowledge to real-world contexts.

Finally, role-play fosters **collaboration**. Working in pairs or groups, children practice negotiating meaning, sharing ideas, and supporting each other. This teamwork not only improves their communication skills but also teaches them important social values such as cooperation and respect.

One practical example of role-play in a real classroom setting can be seen in an English lesson held at a primary school in Namangan. The teacher designed an activity called “**At the Grocery Store**”, in which the classroom was transformed into a small market. Desks were rearranged to resemble counters, and simple flashcards with pictures of fruits, vegetables, and other common items were used as “products.” Students were divided into two groups: one group acted as shop assistants while the other group played the role of customers. The task for the “customers” was to buy specific items using English phrases they had learned in previous lessons. They were encouraged to use expressions such as “*Excuse me, how much is this?*”, “*Can I have three apples, please?*”, and “*Thank you very much.*” On the other hand, the “shop

² Vygotsky. 2025. Simply Psychology: McLeod.(site)

assistants” had to respond appropriately, practicing sentences like “*It costs one dollar,*” or “*Here you are.*”³

At first, some students were shy and hesitated to speak, fearing they might mispronounce words or forget the right phrase. However, because the situation was playful and not strictly formal, the classroom atmosphere became relaxed. Students soon began to participate more actively. The teacher also walked around, guiding them gently and providing help when they struggled. As the activity continued, something remarkable happened: even the quieter students, who usually avoided speaking, started to join in. They wanted to “buy” items and interact with their classmates, and in doing so, they overcame their fear of making mistakes. The children also showed great **creativity**, sometimes inventing funny exchanges such as pretending to bargain or asking for unusual combinations of items. The classroom was filled with laughter, but at the same time, the students were fully engaged in meaningful communication.

The role-play did not only build **fluency** but also promoted **collaboration**. Students who forgot a word often received support from their peers, and groups worked together to make the “market” feel realistic. At the end of the activity, the teacher asked them to reflect on what they had learned, and many students expressed pride in being able to hold a “conversation” in English, even if it was a simple one. This example demonstrates how role-play transforms language practice into a lively and interactive experience. By simulating real-life situations, students were able to practice language in context, develop confidence, and use their imagination. More importantly, they realized that English is not just a school subject, but a real means of communication they can use in daily life.

In conclusion, role-play shows us that learning a language can be both effective and enjoyable. It gives children a chance to use English in ways that feel real, not just like a classroom exercise. Through role-play, they speak more freely, gain confidence, and discover that mistakes are simply part of learning. Even the quietest students find their voice when the activity is fun and meaningful. Most importantly, role-play helps learners realize that English is not just something they study—it is a tool they can use to connect with others in everyday life. For teachers, this means role-play is not an optional extra, but a valuable method for helping young learners grow into confident, creative communicators.

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