

**English Teachers' Perceptions about Using Role Play to Develop
Speaking Skill**

After Reading the Research Work Conducted by

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**And it is Considered Worthy of Approval in Partial Fulfillment of the
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Problem

English learners may have different learning purposes to learn a foreign language. Some learners need to read different types of academic texts; therefore, reading is the most important skill for them. Other learners need to translate different types of texts which require them to demonstrate their writing skill. There may be learners who want to understand other speakers in different contexts; for this reason, listening and speaking are the most important skills to be developed.

In the language classroom, teachers need to help students to develop the four skills; however, not all the skills are emphasized. Specifically, this research focused English teachers' perceptions about using role play to develop speaking skill. According to Bygate (1987, p. 1) "speaking is a skill which deserves attention every bit as much as literary skills, in both first and second languages." Because speaking is the most common and used means of communication among human beings, learners need to be able to speak with confidence in different situations. Unfortunately, the reality is different in the classroom. Students can hardly communicate; they can hardly express themselves with their own words. Consequently, a greater emphasis should be given to speaking in the language classroom. How can this be accomplished?

A good way to improve students' speaking skill is by using role play in the classroom. Students may benefit from using role play not only because "it enables a flow of language to be produced that might be otherwise difficult or impossible to create", but also because it "recreate[s] the sort of language students are likely to need outside the classroom" (Livigstone, 1983, cited in Zyoud, n. d.). As Zyoud states, "role play allows students to prepare and practice for possible future situations" (Zyoud, n.

d.). Language teachers should consider role play as a strategy to help students develop their speaking, but it is necessary to know their perceptions about the usefulness of role play in the classroom.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The aim of the present paper is to analyze teachers' perceptions about the usefulness of role play as a strategy to develop LEI (Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés) students' speaking skill at the Faculty of Languages.

1.3 Research Questions

1. Do the teachers think the speaking skill is important? If so, how important?
2. What do the teachers think are the benefits to develop the students' speaking skill at the Faculty of Languages?
3. According to the participants' perceptions, what kind of activities are used to develop the speaking skill? Is role play widely used by these participants?
4. According to the teachers, how does the Role Play help the students at the Faculty of Languages?
5. According to the teachers what do the students need to be able to perform a Role Play?

1.4 Research Hypothesis

The present study has the following research hypotheses:

1. It is important to develop the speaking skill because the students will be able to have a good communication.

2. Students will practice the language that they are learning and they will be able to express their ideas.
3. Activities which the students can be able to interact to practice their English. An example of this activity is Role Play.
4. When teachers use Role Play they expect that the students practice their English to develop their speaking skill.
5. Students should have a previous class about a specific topic before performing a Role Play.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research has the main purpose to examine teachers' perceptions about the use of Role Play to develop the speaking skill at the Faculty of Languages, BUAP. If the Role Play works as a strategy to develop the speaking skill, teachers who never use role plays in their classes may implement them as a resource for their students, hoping that they find role plays useful. Consequently, students' language level will improve and their performance in real life will be better, too.

1.6. Organization of the thesis

Chapter I introduces the purpose of the study and formulates the research questions with its hypotheses. In chapter II, it is presented the different topics related to this research paper. In chapter III, the methodology used in the thesis is provided. In chapter IV, the results of the study are analyzed. And finally, in chapter V, the findings of the research are explained, as well as limitations and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Communicative Competence

In describing how people develop knowledge of a language, how humans unconsciously acquire the grammatical knowledge to learn their mother tongue and how they interact with others, Chomsky (1965) developed a linguistic theory which “is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-hearer, in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance” (p. 3). He made a great contribution in this respect. He made a distinction between competence and performance. For Chomsky (1965), competence is “the speaker-hearer’s knowledge of his language” and performance is “the actual use of language in concrete situations” (p. 4). By analyzing the meaning of these definitions, it is possible to understand that performance is “a direct reflection of competence” (ibid).

On the other hand, Hymes (1971) mentions the following:

The world of the linguistic theory has two parts: *linguistic competence* and *linguistic performance*. Linguistic competence is understood as concerned with the tacit knowledge of language structure, that is, knowledge that is commonly not conscious or available for spontaneous report, but necessarily implicit in what the (ideal) speaker-listener can say. Linguistic performance is most explicitly understood as concerned with the processes often termed encoding and decoding (p.19).

Hymes (1971, cited in Da Silva Gomes & Signoret, 2005) coined the concept of communicative competence trying to integrate the knowledge and the use of the language. Hymes mentions that (1971) “The Competence underlying a person’s behavior is identified as one kind of performance” (p. 64).

In this way, Canale and Swain (1990) define communicative competence in the context of second language teaching as “a synthesis of knowledge of basic grammatical principles, knowledge of how language is used in social settings to perform

communicative functions, and knowledge of how utterances and communicative functions can be combined according to the principles of discourse” (p. 20). Likewise, Spolsky (1978) defines communicative competence in a foreign language, that is “the ability to communicate with native speakers in real situations –authentic interpersonal communication that cannot be separated from the cultural, paralinguistic, and non-verbal aspects of language”. (p. 12)

As this research is focused on the use of role play to improve the speaking skill, these definitions help to understand that the students need knowledge of the language (competence) in order to perform efficiently in different contexts (performance). If they practice regularly, they will have the ability to communicate effectively and thus, it is expected that their speaking will improve.

2.2 Types of Competences

According to Canale and Swain’s (1990) own model of communicative competence involves recognizing three distinct but related competences, with definable boundaries. The three are:

1. **Grammatical competence:** it will be understood to include knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology.
2. **Sociolinguistic competence:** this component is made up of two sets of rules: sociocultural rules of use of and rules of discourse.
3. **Strategic competence:** this component will be made up of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdown in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence. (p. 29)

On the other hand, Van Ek (cited in Byram 1997) developed a model of “communicative ability”, however he comprises six competences he emphasizes that “they are different aspects of one concept”.

1. Linguistic competence: the ability to produce and interpret meaningful utterances which are formed in accordance with the rules of language concerned and bear their conventional meaning... that meaning which native speakers would normally attach to an utterance when used in isolation.
2. Sociolinguistic competence: the awareness of ways in which the choice of language forms is determined by such conditions as setting relationship between communication partners communicative intention etc... sociolinguistic competence covers the relation between linguistic signals and their contextual – or situational meaning.
3. Discourse competence: the ability to use appropriate strategies in the construction and interpretation of texts.
4. Strategic competence: when communication is difficult we have to find a way of “getting our meaning across” or of “finding out what somebody means” these are communicative strategies, such as rephrasing, asking for clarification.
5. Socio-cultural competence: every language is situated in a socio-cultural context and implies the use of a particular reference frame which is partly different from that of the foreign language learner; socio-cultural competence presupposes a certain degree of familiarity with that context.
6. Social competence: involves both the will and the skill to interact with the others, involving motivation, attitude, self-confidence, empathy and the ability to handle social situations (p. 10).

Van Ek (1997) requires learners to speak or write in accordance with the rules of the language concerned, without specifying the origins and nature of the rules.

As it was mentioned before, these competences are different aspects of one concept. However, it takes time to develop. To perform a role play the student needs to develop these competences because if the student is not able to acquire one of these competences, he will not be able to develop the other competences. Therefore, he will not perform a good role play.

2.3 Speaking Skill

As far as the researchers is concerned, there has been a myriad of definitions of speaking. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Current English (2013), speaking is “the action of conveying information or expressing feelings in spoken languages”. On the other hand, McDonough and Shaw (1993, p. 53) define that “speaking is not the oral production of written language, but involves learners in the mastery of a wide range of sub-skills which, added together, constitute an overall competence in the spoken language”.

