

Using Role Play As A Means Of English Spoken Skills Evaluation At Tertiary Level By University Lecturer In Karachi, Pakistan

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Abstract:

This study aim is to use role play as a means evaluation of speaking skills for Managerial Communication for graduates of a local Technical University in Karachi, Pakistan. English is the medium of instruction for Managerial Communication; however, many students do not have a solid linguistic spoken background, and English is their third or fourth language. The effectiveness of teaching spoken skills pedagogy was measured in two phases with (n=30) mixed-gender university of communication students. In phase I, students' basic skills, and proficiency, fluency and confidence were evaluated using a standardized rubric, scores were recorded. Feedback was given to the students and for next assignment the rules of role play were explained. In phase II role play was used as a means of measuring proficiency, fluency and confidence, along with problem solving skills in a task driven role play. A simple marks comparison projected the effectiveness of the method. Written responses from students were also counted and the responses showed positive feedback for role play and from the teacher as an evaluative tool. The findings of this study indicate a favorable response of university graduate students for the use of role play as a means of evaluation. This study adds to the literature on speaking skills in second language evaluation and its effectiveness. Future studies on a large scale can increase the generality of the results. It is recommended to explore particular methods and classroom practices of using role plays as a means of speaking skills, cognitive flexibility, and evaluations in second language classroom.

Keywords: role plays, teacher, L2, speaking skills, fluency, proficiency, classroom, activities, contextualized study.

Introduction

English is spoken globally for social, personal, and professional purposes (Ounis, 2017). It is somewhat considered to be the language of business and is widely used for conveying messages both in spoken and written form. Many

people aim to master the language before the enter the professional work force. To cater to this requirement of the industry, many universities have devised compulsory language course (Kakepoto, Said, Habil, Umrani, & Memon, 2013). English language communication took an essential skill globally, with an increase in the

language spoken, understood and taught (Samsibar & Naro, 2018).

In the globalized world, 'speaking skills are perceived as fundamental for worldwide mobility, access to advanced education, and work' (Fulcher, 2015a; Isaacs, 2016), and are currently a noteworthy sector in commonly global and nearby language assessments, due at any rate to a limited extent to the ascent of the open development in language instructing and assessment (Fulcher, 2000).

Effective spoken skill is considered to be one of the important skills that an employee needs to possess at workplace. Especially, when it comes to presentation skills, 'it adds value if the presenter complements the presentation in English language' (Clement & Murugavel, 2018). Students' cognitive flexibility can be measured and persistently utilize through oral communications investigate, escalate, while at the same time convey thoughts and emotions. A person's utilization of speaking skills in everyday life is also taken as making the most of every prospect. In the professional world, spoken language is given more weightage, here, for the reason that it is in the interview process that the ability, confidence and skills are gauge by the interviewer (Konar, 2021).

Spoken communication is the means by which we speak with others in a wide scope of social settings, for example, playing, eating suppers, shopping, and so forth. In any case, in spite of its power in language pedagogy and assessment, speaking has been considered as an immaterial build which is trying to conceptualize and survey in a solid and legitimate way (Hussain, Hashmi, Naeem, Arshad & Haider, 2021). Spoken communication progression is empirical to the accomplishment of early education. Furthermore, speaking skills have known to show improvement of kids' reasoning constantly, and their 'perusing, composing, seeing, and speaking to aptitudes' (Saefurrohman, 2018).

In the domain of language Speaking skills assessment and evaluation, several variables become a vital factor which imaginably influence test takers' presentation and along these lines their grades, including task highlights, questioner attributes, rater impacts, and rating scale, among others (McNamara, 1996; Fulcher, 2015). To develop a balanced out speaking assessment criteria is essential, requiring observations, scientific analysis and even carefully thought-out marking schemes.

Surveys or position papers are, as of now, accessible on speaking appraisal, either auditing the improvements in speaking assessment all the more comprehensively (e.g., Ginther, 2013; O'Sullivan, 2014; Isaacs, 2016) or analyzing a particular point in speaking assessment, like articulation (Isaacs, 2014), rating spoken execution (Winke, 2012) and interactional skill (Galaczi and Taylor, 2018). Noticeably, these papers are significant in studying related advancements in speaking ability appraisal and outlining a wide image of speaking assessment for specialists and professionals in the field.

