

TEACHERS AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF USING ROLE PLAY TO IMPROVE THE SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS IN ENGLISH FOR RESTAURANT AND HOTEL OPERATION COURSE

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Received:	04/10/2023	This study explores both teachers and students' perceptions of the use of role play to enhance students' speaking skills in English for Restaurant and Hotel Operation Course at a college in the north of Vietnam. The research addresses three main questions including students' perceptions of role play impacting on their speaking skills development, teachers' perceptions of employing role play to enhance students' speaking abilities and recommendations derived from study findings for optimizing role play as a teaching strategy. The questionnaire, interview, and observation were employed as parts of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The findings highlight the value of role play in improving speaking skills in hospitality-oriented language courses. The students found role play tasks beneficial even though there were challenges related to confidence, language proficiency and time constraints. The study offers insights for improving role play instructions, addressing difficulties, refining instruction techniques and integrating industry-specific knowledge for immersive learning experiences. Moreover, the results and recommendations benefit the students, the teachers, and the course.
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QUAN ĐIỂM CỦA GIÁO VIÊN VÀ SINH VIÊN VỀ VIỆC SỬ DỤNG KỸ THUẬT ĐÓNG VAI ĐỂ CẢI THIỆN KỸ NĂNG NÓI CỦA SINH VIÊN NĂM THỨ HAI TRONG KHÓA HỌC TIẾNG ANH CHUYÊN NGÀNH NGHIỆP VỤ NHÀ HÀNG VÀ KHÁCH SẠN

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO		TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài:	04/10/2023	Nghiên cứu này tìm hiểu quan điểm của giáo viên và sinh viên đối với việc sử dụng hoạt động đóng vai để cải thiện kỹ năng nói của sinh viên trong khóa học Tiếng Anh chuyên ngành Nghiệp vụ Nhà hàng và Khách sạn. Nghiên cứu đề cập đến ba vấn đề chính bao gồm sinh viên nhận thức thế nào về tác động của kỹ thuật đóng vai đối với phát triển kỹ năng nói, giáo viên nhận thức như thế nào về việc sử dụng kỹ thuật đóng vai để nâng cao khả năng nói của sinh viên và các khuyến nghị để tối ưu hóa kỹ thuật đóng vai như một phương pháp giảng dạy. Bảng câu hỏi, phỏng vấn và quan sát được sử dụng như một phần của cả phương pháp định tính và định lượng. Kết quả nghiên cứu nhấn mạnh giá trị của hoạt động đóng vai trong việc cải thiện kỹ năng nói trong khóa học Tiếng Anh chuyên ngành Nghiệp vụ Nhà hàng và Khách sạn. Sinh viên nhận thấy kỹ thuật đóng vai mang lại lợi ích, mặc dù còn có những thách thức liên quan đến sự tự tin, trình độ ngôn ngữ và hạn chế về thời gian. Nghiên cứu cung cấp những hiểu biết sâu sắc để cải thiện các hướng dẫn cho hoạt động đóng vai, giải quyết những khó khăn, điều chỉnh kỹ thuật giảng dạy và tích hợp kiến thức chuyên ngành để tạo ra trải nghiệm học tập sâu rộng hơn. Kết quả và khuyến nghị từ nghiên cứu mang lại lợi ích cho sinh viên, giáo viên và khóa học Tiếng Anh Nghiệp vụ Nhà hàng và Khách sạn.
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1. Introduction

According to Tran Minh Thanh et al. [1], it is widely accepted that fluency in the English language is a key to success in life. Obviously, learners always desire to speak natural and fluent English; however, the second-year students at College of Trade and Tourism faced difficulties in speaking English fluently and naturally while they learned the course of English for Restaurant and Hotel Operation. This could be attributed to factors like motivation, confidence, interests, materials, and so on. To address this, various teaching techniques were employed, and role play emerged as a particularly effective one. Role play provided opportunities for students to practice in different social contexts and roles, leading to improved speaking skills. However, it is crucial to consider individual students' comprehension levels and preferences, as different teaching strategies may be more or less effective for each student. Therefore, the teachers' and students' perceptions of the use of role play should be assessed to determine its effects on student's speaking skills.