However, Bygate (1987, p. vii) considers “speaking as the vehicle *par excellence* [original italics] of social solidarity, of social ranking, of professional advancement and of business. It is also a medium through which much language is learnt, and which for many is particularly conducive for learning”. Sharing the same view point Davies and Pearse (2000) mention that “speaking takes place in ‘real time’, we have to do many things all together: understand what the other person is saying, say what we want to when we get the chance to speak, be prepared for unexpected changes of topic, and think of something to say when there is a long pause” (p. 82). Also Baker and Westrup (2003) defines “speaking as the use of language for a purpose; for example, instead of

asking students to repeat sentences, sometimes give students a topic and ask them to construct and say their own response. In real life, we do not repeat what the others say; we make our own sentences and dialogues”. (p. 7)

In order to be a good English learner, knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation, and so on, are not enough to be competent. It is necessary to use and practice all these elements altogether in order to communicate successfully.

2.4 Accuracy

According to Baker and Westrup (2003), accuracy is defined as “the mastery of the language system” (p. 5). Meanwhile, Bartram and Walton (1991) consider “accuracy as that part of the lesson where students are encouraged to make their utterances as near to a native-speaker’s as possible” (p. 32). Following this idea, Byrne (1976) comments that “accurate speakers do not make mistakes in grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation” (p. 7).

On the other hand, Davies and Pearse (2000) mention that “accuracy practice is intended to establish some correctness in the production of new items immediately after they are presented, or to correct errors later on” (p. 36). Furthermore, they mention that

In accuracy practice, learners are usually very aware that they are repeating the new item or items over and over again. They also know that they are expected to avoid errors. However, this does not mean that after accuracy practice they will always produce and use the new items correctly in real conversations (ibid).

In other words we can come up with the conclusion that accuracy is the ability to produce correct sentences using correct grammar and vocabulary but may not include the ability to speak fluently. This is another concept that needs to be explained.

2.5 Fluency

According to Byrne, (1976) “fluency is defined as the ability to express oneself intelligibly, reasonably, accurately and without too much hesitation” (p. 9). In a context of learning a second language, this definition is reinforced by Baker and Westrup (2003) who mention that “fluent speakers can express themselves appropriately and without hesitation” and “[they] do not usually worry about making mistakes” (p. 7).

On the other hand, Faerch, Haastrup and Phillipson (1984, cited in Riggenbach, 2000) consider “fluency as the speaker ability to make use of whatever linguistic and pragmatic competence they have”(p. 15). Furthermore, Lesson (1970, cited in Brumfit, 1984) refers to “fluency as the ability of the speaker to produce indefinitely many sentences conforming to the phonological, syntactical and semantic exigencies of given natural language on the basis of a finite exposure to a finite corpus of that language” (p. 55). Meanwhile, Bartram and Walton (1991) mention that “fluency is defined as that part of the lesson where students work on their capacity to communicate within the language” (p. 32).

Also Fillmore (1970, cited in Brumfit, 1984) discusses fluency with exclusive reference to production, distinguishes four different kinds.

The first is ‘the ability to fill time with talk’, to talk without significant pauses for an extended period. The second kind is ‘the ability to talk in coherent, reasoned and “semantically dense” sentences,’ showing a mastery of the semantic and syntactic resources of the language. The third kind is ‘the ability to have appropriate things to say in a wide of contexts’, so that you do not become tongue-tied with strangers or lots for words when an unexpected situation arises. And the fourth is ‘the ability to be creative and imaginative in...language use’ (p. 53).

The previous definitions agree that speaking fluently means being able to communicate one’s ideas without having to stop and think too much about what one is saying also the ability to talk in coherent showing a mastery of the language and to have appropriate things to say with strangers or unexpected situations.

2.6 Oral Skills and Interaction

According to Bygate (1987, p.5) there are two basic ways in which something we do can be seen as a skill. There are motor-perceptive skills and interaction – skills.

- 1 Motor –perceptive skills involve perceiving, recalling and articulating in the correct order sounds and structures of the language. This is the relatively superficial aspect of skill which is a bit like learning how to manipulate the controls of a car on a deserted piece of road far from the flow of normal traffic.
- 2 Interaction skills involve making decisions about communication such as what to say, how to say it and whether to develop it, in accordance with one’s intentions, while maintaining the desired relations with others.

Mackey (1965, cited in Bygate 1987) agrees with Bygate that oral expression involves not only the use of right sounds in the right patterns of rhythm and intonation, but also the choice of words and inflections in the right order to convey the right meaning. (p. 5). Meanwhile, as Wilkins (1975, p. 76) says, interaction skills are those of “controlling one’s own language production” and “having to make one’s own choices”.

As students of a second language we have to learn how to produce the correct order sounds and structures of the language and also we have to be able to make the correct decisions about communication to avoid a misunderstanding among the listeners. It is necessary to integrate motor perceptive skills and interaction skills to get a good communication.

2.7 Transactional and Interactional Language

When students interact in a speaking task, they are usually involved in two types of conversations: transactional and interactional (Brown & Yule, 1983). “Transactional language is when the speaker has primarily in mind the efficient transference of information language used in such situation is primarily ‘message oriented’. It is important that the recipient gets the informative detail correct” (p.2). McCarthy (1991) mentions some examples about transactional language: “it could be to tell somebody something they do not know, to effect the purchase of something, to get someone to do something, or many other world-changing things” (p. 136). In each example, what really matters is the fact that the speaker has to be clear in what he says, and the listener should understand the message as it was originally conveyed.

In addition , McCarthy (1991) comments that interactional language “has as its primary functions the lubrication of the social wheels, establishing roles and relationship with another person, confirming and consolidating relationships, expressing solidarity, and so on.” An example of this can be found in McDonough and Shaw (1993) who express that “it would be someone trying to ask a bank manager for a loan where the speaker is trying to conflate serious message oriented language with the language needed to maintain the social roles of the participants” (p. 155).

These concepts are particularly relevant to this project in the sense that when students are engaged in a role play, it is necessary to take into consideration transactional and interactional language because it is the ability that the students have to acquire, establish and maintain a relationship. This will be affected by the purpose and the context of the task.

2.8 Oral Communication

Oral communication has been defined in different ways. According to Rangel (1990), oral communication is defined “as a process which speakers and listeners interact in a social context”. This idea is reinforced by Furniss (2004) who mentions that oral communication “involve[s] interaction between speaker and audience, intentionality, culturally specific genres of speech, genre expectations, notions of truth, the evaluative dimensions of language both lexically and contextually, and the aesthetics of language use” (p. 3). Also, Richards and Schmidt (1983) point out that oral communication “is the exchange and negotiation of information between at least two individuals through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols” (p. 4).

On the other hand, Byrne (1976) refers to oral communication “as a two-way process between speaker and listener and involves the *productive* skill of speaking and the *receptive* skill of understanding” (p.28). Sharing the same view point about productive and receptive skills, Widdowson (1978) comments that “speaking and writing are said to be active or productive skills whereas listening and reading are said to be passive or receptive skills” (p. 57).

Oral communication is a really important tool that helps us to express our ideas, feelings, thoughts and it is a way to interact with another speaker to have an extended vision of what is happening around us. Besides oral communication is indispensable if we want to get something.