In this study, an account audit, that is role play was used as a means of assess speaking skills. As indicated by Norris and Ortega (2006, p. 5, referred to in Ellis, 2015, p. 285), an account audit means to "scope out and recount a tale about the observational region." Assessing written work has clear cut markers, however, spoken skills require a more holistic approach to check the improvement of diction, tone, clarity and confidence (Kristensen, 2022).

For this study, role play is being used as an assessment strategy. Keneth (2008) states that role play can be defined as the type of student's behaves in a certain context. Role playing as a method of teaching can be considered as a problem can solved consciously which is briefly acted out so that the student can identify with the characters. Role play not only provides a variation in teaching technique but also allows a

more student-centred approach to learning (Sharma, 2020). Tompkins (2001) defines role play as “it is one of the classroom teaching techniques that encourage students to participate actively in the process of learning English. Therefore, foreign language students practice the target language in context similar to real-life situations where stress and shyness are removed”

Role plays may also be counted as a creative assessment (Karwowski & Soszynski, 2008). There are three types of role play, they are: fully scripted role-play, semi-scripted role-play and non-scripted roleplay (Krebt, 2017). By role playing, it means to be used as a method of teaching that can be considered as a problem-solving consciously which is briefly acted out so that the student can identify with the characters (Blanter, 2009). Role play activities could be shown as the way student behaves in specific context and situation (Yakubov, 2022)

The researcher defines it as the role-playing as a means and as a teaching method for teaching spoken skills and evaluating it as well, which is conscious representation and discussion of the role in a group. In the class a problem context is shortly acted out so that the students can cope with the character, while displaying their spoken abilities effectively based on a marking-criteria adopted from the university’s own standardized proficiency and fluency rubrics.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study to use role-play as a means to assess students speaking abilities, at tertiary level.

Research Question

The research question of the present study is:

- 1) How effective is the use of Role Play method as a means of English Spoken Skills evaluation at tertiary level by university lecturer?

What is the learners’ feedback regarding use of Role play as a means of Spoken skills evaluation?

The research question will serve as the study objective and will be useful to understand the efficacy of the role play method as and evaluator for speaking skills at tertiary level.

Background

Communication is derived from the Latin action word "communicare" which implies "to talk together, present, convey and talk with each other" (Sonseca, et al., 2015). However, communication in the sincere sense includes "normality" with somebody. The "ordinariness" is accomplished through commonly shared codes. A few other meanings of communication was seen as remembering the root sense. In the expressions of slight, communication is the means by which we share data; pass on what we know or what we need to know (Zrekat & Bakar, 2106). Communication is the cycle by which data is passed among people or potentially associations by methods for recently concurred images.

So, in a broader sense, communication is intuitive. In this regard, in any tertiary organization, the instructor is relied upon to share data to encourage aptitude securing by his students (Hussain et al, 2021). Compelling communication achieves the ideal normality of divided information among the students and their teachers. It is significant for the teacher to (Asemanyi, 2015) "pass on what we know ...". Hussain, Hashmi & co further state in their paper that, ‘the medium that best suits the individuals engaged with the communication, the spot, and the reason should be appropriate if communication is to be successful.’

According to Brown and Yale (1983) ‘spoken language is a skill that have primarily transactional function whose main purpose is to communicate a message well to the listener’. In

simpler terms, speaking can be formulated by adequate feedback as well, since it help clarify and makes things more easy for the individual to understand. Speaking is also the skill where one expresses opinions, emotions and judgements regarding something as a response to a stimulus. Being able to communicate effectively has become an important skill to acquire in second language learning (Rao, 2019).

For productive communication, students require more than the proper capacity to introduce well along with a scope of predictable articulations. Effective communication is setting subordinate and, in this way, implanted in its specific talk network. Oral communication mirrors the persevering and amazing job of language and communication in human culture (Rahman, 2010). So situational means to teach and evaluate spoken skills can be more effective than generic manner of teaching English as a second language. One of the reason role play is not implied in many activities based teaching pedagogy.

The ability to speak English effectively has become a very important skill and much needed in both the academic as well as professional world. Speaking skill is usually measured in terms of the capability to carry out a conversation keeping in tune with theme of the conversation. (Yakubov, 2022). This fact gave a new scope to language teaching and thus making both the academics and parent understand the importance of spoken communication. However, the measurement of speaking skills is a task in its own self.

Fluency and proficiency play an active role in communication, however, individual may differ in terms of their language proficiency, which can be accounted for by just one underlying aspect, which may vary from context to context. Though Cummins (1979) pointed out that the 'construct of academic language proficiency does not in any way depend on test scores as support for either its construct validity or relevance to education'.