Speaking skills involve crafting and delivering a message for an audience. Carnegie [2] focuses on tailoring messages to resonate with the audience. While Lucas [3] emphasizes intent, including informing, entertaining, persuading, or inspiring, McCroskey [4] and Rapoport [5] highlight the importance of both verbal and nonverbal cues in communication. McCarthy and Carter [6] stress considering the listener's reactions, emphasizing the interactive nature of speaking.

Role play is considered a technique in teaching English which allows students to practice speaking in a conversational situation, build confidence and fluency, assess progress and put learning into action. It involves fantasy or imaginary situations in order to improve students' speaking skills as well as creates motivation and involvement necessary for learning. Tompkins [7] refers to its active engagement in learning English. Gower et al. [8] describe it as unscripted role assumption in conversations. Keneth [9] sees it as intentional enactment for student identification. Glover [10] highlights role play as a method for experiential learning and perspective-taking in real-world scenarios.

Perception is the process by which we interpret and make sense of sensory information from our environment. It involves organizing, interpreting, and giving meaning to the sensory input we receive through our senses. This process is influenced by factors like previous experiences, cultural background, emotions, and individual differences. Perception, as described by various scholars, involves the process of extracting information [11]. Tubbs and Mors [12] mention its active nature, where individuals selectively perceive, organize and interpret their experiences. Robbins [13] similarly defines perception as the process through which individuals govern and interpret sensory information to derive meaning in their environment. According to Kleinke [14], perception holds significance in learning, as it influences how students engage with educational strategies.

Various studies have explored students' perceptions of using role play in learning speaking skills. Abdel-Raheem [15] assessed the effectiveness of role-play in developing EFL students' speaking skills. The results indicated a significant improvement in speaking abilities, with positive feedback from both teachers and students. Melinda Dooly [16] explored role play as a teaching technique for improving speaking skills in second language learners. The findings demonstrated its effectiveness, with high levels of engagement and motivation reported by the teachers and students. Rahma [17] investigated EFL students' perceptions of role play in language learning. The study revealed that the students believed role play to be an effective technique for improving speaking skills and enjoyed the activity. Another research conducted by [18] delved into the influence of role-play exercises on the speaking abilities of Korean students who were learning English as a foreign language. The study aimed to uncover whether engaging in role-play activities led to noticeable improvements in the participants' speaking performance. Samuel Adu-Gyamfi and Akua Agyeiwaa Owusu-Ansah [19] conducted a study on the use of role play as a teaching technique in higher education. The results indicated that the students found role play

effective in improving their speaking skills and enhancing their overall learning experience. Wang [20] conducted a study to investigate the effectiveness of role play in improving Chinese EFL learners' speaking proficiency. The results showed that the use of role play significantly improved the learners' speaking ability, particularly in terms of fluency and accuracy. While all these studies investigated the teachers and students' perception of using role play to improve speaking skills in general, this research was conducted in English for Restaurant and Hotel Operation Course. The study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the students' perceptions of the use of role play to improve their speaking skill in English for Restaurant and Hotel Operation Course?
2. What are the teachers' perceptions regarding the use of role play as a teaching method to enhance students' speaking skills in English for Restaurant and Hotel Operation Course?
3. What recommendations can be made for using role play as a teaching method to enhance students' speaking skills in English for Restaurant and Hotel Operation Course based on the findings of the study?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research design

Descriptive qualitative method was applied in the research. The data collection instruments used to collect the data were the questionnaire and interview which assisted to gather students and teachers' perceptions of using role play to improve students' speaking skill.

2.2. Participants

This research was conducted in TB58NS2 and TB58QD1 classes at College of Trade and Tourism with sixty second-year students. Each class has thirty students, who learned sixty periods of English for Restaurant and Hotel Operation. In addition, three English teachers teaching English for Restaurant and Hotel Operation Course participated in the interview.

2.3. Data collection instrument

The data was collected from the questionnaire and interview. There were three parts with closed-ended questions, open-ended questions and Likert scale questions for students' questionnaire section and ten questions for teachers' interview section.

The researcher planned to explore the teachers' views on using role play to enhance speaking skills in the English for Restaurant and Hotel Operation course; therefore, conducting semi-structured interviews with these teachers was an appropriate method for gathering insights. This approach allows for in-depth discussions on experiences, attitudes and challenges related to role play.