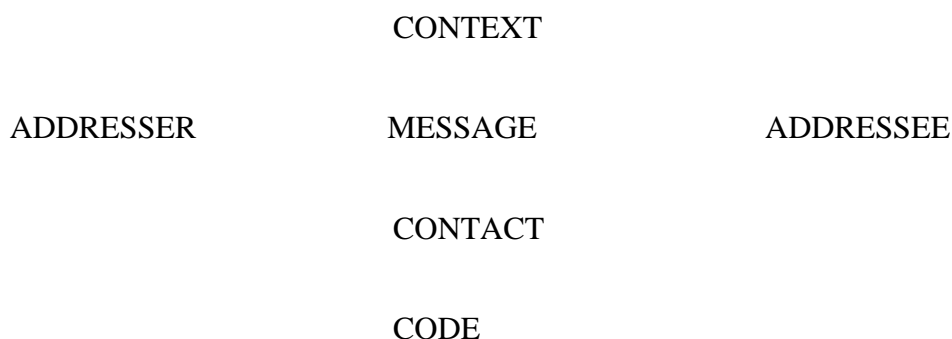
2.9 Characteristics of a Verbal Communication

In order to understand the communication process better, Jakobson (1960)

mentions six factors which are part of any act of verbal communication:

The ADDRESSER sends a MESSAGE to the ADDRESSEE. To be operative the message requires a CONTEXT referred to graspable by the addressee and either verbal or capable of being verbalized; a CODE fully, or at least partially, common to the addresser and addressee (or in other words, to the encoder and decoder of the message); and, finally a CONTACT, a physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee, enabling both of them to enter and stay in communication (p. 3).

All these factors inalienably involved in verbal communication may be schematized as follows:



This diagram explains the way speakers of different languages communicate and express their ideas in a comprehensive way. However, there are other authors who went further in the description of an act of communication. For example, Da Silva Gomes & Dorcasberro Signoret (2005) mention that “the human communication can use other channels and codes, like the gestural communication” and this “verbal communication allows a better efficiency because the languages are systems which are organized to convey information” (p. 27). Regarding other channels to carry out the communication process, Rodriguez and Beltran (1998) say that “[a] gesture, a look, a word, and even the silence... are part of the communicative process; in this process we can find our anxieties, our feelings, our ideas and our knowledge” (p. 5).

We are all involved in a communication act at any given time, even when we are in silence. Therefore, it is difficult to escape from communicative process. The

information and the messages turn us into receptors and at the same time we are able to create new messages with accuracy and fluency. Furthermore, it is here when we have to apply motor- perceptive skills and interaction skills to be involved in transactional or interactional conversations. This, in turn, will help us achieve our communicative goals.

2.10 Communicative Activities

In order to be communicatively competent, students should be able to use the correct words in their conversations. This implies a good use of the language they are learning. According to Harmer (1991)

Communicative activities are those which students are somehow involved in actions that give them both the desire to communicate and a purpose which involves them in a varied use of the language. Since here the students can do their best to use the language as individuals arriving at a degree of language autonomy (p. 50).

Meanwhile, Littlewood (1981) comments that “communicative activities provide whole-task practice, they improve motivation, they allow natural learning and they can create a context which supports learning” (p. 17).

On the other hand, communicative activities have been classified in different ways. Littlewood (1981) makes a distinction between what he calls ‘functional communication activities’ and ‘social interaction activities’. Functional communication activities are: sharing information with restricted co-operation, sharing information with unrestricted co-operation, sharing and processing information. Besides, Littlewood classified social interaction activities as the classroom as a social context and simulation and role-playing.

Harmer (1983) makes a distinction between ‘practice’ activities and ‘communicative’ activities. Oral practice activities consist of the following: oral drills, information gap activities, games, personalization and location and oral activities. Meanwhile communicative activities are: reaching a consensus, relaying instructions

communication games, problem solving, talking about yourself, simulation and role-play.

Furthermore, Rivers and Temperley (1978) present fourteen categories of language use. They mention that “students need situations where they are on their own trying to use the foreign language to exchange with others messages of real interest to them” (p. 47). Here are the activities that the authors suggest: establishing and maintaining social relations, expressing reactions, hiding one’s intentions, talking one’s way out of trouble, seeking and giving information, learning or teaching how to make or do something, conversing over the telephone, problem-solving, discussing ideas, playing with language, acting out social roles, entertaining others, displaying one’s achievements and sharing leisure activities.

In addition Ur (1981) offers a variety of oral activities. These are classified into three main types: brainstorming activities, (guessing games, finding connections, ideas from a central theme and implications and interpretations), organization activities (comparisons, detecting differences, putting in order, priorities, choosing candidates, layout problems, and combing activities) and compound activities (composing letters, debates, publicity campaigns, surveys and planning projects).

Every author categorized communicative activities in different ways but the purpose is the same: helping students to use the language they know in order to get communication among speakers.

2.11 Definition of Role Play

Role play is a communication activity (Harmer, 1983) that has been defined and characterized in different ways by different authors. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), role-play is defined “as a participation in simulated social institutions

that are intended to throw light upon the role/rule contexts governing, 'real' life social episodes". (p. 370). Furthermore, Blatner (2002) refers to role play as "a method for exploring the issues involved in complex social situations". Besides, Qing (2001) points out that role play "is the projection in real life situations with social activities" (p. 37). Likewise, Oberle (2004) comments that "role play activities help introduce student to 'real world' situation" (p.199). Sharing the same idea Wrentschur and Altman (2002, cited in Zyoud (2013) mention that "the participants in a role play are able to adopt roles hither to alien to them, and try what it feels like to be on the other side for once". In addition, Byrne (1976) expresses that role play "is a process that participants interact either as themselves in imaginary situations or as other people in imaginary situations" (p. 115). This idea is reinforced by Klippel (1983) who comments that "role play consists of short scenes, which can be realistic – as in acting out or shopping situation, or pure fantasy, role plays may be enacted around every day situations as well as around topical problems" (p.121).

These definitions emphasize the fact that students practice the language as if they were in real-life situations. These situations allow them to take on a specific role. In order to perform well, they need to examine and understand the imaginary situation that will facilitate the use of different grammar structures previously learned in their course. As a result, their communicative goals may be successfully achieved.

2.11.1 Advantages of Role Play

Van Ments (1983, cited in Graves 2008) identifies three general advantages to role play activities. He mentions that

They are positive and safe in dealing with attitudes and feelings, they provide a safe venue for expressing personal and sometimes unpopular attitudes and opinions, and role play is highly motivating as the majority of students enjoy these types of activities and become inspired learners (p.24).

This idea is reinforced by Ur (1981) who mentions that “students find role play easier and more attractive than ordinary discussion” (p. 10). In addition, she mentions three important reasons to use role play.

Firstly, the fact that the kind of speech involved is concrete and personal, the issues relevant to actual life, makes it relatively easy to think of things to say. Secondly, the criteria of what are ‘good things to say’ are no longer so intellectual; the student does not have to say anything clever or original. Thirdly, many students find it easier to express themselves from behind the mask of being someone else; others find it simply more simulating and exciting (ibid).

Whereas, Wrentschur and Altman (2002, cited in Zyoud 2013) say that the “main benefit of role play from the view of language teaching is that it enables a flow of language to be produced that might be otherwise difficult or impossible to create” (p. XX). In addition, Qing (2001) mentions that

Role plays provide training for both speaking and listening in any language-learning situation. Role plays are an essential dress rehearsal which enables learners to do more than learn a set of phrases as they will experience how communication and interaction might take place in a variety of situations (p.38).