Burlinska (2016) unpublished thesis discovered some interesting notions regarding role play and speaking skill, he states that, 'drama supports students to gain fluency in speaking English as a foreign language'. Use of drama or role play can be one of the most effective technique to develop L2 speaking skills in second language learners. It gives learners a chance to practice the L2 in a native written format that allows communication in different settings and social roles (Burlinska, 2016), it also helps develop students' fluency and accuracy in speaking English as a foreign language in a language classroom.

The communication course that is essentially taught at almost all Pakistani universities, aim is to help students develop the rational and logical thinking skills that is essential, (Tuzlukova, Al Busaidi, and Burns, 2017), especially when entering for the professional world. Communication for professional is a specialized subject taught in many universities to equip students for handling professional communications both written and verbal effectively (Konar, 2021).

According to Karwowski & Soszynski, the main intention of the Role Play is to develop participants' creativity, by: '(1) development of imagination; (2) change of convictions about creativity; (3) development of a capability for constructive criticism; (4) realization of the role of imagination in the process of problem-solving; and (5) stimulation of intellectual operations that play a role in creative thinking'. So, Role play activities being implied at tertiary level can be a good source for teachers to be utilized to teach creativity, problem solving and speaking skills improvement.

Role play originated from psychodrama which is a form of psychotherapy (Moreno, 2017). The term 'role' according to Rojas & co (2018), comes from the Greek word 'rolled-up' which refers to theater's scripts used during the ancient Greek times. Role-Plays, however, emerged from the

games “Simulate Society” (1966) and “Dungeons & Drangons Fights” (1974) created to involve participants’ feelings and emotions using heroic and fantasy elements. Roja, further added that role-play is a practice of functional language that allows the application of different corrective styles, such as error correction, self-correction, peer correction, etc., among English language students. Using role play can be a amusing activity that keeps the learners occupied, entertain, amused, while enabling the participants to attain new knowledge in a significant way. For their role plays the students can select their own set of vocabulary, expressions in tune to the situation that they have selected to act out, thus also promoting creativity through collaborative learning (Supena, Darmuki, & Hariyadi, 2021).

Kumaran (2017) added that the learners enjoy taking part in role play especially using a foreign language. Students’ participation empowers them to communicate without hesitation and fear in real-life contexts strengthening their process of foreign language acquisition., thus, developing a self confidence that is needed to speak a different language from their native tongue.

Holt and Kysilka (2006) thus explain that surrounding or the situation the student will face, can impact his/her way of acting. When we see yourself or other role-players as members of congregation, an audience or students in a parade, then the way we behave changes in accordance with our surroundings (Richard, Baud-Bovy, Clerc-Georgy, & Gentaz, 2021).. For instant, the way that we used to behave with our friend is different from the way that we behave in formal situations. They acknowledged that roles can also be affected by a person’s function or purpose. Holt and Kysilka (2006) add on that role play technique can be enjoyable and lead to develop learning, these techniques can be used a student-student communication, they help EFL students to comprehend the importance of cooperation and to have an interest in learning. Kristensen (2022)

paper utilizing theatrics to improve fluency and accuracy among speaker adds value to the notion that role play can be viable means to test and evaluate speaking abilities.

Through various studies and research conducted using role play as a means of teaching tool in language classes, following main points have been noted. Using role plays in classroom had played a significant role in increasing learners’ interest in being able to speak effectively. Role play can be used as an effective means to teach both communication and writing in language classroom. Lastly, the role plays activity and it’s marking criteria play and active motivation stimuli for the learners to learn language skills, especially learning a different language.

Research suggested that there is an evident lack of evaluative tools for speaking skills as opposed to abundant materials available for writing skills. This paper will see the effectiveness of Role play as a means of assessments at the tertiary level.

Research Method

Type and Nature of Study: This is a Qualitative and quantitative study which comprised of students’ feedback along with rubrics comments and marks serving as qualitative analysis of comparative marks scheme of a presentation and role play activity marks.

Population and Sample Size: The study comprised of Communication Lecturer from a Private university along with her students from the communication class. It is a purposive sample with teacher and student selected from one university. Students from the same program of Business Studies from the final semester. 30 students were part of this study, from the age bracket of 21-23years. It was a mix gender study with 8 female students and 22 male students.