2.4. Data analysis

The questionnaire was analyzed by descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies and percentages. This provided an understanding of the students' perceptions of using role play to improve their speaking skills.

An interval scoring system was employed to evaluate the students' responses on the questionnaire. This system categorized responses into distinct intervals, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" for scores between 0 and 2, "Disagree" for scores between 2.1 and 2.5, "Undecided" for scores between 2.6 and 3, "Agree" for scores between 3.1 and 3.5 to "Strongly Agree" for scores between 3.6 and 4 [21, p. 137]. After data collection, the scoring system was applied to analyze the participants' feedback.

To determine the average response, the mean score ($\bar{x}$) was calculated using the formula $\bar{x} = \sum x/N$, where $\bar{x}$ was represented as the mean, $\sum x$ denoted the total raw score, and N was signified as the total number of participating students [22, p. 298]. Additionally, a grand mean score ($\bar{X}$)

was computed by summing all individual mean scores and dividing by the total number of questionnaires.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Findings from the students' questionnaires

The closed-ended questionnaire consisted of four questions (Appendix 1), and the results of questionnaire were shown in table 1.

Table 1. *Students' engagement and preferences in Restaurant and Hotel Operation Course*

Content of questions	Option (%)				
	A	B	C	D	E
1. Have you ever participated in role play activities in your Restaurant and Hotel Operation Course before?	66.7	25	8.3		
2. What would you like to achieve by the end of this course?	100	41.7	86.7	66.7	
3. What types of feedback do you find helpful after participating in a role play activity?	46.7	90	83.3	58.3	
4. Would you like to see more role play activities incorporated into your Restaurant and Hotel Operation Course?	96.7	3.3			

Table 1 summarizes the students' past experiences with role play activities, their goals for the course, the types of feedback they find helpful and their preferences for incorporating more role play activities into the curriculum. This information can be used to understand student engagement levels and preferences, which can be valuable for optimizing the course content and teaching methods to better suit the needs and expectations of the students.

Table 2 illustrates the result of the questionnaire which investigated students' perception of using role play in Restaurant and Hotel Operation Course.

Table 2. *Students' perception of using role play in Restaurant and Hotel Operation Course*

(Unit: %)

No.	Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Role play activities are important for students who are studying Restaurant and Hotel Operation.	25	41.7	33.3	0	0
2	Role play activities are suitable for students to practise speaking.	50	33.3	16.7	0	0
3	Role play activities help students to understand the hospitality industry better.	25	33.3	36.7	5	0
4	Role play activities can improve students' vocabulary and grammar structure.	41.7	33.3	25	0	0
5	Role play activities can help students improve their fluency and build their confidence in speaking.	33.3	35	25	6.7	0
6	Role play activities can help students improve their communication skills.	33.3	35	25	6.7	0
7	Role play activities help students develop their collaborative skills.	28.3	41.7	25	5	0
8	Students feel comfortable when participating in role play activities.	25	33.3	30	11.7	0
9	Role play is an interesting way to learn English for Restaurant and Hotel Operation Course.	33.3	41.7	25	0	0
10	Role play activities should be used in all speaking lessons.	30	28.3	30	11.7	0

As can be seen from table 2, the majority of students (over 50%) agree or strongly agree that role play activities in the Restaurant and Hotel Operation Course are important (66.7%) and suitable for practicing speaking (83.3%). They also contribute to understand the hospitality

industry (58.3%). Besides, they improve vocabulary and grammar (75%) and so on. It can be concluded that the students have positive attitudes towards using role play to improve their speaking skills in Restaurant and Hotel Operation Course.

By collecting information from open-ended questions, the researcher understands the challenges that the students have experienced when participating in role play activities.

Table 3. *Students' difficulties when participating in role play activities*

Options	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Do not feel confident to act out	50	83.3
Limited vocabulary and grammar structures	40	66.7
Related to hotel and restaurant topics		
Lack of time to prepare the role	30	50
Lack of classroom space	30	50
Poor interaction among individuals	20	33.3

Table 3 indicates that learners face various difficulties during role play activities. One of the biggest factors that students met was their low self-confidence (50 students or 83.3%). There may be underlying factors contributing to their self-doubt or fear of performing in front of others. A significant number of students (40 students or 66.7%) feel they lack the necessary language skills to effectively engage in role play activities. It suggests that there may be a need for more focused language instruction and vocabulary-building exercises to help students improve their language proficiency. Surprisingly, half of the students thought that there is a lack of time and classroom space to prepare the role. These challenges highlight the importance of allocating sufficient time and space within the classroom for students to prepare for role play activities. The last challenge provided by 20 students or 33.3% indicating poor interaction among individuals during role play activities suggests that there may be difficulties in effectively engaging and communicating with their peers.