Role play helps the students to develop their language skills in the social life because the topics that students perform are in a context where students are involved and exposed in their daily life. Also, they practice grammar and vocabulary they have at their command and they do not need to worry about complex structures or sophisticated vocabulary. On the other hand, role play is useful to promote interaction; with it students can express their feelings and their own opinions. As a result, they can improve their communicative competence.

2.11.2 Elements for a Role Play

In order to perform a role play, some important elements need to be considered.

According to McDaniel (2000)

There are four basic elements that are essential for the success of any role play activity. The first element is that the activity builds on knowledge the students already possess about a particular historical context. The second element is to design the roles [themselves] to maximize student involvement. The third element is to set up a specific situation. The last element is the instructor’s limited involvement and willingness to be flexible. The instructor needs to guide the

students along, but not overbear the conversation and let the students take their own path to understanding (p. 357).

Teachers also play specific roles when they design a role play for their students.

Qing (2001) mentions that

The detailed teaching of role play is categorized into three steps: presentation, comprehension and consolidation. In the process of presentation, a teacher acts as a conductor to give students a whole idea about the story by various means, such as, multi-media power point. In the process of comprehension, a teacher checks if the students understand the content of teaching by questions. In the third step, the students play as dominant actors organized by the teacher (p. 37).

It is important to emphasize that there are steps that teachers have to take into consideration before applying a role play. It is not as easy as it seems. Teachers cannot expect students to perform a role play about something they have no previous knowledge. Students have to analyze the role that they are going to perform and the context where the role is taking place. Teachers have to conduct their students to achieve a good presentation. By following these steps, students will be able to have a better performance in the role play.

2.12 Examples of Role Play

The following section provides examples of role play. In each role the teacher plays the same role. However, the student plays different roles that facilitate the use of the language in every different situations.

2.12.1 Example I

Arranging to meet.

In this activity groups of students are going to arrange a reunion to celebrate some event (a birthday, anniversary, etc.). They have to agree when and where the reunion will take place.

- The teacher tells the class that they are going to work in groups of five, and they are going to arrange to meet in honor of... (a birthday, anniversary, etc.)

- The teacher explains that each group must decide where they should meet and when, based on the information that they will be given.
- The teacher tells the students that they are going to get some pieces of paper, and they should not show them to each other.

STUDENT A: You want to have lunch in a restaurant.
You should think of reasons why this is the best choice.

STUDENT B: You want to have dinner at you home.
You should think of reasons why this is the best choice.

STUDENT C: You want to have lunch at your home.
You should think of reasons why this is the best choice.

STUDENT D: You want to have dinner at a restaurant.
You should think of reasons why this is the best choice.

STUDENT E: You are undecided. You should listen to the others' ideas and then agree with the suggestion you like best.

Taken from Littlewood (1981, p.53)

2.12.2 Example II

Learners will have their cues printed on separate cards. This gives the interaction some of the uncertainty and spontaneity involved in 'real' communication: each learner must listen to his partner before formulating a definite response.

Learner A	Learner B
You meet B in the street. A: Greet B B: A: Ask B where he is going B: A: Suggest somewhere to go together B: A: Accept B's suggestion. B:	You meet A in the street A: B: Greet A A: B: Say you are going for a walk. A: B: Reject A's suggestion. Make a different suggestion. A: B: Express pleasure

Taken from Baker and Westrup (2003, p.85).

Remember to play your role and not to interrupt your teacher if you disagree with what he says or does. Make a note of it to discuss with him and your tutor later.

2.12.3 Example III

- In groups of about 6. Arrange your chairs to make separate groups. Put a chair, a table or a desk for the 'teacher' to put the register on.
- You need 10 role play cards. They will all have names on and some will have the number of times that particular student has been absent and the reason for his absent written on them. The register sheet should match the cards. One card will say 'teacher'.
- Give out cards face down, in each group.
- Read them to yourselves, and 'learn' your name and your role. The spare cards are the students who are absent.

- The ‘teacher’ will call and mark the register. Students should answer, ‘yes’ or ‘here’ or ‘present’.
- The teacher must find out why students have been away, and what has happened to the absentees, if he can. The teacher should try to develop short conversation around each situation.
- When you are the ‘teacher’ use whatever language comes naturally to you and remember to rephrase where necessary. Bear in mind how you could exploit this situation to make a meaningful context for teaching something.
- Begin your role play announcing that you are going to take the register. End when you have gone through all names. This should take 5 minutes.
- When the first ‘teacher’ has finished, collect the role play cards and shuffle them. Redistribute them, making sure somebody different gets the ‘teacher’s’ card each time.

Remember to play your role and not to interrupt your teacher if you disagree with what he says or does. Make a note of it to discuss with him and your tutor later.

Taken from Littlewood (1981, p.51).

2.12.4 Example IV

A more flexible framework is created if only one learner is given detailed cues. The other has information that enables student to respond as necessary. Here, for example, two learners play the roles of a prospective guest at a hotel manager (ess):

Student A: you arrive at a small one evening. In the foyer, you meet the manager (ess) and:

- Ask if there is a room vacant
- Ask the price, including breakfast

- Say how many nights you would like to stay
- Ask where you can park your car for the night
- Say what time you would like to have breakfast

Student B: you are the manager (ess) of a small hotel that prides itself on its friendly, homely atmosphere. You have a single and a double room vacant for tonight. The prices are: \$900 for the single room, \$1700 for the double room. Breakfast is \$70 extra per person. In the street behind the hotel, there is a free car park. Guests can have tea in bed the morning, for \$30.

Taken from Littlewood (1981, p.52).

2.12.5 Example V

The situation is a debate or discussion about a real or simulated issue. The learner's role ensures that they have (a) adequate share knowledge about the issue and (b) different opinions or interests to defend. At the end of the activity, they may have to reach a concrete decision or put the issue to a vote. For example, here is an activity.

You are a group of people who are anxious to help the old in your small town, and you have to manage to make a start by collecting \$10,000 from local inhabitants and holding jumble sales. Study your role and then discuss how the money can best be used.

Student A. Role: Miss Julia Jenkins, spinster.

- You feel that you should contact one of the charity organizations advertised to ask for a piece of advice.

Student B. Role: Ronal Rix, the local vicar.

- You wish to found an Old people's Club which will meet in the church hall. Some of the \$10,000 that has been collected was raised by holding jumble sales in the church hall.

Student C. Role: Mr. David Hicks, headmaster of the local primary school.

- You are anxious for the pupils at your school to play a role in helping the aged.

Student D. Role: Mrs. Dorothy Foster, widow.

- You think the money should be used to renovate and old country house which could be used as an old people's recreation center.

Taken from Littlewood (1981, p.57).

In the previous examples of role play the teacher plays the same role, he is a guide in the process to perform a role play meanwhile the students take an active part, they are emphatic and they have to analyze every role to make a good perform.

2.13 Chapter conclusion

This chapter discussed relevant topics regarding the speaking skill. In the first place, the concept communicative competence and the types of competences were analyzed, then concepts such as accuracy, fluency and interaction were also described. Following this, transactional language and interactional language were developed. Next, oral communication and its characteristics were also explained to understand more the topic. Finally, communicative activities were explained such as the role play and its advantages. Elements and examples of role play were presented at the end. All the topics were associated with the speaking skill to have more information about the research. In the following chapter, the methodology of this paper will be presented.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

As it was mentioned before, the main goal of this work was to analyze English teachers' perceptions on using role play to improve students' speaking skill at the Faculty of Languages. Therefore, it was a qualitative piece of research. In order to achieve the purpose of this thesis, interview method was used. This chapter presents a detailed description of the participants, instruments and procedures.