Research Tool: the tool for evaluation was a Rubric selected from Assessment Resources for marks and feedback from the university’s own

rubrics bank. For the qualitative data, students' feedback and teacher's own feedback was considered. As it is considered through research that scoring of oral skills may have a subjective outlook, a pre-role-play activity and role play activity was conducted with an external evaluator present as well. To have a sense of reliability of the score and feedback. The same evaluator was present for both activities and her feedback were taken into consideration. The students' feedback was taken in a classroom discussion, while the teacher submitted a written response on the marker sheet.

Data Collection Technique: The rubrics was the test tool. Students were first grouped into 5 members each and a role-play assignment given, each group got a different scenario and role was done based on the situation they got. The feedback and marks were shared, post the evaluation students were asked regarding the effectiveness of role-play and whether is boosted their speaking skills or not. Teacher's feedback was also taken where she gave a comparative analysis of how they spoke before the role-play and the change in their tone variation and confidence happened after the activity. The

students' gave their feedback in class, in a group discussion, with every student narrating and giving their views regarding the benefits of the activity, their responses were also collected in written form, by the researcher, while the teacher gave a written feedback, that was used as it is by the researcher. A graduate of the same university, in his professional field, was the external evaluator whose feedback were written were also taken into account.

Analysis of Data: The scores of the activities were used in a simple comparative form, as seen in table 1. The average score and the difference of pre and role play score for fluency, accuracy, confidence and clarity were used. For the written responses taken by the researcher from students, teacher and external observer, simple thematic analysis was done. This all helped in understanding and analyzing the effectiveness of using role play as a means to evaluated speaking skills of learners.

Result

We will analyze the marks data to see the progression of marks and will discuss in detail the feedback post marks discussion.

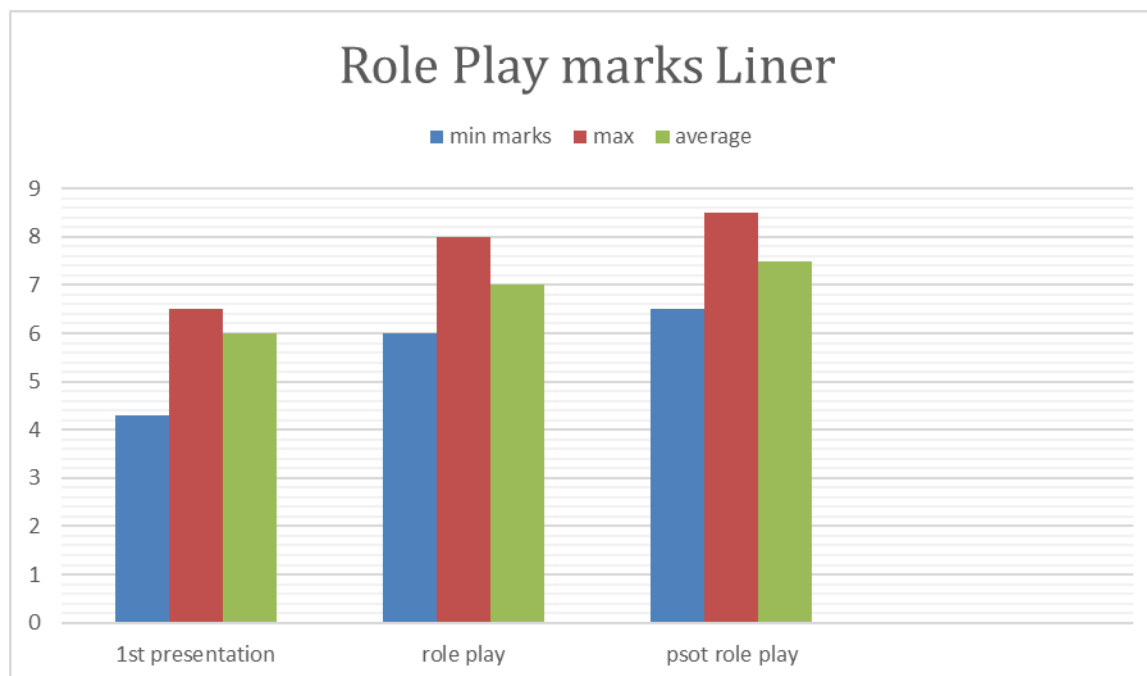


Table: 1, role play marks, liner graph.