It is important to remember that addressing these challenges requires a tailored approach based on the specific needs and abilities of the students. Regular assessment and feedback can help identify individual areas for improvement and allow for targeted support to overcome these challenges effectively.

Based on the open-ended questions, the researcher also understands the students' suggestions or feedback for how role play activities could be improved.

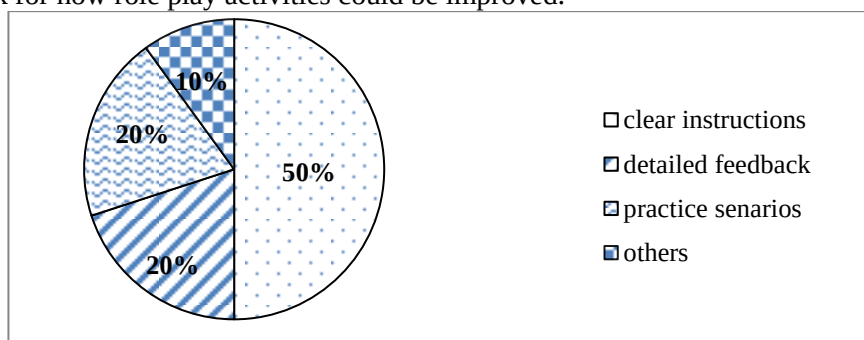


Figure 1. *Students' suggestions to improve role play activities*

Figure 1 presents the students' suggestions to improve role play activities. Since 50% of the students mentioned the need for clear instructions, it suggests that there may have been some confusion or ambiguity in the role play activities. The fact that 20% of the students mentioned the need for detailed feedback indicates that they value specific guidance on their performance. The remaining 10% of the students provided miscellaneous suggestions, including variation in scenarios, encouraging creativity, time management, peer collaboration, incorporation of

reflection and adaptability. By implementing these recommendations, the researcher can enhance the role play activities, address the students' suggestions and create a more effective and engaging learning experience.

3.2. Data analysis and findings from the teachers' interview

The researcher conducted an interview to three English teachers to explore their perception of using role play to improve the speaking skills of second-year students in the English for Restaurant and Hotel Operation Course. All of them have extensive experience and a strong commitment for using role play consistently in their courses and aiming to enhance student learning. They focus on scripted and semi-scripted scenarios, with one teacher incorporating occasional unscripted role plays to foster creativity. Immediate and comprehensive feedback is valued for skill development. Role play activities are aligned with specific course topics to bridge theory and practice. The teachers emphasize the pivotal role of role plays in deepening understanding of the hospitality industry, practical application, critical thinking and decision-making. Assessment methods include evaluating communication, confidence, adaptability and industry-specific terminology use. Challenges include time constraints, engagement, and authenticity. The teachers recommend clear instructions, a supportive environment, structured feedback and post-activity reflection for successful implementation. They also suggest leveraging technology, collaborating with industry professionals, diversifying scenarios, and refining based on student feedback. Overall, their insights offer a comprehensive perspective on using role play to enhance speaking skills in the Restaurant and Hotel Operation Course. Educators can benefit by applying their expertise, implementing their suggestions, and addressing challenges to create a dynamic learning environment that prepares students for success in the hospitality industry.

4. Conclusion

The discussion highlights the positive impact of role play activities on speaking skills in the English for Restaurant and Hotel Operation Course. Insights from the students and experienced teachers reveal benefits, challenges and effective strategies. The students' positive reception and feedback offer valuable suggestions for tailored instruction. The teachers emphasize aligning scenarios with industry topics and providing personalized feedback, showcasing the effectiveness of experiential learning. Comprehensive recommendations emerge, including addressing challenges, enhancing role play activities, fostering engagement and integrating industry-specific knowledge and technology. This approach prepares the students for successful careers in the evolving hospitality sector. Based on the findings, the English teachers should continue using role play activities in their courses more frequently.

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