3.1 Participants

In this research, six English teachers from the Faculty of Languages participated in order to get their perceptions towards the use of role play to improve students' speaking skill. These teachers were teaching workshop III (listening and speaking) at the time of the study. Two of them were female between 40 and 42 years old and the rest of the participants were male between 40 and 45 years old. All of the participants work just at the Faculty of Languages. Their teaching experience ranged from 18 to 22 years.

3.2 Instrument

For the development of this research, it was necessary to design an interview (see Appendix A) which followed a specific procedure. There were six questions which were developed with all the possible statements related to the topic. The first question contained the participant's teaching experience. The second and the third questions were related to what they thought about the speaking skill and the importance of developing it. In the fourth one, they mentioned activities to develop the speaking skill. Meanwhile in the fifth one, participants pointed out if role play helps students to develop the

speaking skill. The sixth one, they provided their opinions about the best moment to apply a role play.

3.3 Procedure

Once the instrument was designed, a revision was made by the director of the thesis. It was piloted in order to see if the necessary information was obtained. After the piloting process, the questions in the interview were modified. Once these changes were carried out, the instrument was applied to English teachers from the Faculty of Languages. As the participants were busy with different academic activities, it was necessary to go to their workplaces and schedule a specific hour for the interview after their work. Some of the teachers had the willingness to be interviewed and some of them did not because they did not have much time. One of the participants did not turn up and the interview was rescheduled. The guided interview was recorded to have reliable information. All the questions were designed as open questions so that the teachers could express their thoughts freely. All the interviews were conducted in the morning.

After all the interviews were conducted, the analysis of the information was carefully carried out. It was essential to transcribe every interview and it was crucial to read one by one in order to analyze them.

The analysis of the data provided a general perception about the use of role play that improved the students' speaking skill, according to the participants.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The results of this qualitative study researching teachers' perceptions about using role play to develop speaking skill are presented in this chapter. Evidence was taken from the interviews. Because of ethical considerations, the participants' real names are not revealed in their extracts; instead they are referred to as follows: participant 1 (P1), participant 2 (P2), participant 3 (P3), participant 4 (P4), participant 5 (P5), and participant 6 (P6).

4.2 Research Questions

The research questions that guided this work were the following:

1. Do the teachers think the speaking skill is important? If so, how important?
2. What do the teachers think are the benefits to develop the students' speaking skill at the Faculty of Languages?
3. According to the participants' perceptions, what kind of activities are used to develop the speaking skill? Is role play widely used by these participants?
4. According to the teachers, how does the Role Play help the students at the Faculty of Languages?
5. According to the teachers what do the students need to be able to perform a Role Play?

4.3 Answers to Research Questions

The five research questions in this research project were answered. Different categories emerged from a depth analysis of the qualitative data provided by the

participants in their interviews. Each research question generated different categories, which are graphically represented in order to understand them better. The research questions will be answered in the order they were formulated.

4.3.1 Importance of the Speaking Skill

Regarding the importance of the speaking skill, all the participants provided their personal opinion. The category “The most important” emerged from these opinions. Participants 1, 3 and 4 considered that speaking is the most important skill. Meanwhile participants 2, 5 and 6 considered that speaking is “Very important”.

Participant 1 said the following:

“It’s the most important skill for me, if you can’t speak you can’t communicate. You need to be able to understand so you get the message to process it and you can communicate” (P1).

Likewise the participant 3 mentioned:

“it’s the most important skill for the students to master, if they are unable to speak, they will sure feel that they are not learning, English is like a test if you’re not ready or willing to speak you’re not learning it’s like the most important test for yourself that you’re learning English” (P3).

Participant 4 agreed saying:

“yeah, yes it’s the most important I believe that people who learn a language do they expect to do something with the language that’s a skill they want to speak with other people understand what the other people say to them”(P4).

Participant 2, 5 and 6 pointed out that speaking is very important.

Participant 2 said the following:

“it’s very important for me and also for the students, it’s necessary that they can communicate ideas, for example if they want to get a job they need to speak in English and also if they travel abroad is necessary they use English in the spoken form” (P2).

Similarly, participant 5 mentioned this:

“it’s very important this is the first skill along with listening that we develop in terms of language acquisition and of course without speaking there are many things you cannot determine, for example you cannot determine if the students are actually learning or not” (P5).

Participant 6 added:

“It’s very important speaking it’s the main way the people communicate” (P6).

With the previous quotes, it is possible to see that all the participants coincided in the importance of the speaking skill. The categories are shown in figure (4.1).

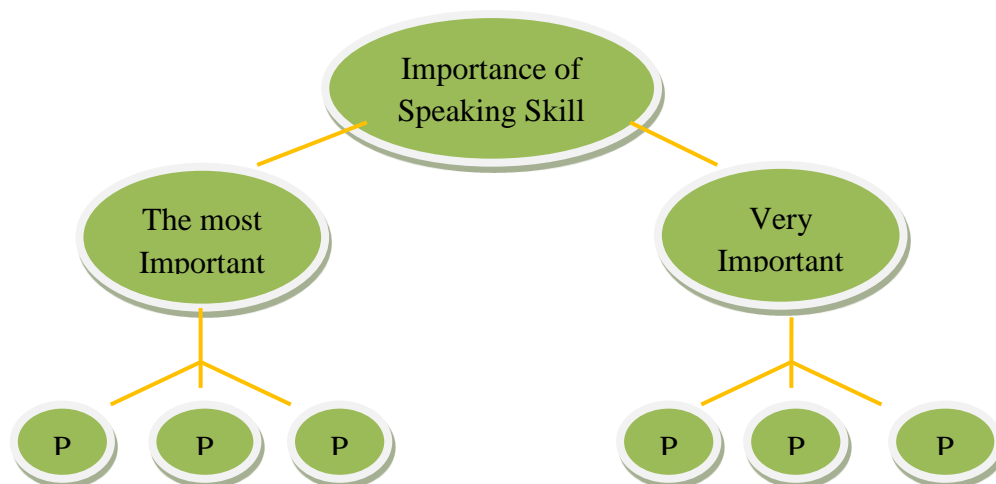


Fig. 4.1 Categories from the participants of the importance of the speaking skill.

The first category shows that participant 1, 3 and 4 agreed that speaking is the most important skill because according to their perceptions if students cannot speak they will

not be able to communicate their ideas as a result they could not understand what the others are saying and also students will feel they are not learning the foreign language because they are not able to produce it. The second category illustrates that participants 2, 5 and 6 considered that it is very important because it is the main way people communicate and it is necessary because they use speaking skill every day furthermore according to the participants without speaking you cannot determine if students are learning a foreign language.

4.3.2 Benefits of Developing the Speaking Skill

The participants have different conceptions about the benefits to develop the speaking skill; from the analysis, the benefits of developing the speaking skill were classified in three different categories: a) *social*, b) *traveling* and c) *workplace*. In the following lines, several excerpts from the participants' interviews will be provided.

The first category was social. Participants 1, 2, 5, and 6 mentioned the relationship of using the speaking skill to communicate something.

Participant 1 mentioned:

“You have to give answers so you're in a real situation you need English to speak you need it in your daily life” (P1).

Participant 2 provided:

It's very important for me and for the students, it's necessary they can communicate ideas” (P2).

Participant 5 pointed out:

“Well for everybody these days oral communication is one of the main generic competences also the way you speak people can determine how educated you are” (P5).

Likewise, Participant 6 agreed saying:

“that’s the main way that they’re gonna be using the language they are learning, so for example my students here, they are learning English the main way they can use English is speaking with somebody” (P6).