Discussion

The study's main objective is to evaluate speaking skills through an activity, mainly, fluency and proficiency. The idea to use role play came from previous studies done for younger learners, as a means to develop confidence and fluency. Taking into account teacher's perception was integral in this study to understand the views of the one who is spearheading the classroom (Skripsi, 2021)

The students first presentation which was a class introduction and the students; spoken skills were evaluated based on tone, clarity, fluency and confidence. The bar graph displays a highest lowest and average marks per speaking task. A steady progression in marks is clearly visible. From the first activity to the last the minimum and average marks are higher, post the role play activity and clearly the marks increase in terms of clarity, tone and fluency with proficiency.

The role play task was design by the teacher in an interesting scenario. The main theme of the role play task was conflict resolution, incorporating

cognitive ability of problem solving, then enact the conflict scenario bringing it to a conclusion using negotiation and effective communication skills. The teacher used newspaper stories from the past with an incomplete resolution to the students at random. The students task was to finish the writing of the scene and find a logical conclusion to the conflict. The score rubrics had a few criteria. However, fluency, accuracy and tone, proficiency and confidence carried the most weightage.

For the activity of role play the teacher had also invited an external to be the objective marker and her scores were later compared with the external to devise and average ratings per student. The scores were then placed on the linear graph to see a comparison seeing a marked difference of score overall. The students were given the permission to use props, dress up as the characters and use their expressions and tone to convey the characters they are playing, personality and characteristics. So the learners were allowed creative freedom to enact the roles so as they choose.

The research heavily relies on the qualitative and quantitative data that is the students' feedback, the external's score and the teacher's own feedback regarding the activities and progress in terms of spoken skills. Especially the teacher's and the external, in order to keep the study as objective as possible. The study shows results from all feedback and marks that there has been a massive improvement of language through role play and that role play served as an adequate assessor for speaking skills.

The rubrics contained elements of clarity of voice, tone and accuracy, confidence, creative thinking and auditable voice and such as its assessments criteria. These are the most important assessment elements. Generally, research has supported these two as the most important elements for speaking skills (Teer, 2020). Confidence is another element and adds value to speaking skills (Christie & Listyani, 2018). With confidence in one's ability, the narration, writing and speaking aspect of language becomes less hassle and the learners gain the morale boost that they need to learn any language effectively. Creative thinking and logical reasoning were important for this particular task as it was a conflict resolution based activity, in order to draw an amicable conclusion to the conflict, the students had to think of creative resolution.

The feedback from the students mostly focused on the improvement of their confidence, many students' response indicated a higher importance to confidence and that it builds up their moral. This can be interpreted that they felt an increase in self-confidence and that aided their speech. The increase in confidence for them held a higher value and wanted to let the teacher know that this was a result of the activity.

Many students remarked at the motivation they got from the activity, stating that it made them believe in themselves more and felt that from then on they can give better presentations. They also

remarked that the activity was extremely interesting and 'fun' something they didn't think they would enjoy this much, nevertheless getting to play a different character and stepping 'out of their comfort zone' it was 'refreshing and challenging at the same time'. Students further on stated that the writing and creative process was 'interesting' and if they had more time, they would do much better. All the learners agreed that the role play 'helped improve their confidence and speaking skills in public' they also felt that their 'tone; improved.

Creative thinking was another feature that students mentioned and revealed in their feedback. They mentioned that while writing or preparing the script they got thinking and that made them enjoy the process. Even while presenting the act, they said that a lot of times they simply improvised and felt more at ease with that. They further mentioned that since they had to improvise and also elaborate in the scenarios given to them, they had to think, work as a team and also cover for each other as and when the need arises. This made them think and find solutions to the task at hand logical, thus, clearing out the cognitive flexibility aspect of the activity.

Clarity of speech was another aspect that the students mentioned saying that when presenting they felt that their language was clear and better. Something that was of high value for their speaking skills. The controlling of tone, clarity of words spoken and the ease with which they had to deliver dialogues.

These are students of tertiary level, and their next step is professional life, so they have to start appearing in interviews and job tests, two students who had a job interview post this activity stated that they felt more at ease answer questions since they felt they have already stepped out of their comfort zone, hence the interview did not scare them much

The feedback forms the external was noticeable that the students' confidence was elevated and that is the most noted element. She compared it to a previous activity and said that the role play was better than the last activity.

The teacher's own feedback was an interesting aspect. She was of the opinion in beginning that she did not seem very hopeful regarding the activity as they class introduction fell short to impress her, plus the role play scenes that she gave to the students were a bit tricky and in her mind a bit difficult. However, the marks and feedback from her showed that the students language ability has a marked improvement and showed they were using their higher order thinking skills.