The second category was traveling. Participants 1 and 2 mentioned the following:

Participant 1 illustrated:

“It’s the most important rule because it’s all you need because if you travel to the United States, go to the airport you have to ask questions” (P1).

Participant 2 mentioned:

“If they travel abroad is necessary they use English in the spoken form” (P2).

The third category was workplace. Participants 2 and 4 mentioned that because the students will get a job, they will need to develop this skill.

Participant 2 expressed:

“For example if they want to get a job they need to speak in English” (P2).

Participant 4 said:

“Because these students will be teachers one day of English as a foreign Language so they need to develop this skill to have to do their job” (P4).

With the previous quotes, it is possible to see that there are similarities in the participants’ opinions about the necessity to develop the speaking skill. The categories are shown in the following figure (4.2).

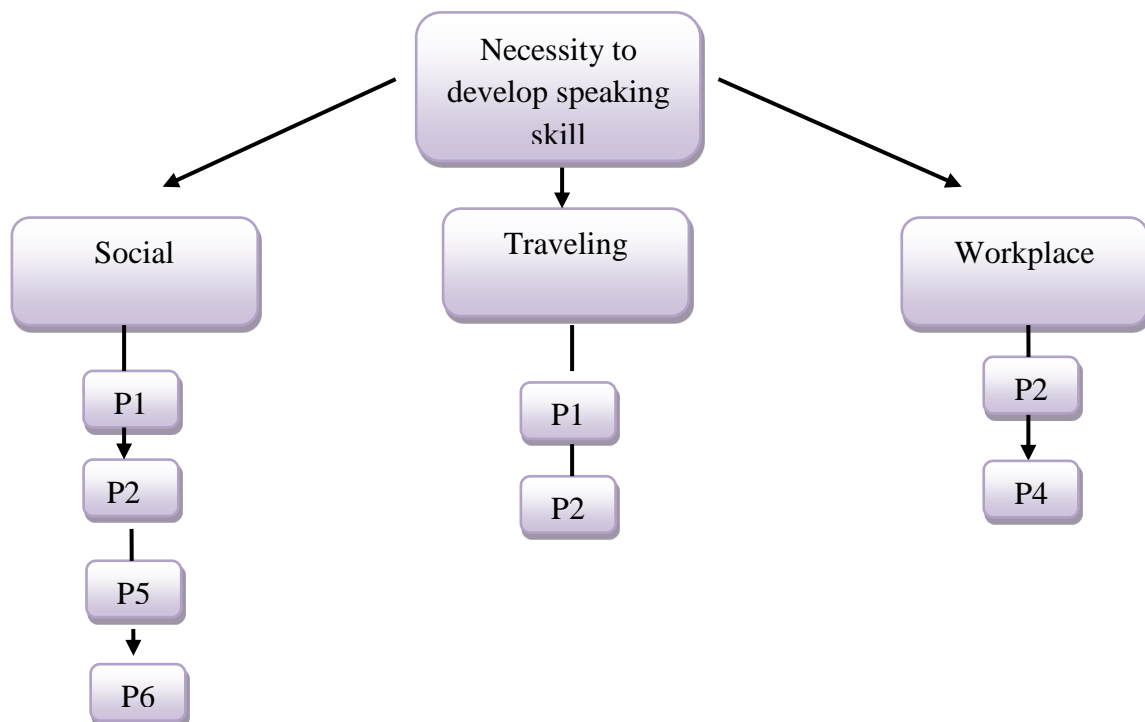


Fig 4.2 categories from the participants about the necessity to develop the speaking skill.

In the first category participants 1, 2, 5 and 6 mentioned that it is necessary to develop speaking skill because according to their perceptions students use it in real situations that they are exposed every day (social). The second category pointed out that, participants 1 and 2 considered that if students travel abroad they need to use English in spoken form. In the third category participants 2 and 4 expressed that because students will be teachers they will need to develop this skill (workplace).

4.3.3 Activities that Teachers Use to Develop the Speaking Skill

Among the activities to develop the speaking skill, all the participants coincided in the use of role plays one of the activities to increase students' speaking.

Participant 1 mentioned:

“Any kind of activities, well I use pair group, work group, from time to time role play, interviews presentations” (P1).

Participant 2 expressed:

“Yeah I use a lot of role play, oral presentations” (P2).

Participant 3 added:

“For example the role play this one of those, there are many others but role play and talking about themselves” (P3).

Participant 4 pointed out:

“I use a lot pair work, they share opinions ideas and they have to agree or disagree with their classmates’ ideas, sometimes play roles for example, like in the restaurant, the customer, the waiter” (P4).

Participant 5 said:

“role play as a technique yes I do but there are several types of role play in which you ask students to play a role for example specific characters there are some other cases in which you ask them to exchange information and they are switching from speaker to listener... I ask students to work in pair and work in groups” (P5).

Participant 6 provided:

“I do a lot of storyteller and so the storyteller is a little bit different, it’s focused on acquisition comprehension with the belief that as students are acquiring the language....I used to use role play a lot, I used to use role play to give students that chance to practice the using the language I still do it sometimes” (P6).

The previous comments show that there are relationships between the activities that participants use to develop speaking skill. The types of activities are shown in the next table (4.1).

Participants	Activities to Develop the Speaking Skill					
	Pair Group	Role Play	Interviews	Presentations	Work Group	Storytellers
P1	✓	✓	✓	✓		
P2		✓		✓		
P3		✓				✓
P4	✓	✓				
P5	✓	✓			✓	
P6		✓				✓

Table 4.1 Type of activities to develop speaking skill.

In the first category participants 1,4, and 5 use pair group to develop the speaking skill. In the second category participants 1,2, 3,4,5 and 6 agreed on the use of role play. In the third category participant 1 mentioned that among the activities that he uses, he makes interviews. The fourth category illustrates that participants 1 and 2 apply presentations. In the fifth category participant 5 pointed out the use of work group. In the last category participants 3 and 6 consider storytellers as an activity to develop speaking skill.

The next figure shows that the participants use different activities to practice speaking skill but all of them coincided in the use of role play which according to them it helps students to develop their speaking skill. The following figure shows the information previously described:

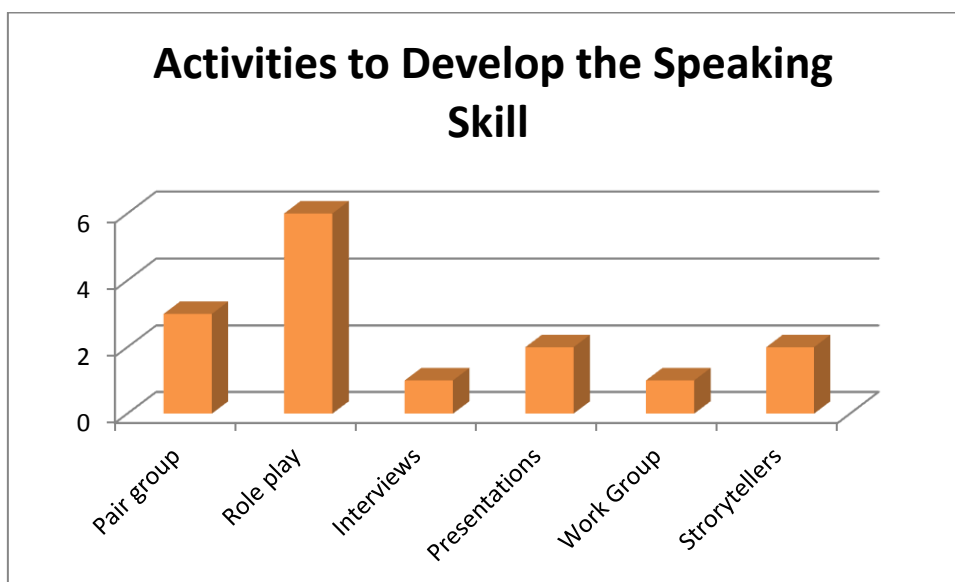


Figure 4.1 Type of activities to develop speaking skill.