The teacher further remarked that the pre implementation of role play activity, many of the students found it difficult to articulate their views regarding the task when it was first given to them. In order that they could better understand the nature of the task, detailed explanations were supplied and their queries were answered to inculcate confidence building. They were also encouraged to have a one-on-one group discussion with the instructor post their mind mapping of how they as a group would approach the task. The aim of the discussion was to clarify their thoughts, lead them towards decision making and inculcate confidence in their manner of expression. This one on one session with each group and the teacher's input and constant encouragement throughout the sessions of speaking class must have played a vital role in the improvement of scores and speaking ability. However, the teacher did agree that the role play was indeed an interesting and effective way to measure speaking abilities in a non-convention manner.

In response to post role play activity, the teacher found that students displayed excitement and many even dressed up for the task at hand. Some showed immersion where they adopted the

mannerisms and ways of speaking of the characters they were playing. Practice also allowed the students to express their dialogues or lines in a clear and coherent manner. Overall, they displayed command over their chosen task (Christie & Listyani, 2018).

The teacher was delighted with the activity and the consequential result. She also added that for the rest of the semester activities, the student performed exceedingly well since the confidence boost from the role play activity. The final speaking task was also linked by many students with the speaking style discovery post the role play activity.

The external observer also remarked that the clarity and proficiency of dialogue delivery was far better than the classroom activity done, where students had to pronounce each word and line with accuracy and diction that the evaluation of speaking ability became easy and interesting for the participant and the students involved in the activity. The external was also focusing on accuracy of the tone as well and noted that the learners were very much in character and spoke their parts with accuracy and language proficiency was evident. In comparison to two activities that the external was part of, basic presentations to role play, there was a wide angel of marking criteria in role play and speaking skills were very accurately measured.

The marks result of pre, post and during activity showed a steady incline rather than a decline in the students' marks. The data indicated that role play acted as an interesting and a well balance means to evaluate the students' speaking skills.

Conclusively, the research questions have been well answered in a positive outlook, the question being: How effective is the use of Role Play method as a means of English Spoken Skills evaluation at tertiary level by university lecturer? With the subsidiary question: What is the

learners' feedback regarding use of Role play as a means of Spoken skills evaluation?

Role play, indeed, turned out to be a useful tool to evaluate speaking skills for learners of English language especially in concern to clarity and proficiency score. The feedback of both learners and the teachers were valuable and reflected the benefits of the activity overall. The score comparison linear graph speaks volume of the score difference and the effectiveness of the activity on the whole.

Conclusion

Considering the effectiveness of role play as a means of speaking skills evaluation, it can be said that they students learnt and enjoyed the activity and that it boosted their confidence in speaking skills. Teacher and external evaluator also stated the same. Speaking skills have high value in professional fields as a lot depends on the ability to convey their thoughts effectively to the audience. The 30 students from the private university narrated an increase in their speaking abilities, that was supported by the external evaluator's marks and feedback, along with the teacher's own feedback of the activity (Seli, 2019).

The research is basically a contextualized one and there is a vast room for further research and in-depth study that can be done in other aspects that this particular research has not really looked upon.

Similar research can be done based on a purely quantitative one aspect, in which controlled and independent groups can be evaluated based on either speaking, cognitive and creative skills at tertiary level to even test problem solving abilities. This will give chance to evaluate the efficacy of the role play as an actual means of speaking skills measurer and also display other aspects that may be revealed through data analysis.

The role plays as a means of assessment for speaking skills can be implemented at school level and children's ability can be measured adopting an already tested rubrics that are available and free to use. The role play method can add value to ELT classes as a means of teaching fluency of language. A study to devise a specialized rubric for role play or similar activity can be conducted that may add more value to the ELT community.

A gender neutral study can be conducted to see the difference of gender response to the activity and the level of clarity and confidence that may increase or decrease. This study was also conducted inside the classroom, an outdoor theater environment for this activity can be measured differently or may result in better overall ability marker.

To close, the appraisal of talking has gotten a lot of value at the tertiary level. Its practice serves in cultivating the students' learning cycle and in boosting their talking possibilities. Notwithstanding their hotel to scientific rubrics, the instructors depended on various intelligent, valid, informative exercises that ensured a progressing sustainment of the students' talking capability. The task can be replicated for other levels and age brackets to evaluate the effectiveness of role play as an adequate speaking skill evaluator and a motivator.

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