4.3.4 How Role Play Helps the Students at the Faculty of Languages.

The participants have different conceptions about how role play helps the students at the faculty of languages. Two categories emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data regarding the fourth research question. Such categories were a) practicing the language and b) communicate ideas.

The first category “practicing the language” is illustrated with the comments made by participants 1, 3, and 4.

Participant 1 mentioned:

“in many cases yes role play and all of those artificial situations they sometimes are the best option you have in classroom so especially here in Mexico you don’t have many opportunities outside the classroom using

English so role play is all control activity in the classroom ...so role play give you a chance to practice what you learnt” (P1).

Participant 3 pointed out:

“Very much there are good context or good examples practicing the role play; you give the students different characters or different positions and they can play them, they can simulate be a waiter, costumer or someone famous. So people like playing roles so that’s why it’s important to implement these activities in the classroom” (P3).

Similarly, participant 4 agreed saying:

“Yes I do in certain ways it does; it helps them to practice ok, in the situations that they could have in a future” (P4).

The second category emerged from comments made by participants 2 and 5. They illustrated that role play helps the students to communicate their ideas.

Participant 2 expressed:

“Yeah very much because they have to take a role and develop it and they have to speak and try to communicate their ideas” (P2).

Participant 5 considered:

“Well communication is about taking roles..... there’s always this listener – speaker, roles you have to fulfill” (P5).

With the previous quotes, it is possible to see that there are relationships between opinion’s participants about how role play helps the students. The categories are shown in the following figure (4.3).

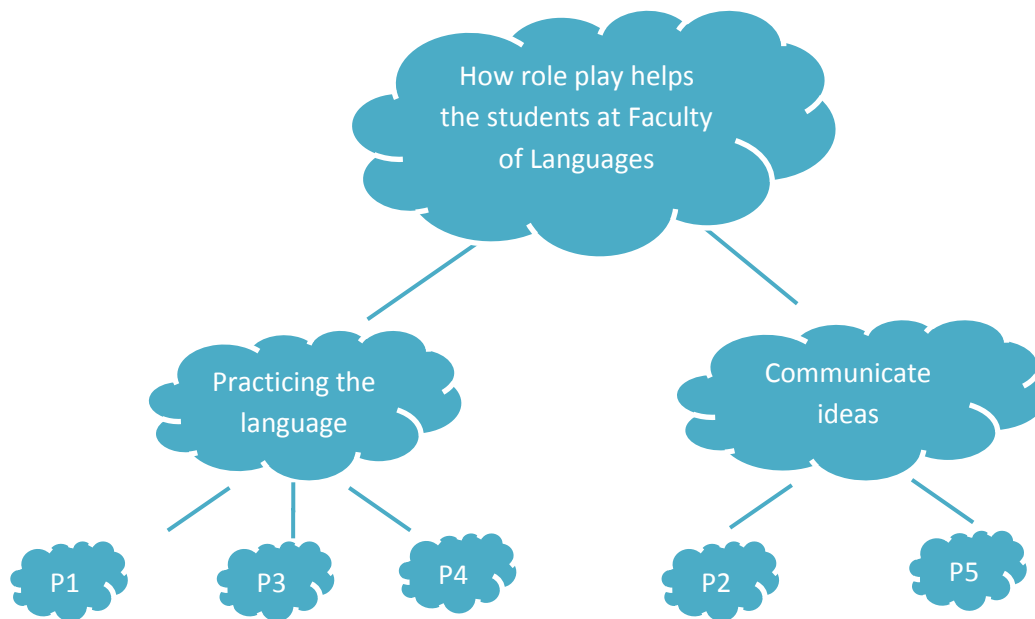


Fig 4.3 How role play helps the students.

The figure shows the fact that participants 1, 3 and 4 mentioned that role play helps the students to practice the language because role play is a control activity in the classroom which give the students a chance to practice what they learn, also according to participants' perceptions with role play students can simulate be another person that will help them to practice situations that they could have in a future. The second category illustrated that participant 2 and 5 considered that the role play helps the students to communicate their ideas because when students are part of a role play they take a role, examine and develop it as a result they have to speak and try to communicate to have a good perform.

4.3.5 Previous conditions that students need before performing a role play

The participants have different conceptions about the previous conditions that students need before performing a role play. Three categories emerged: a) control of the language, b) previous knowledge, and c) practicing and produce it.

Participant 1 and 6 mentioned that before performing a role play students have to know the language.

Participant 1 commented:

“Well you need to know the language first, you can't apply a role play if you don't have the control in the language.....and if you know the language you could apply it” (P1).

Similarly participant 6 agreed:

“For me I used to apply role play after acquiring a little bit [of the language] with storyteller activities to help students to acquire the different grammar structure and so for they need to be able to do the role play themselves” (P6).

Regarding the second category, participants 3, 4, and 5 pointed out that students have to have some previous knowledge before performing a role play.

Participant 3 mentioned:

“It depends for example if they are supposed to watch a TV series it's much better to practice the role play before which actually includes TV series... I structure part of the conversation and the students practice before, so when they watch the TV series they are familiarized with the talk” (P3)

Participant 4 illustrated:

“I think they should know something else before having a role play because they have, they must have like a model to follow yes like the vocabulary they

need to use in that situation so previous so we have to plan we have to guide them to have a role play” (P4).

In the third category, participants 2 and 5 provided that students need to practice and then produce the role play.

Participant 2 expressed:

“It could be done in whatever stage of the class or maybe for the practice of the production of the students in those stages it could be really nice so they practice the language and they produce their own ideas” (P2).

Participant 5 mentioned:

“When students have something to say so, they are prepared for communicative exchanges” (P5).

With the previous quotes, it is possible to see that there are relationships about the best moment to perform a role play. The categories are shown in the following figure (4.2).

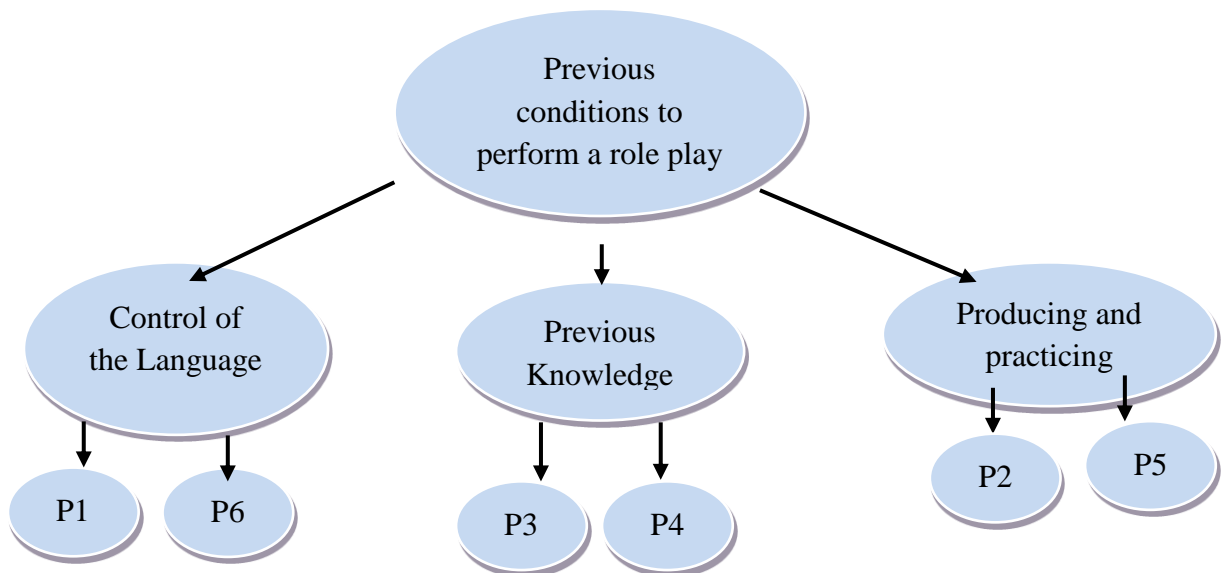


Fig 4.2 Categories from the participants about the best moment to perform a role play.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter provided the answers to the research questions that led this investigation. Some categories emerged from the participants comments, and these categories were illustrated in different figures. Also, the participants' excerpts reinforced the categories and the information was better understood. In the following chapter, the conclusion of this paper will be presented.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to analyze the teachers' perceptions about using role play as an activity to develop the speaking skill in the students at the Faculty of Languages. For this research, six interviews were applied to teachers who work at the faculty; these interviews were recorded and evaluated. The focus of the analysis was on the role play's function. Finally, the results of each interview were analyzed.

The final conclusions are presented in this chapter. The findings and their significance are briefly explained, then the implications of the study are discussed. The limitations are analyzed, and as a final point, some suggestions for further research are presented.

5.2 Findings and their significance

In this section, the findings of the research and their significance are briefly explained. First of all, the importance of using role play to develop the speaking skill was confirmed. It was found that speaking is one of the most important skills. This means that the participants emphasize the fact that students need to be prepared for real life situations. This will consequently bring some benefits for the students.

Some of the benefits of the speaking skill were categorized as follows: a) social, b) travelling, and c) workplace. This means that if students develop the speaking skill they could interact with others; also students will be able to travel abroad by themselves and they will have a chance to find a better job. However, in order to achieve students' speaking skill it is necessary to design activities focused on the speaking skill.

Among the communicative activities that the participants mentioned, such as pair group, work group, presentations, interviews and storytellers, all the participants

coincided in the use of role play to improve the speaking skill. They consider that using role play will help students to practice the language and they will be able to communicate their ideas. This fact will help students to practice and improve their speaking skill in a safe environment before coping with real life situations. At this point, another important aspect needs to be considered, regarding the necessary conditions to apply a role play.

According to the last research question, some conditions emerged as necessary to apply a role play, namely, a) control of the language, b) previous knowledge, and c) practicing and producing. This suggests that in order to perform good role plays in the classroom, students need to know the grammar structure. Also it is important that teachers provide them with previous vocabulary words about the topic which will help the students to get familiarized with the context that the role play will carry out. As a result students will practice the role play and they will be able to produce it. This reinforces the fact that they will be practicing for real life situations.

5.3 Implications

This study revealed the importance that teachers give to the speaking skill. Several implications emerge at this point. Although all the participants consider that the speaking skill is important, that does not mean that the other skills are less important in the language learning process. Language teachers should focus their attention on taking into account the other skills such as listening, writing and reading, so that the students will have a balance among the four skills. Teachers could apply a variety of activities giving enough attention to all the skills; also teachers will have to prepare materials and they will have to apply these activities frequently. With a combination of the four skills in their courses, it is expected that students develop the four skills at the same pace.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

Some limitations were encountered in the realization of this project. First of all, the number of the participants for this project was limited to 6 teachers. Consequently, the participants' perceptions were also limited. In the sense, the results cannot be generalized to the whole population.

Another limitation is concerned with the context of the research. All the participants work at the Faculty of Languages. There is the possibility that different results could emerge if the contexts were different.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

Two suggestions emerged from the limitations in this study. First, the number of participants was a small population. However, a larger number of participants would be necessary in order to analyze different teachers' perceptions about using role play. Second, this research was carried out in only one context. This calls for a wider variety of contexts such as public/private and different levels, where their experience may be different. This will permit to have a broader panorama of the effectiveness of role play to develop the speaking skill.

5.6 Conclusion

This particular study focused on the importance of developing the speaking skill in students at the Faculty of Languages. Several activities were considered but role play was the most predominant of all. Although the results cannot be generalized, it is expected that this particular study can make a small but significant contribution in facilitating teachers an activity to help the students to develop their speaking skill in a

different and dynamic way, which can be applied in different levels and different populations such as teenagers or even children.

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APPENDIX A:

INTERVIEW TO TEACHERS

1. How long have you been teaching English?
2. What do you think about speaking skill? Is it important for you? If so, why?
3. Why is it important to develop speaking skill for the students?
4. Do you use any kind of activity to develop speaking skill? Which one (s)?
5. Do you think role plays help the students to develop speaking skill? If so, how?
6. In your personal opinion, what is the best moment to apply a role play?

APPENDIX B:

INTERVIEW TO PARTICIPANT 1

Researcher- How long have you been teaching English?

Participant 1 - for 1995 so that must be 18 years

Researcher- oh my god really

Participant 1 - a long time right

Researcher- yeah it's a long time but you know you look young so that's why oh my god

Participant 1- oh thanks

Researcher- what do you think about speaking skill? Is it important for you?

Participant 1- speaking yeah definitely it's the most important skill for me

Researcher - why?

Participant 1- if you can't speak you can't communicate it's very hard to communicate to anybody if you are not native speaker I mean you need to be able to understand so you get the message to process it and you can communicate.

Researcher - In your opinion why is it important speaking skill for the students?

Participant 1- it's the most important rule because it's all you need because if you travel to united states go to the airport you have to ask questions you have to give answers so you're in a real situation you need English to speak you need it in your dairy life.

Researcher- Do you use any kind of activity to develop the speaking skill?

Participant 1 – any kind of activities, well I use pair group work group from time to time role play interviews presentations

Researcher- you use communicative activities right.

teacher- well I think so different activities depending of the size of the group of the level of the group possible in the age of the group as well if they are younger they have to have more control activities to speak it's important to try do speaking activities.

Researcher- you mention before you use role play do you think role play help students to develop speaking skill?

Participant 1 - in many cases yes role play an all of those artificial situations they sometimes are the best option you have in a classroom so specially here in Mexico you don't have many opportunities outside the classroom using English so role play is all control activity in the classroom being an actor in situations in an English speak country if you study English in Britain you can go out in the street and talk to people, interview people you're practicing so, role play give you a chance to practice what you learnt

Researcher- Now in your personal opinion, what is the best moment to apply a role play?

Participant 1 -well you need to know the language first you can't apply a role play if you don't have the control in the language and if you have another chance to practice a little bit in a control way and when you choose the language when your teachers teach you have more language and if you know the language you could apply it you need a pair to be able to practice the language maybe practicing in small groups or pairs and then apply it

Researcher- sometimes students don't want to participate in a role play. According teaching experience what would be the reason why they don't want to be a part of a role play?

Participant 1 - well probably it's artificial so they have to convince people that it's worth it maybe the teacher how he teaches and if the teacher doesn't explains and set up

the activity properly they wouldn't like apply if the students believe it's silly the teacher have to solve it maybe he must show people how to do it.

Researcher – ok thank you so much I really appreciated it.