

Effect of Role Play on Vocabulary Enhancement, Grammar Acquisition and Syntax Ability at Elementary Level in the Subject of English

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Abstract

This is an experimental study which aimed to examine the effect of Role Play method of teaching on vocabulary enhancement, grammar acquisition and syntaxability of the learners. The objectives of the experimental study were: (i) to explore the effect of Role Play on vocabulary enhancement of the students (ii) to investigate the effect of Role Play on grammar acquisition of the students (iii) to examine the effect of Role Play on syntax ability of the students. In order to obtain the above mentioned objectives, it was hypothesized that the effect of Role Play on vocabulary enhancement, grammar acquisition and syntax ability would be negative. All the students studying English in class 8th in the province of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa constituted the population of this experimental study. The sample of this experimental study constituted the forty eight (48) male students studying English in class 8th at The Knowledge School Khall, Dir Lower, KhyberPakhtoonkhwa. The experiment was steered through the Pre-test Post-test Equivalent Group Design. On the basis of the results of the pre-test, two groups i.e. control and experimental groups were made. Each group consisted of twenty four (24) students. Both the groups were taught the 8th class English course. The control group which was selected randomly was taught over routine method, while the students of experimental group were taught through the Role Play method of teaching. The duration of the experiment was six weeks. On a teacher made pre-test and post-test data were collected. Through t-test collected data were analyzed. The outcomes of the data discovered that the experimental group students showed better results in vocabulary enhancement, grammar acquisition and syntax ability than the control group students.

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Keywords: Vocabulary, Grammar, Syntax, Approach, Method, Technique, Role Play

INTRODUCTION

Thornbury (2005) says, “English is the combination of skills and different sub skills. Its skills include listening, speaking writing and reading, whereas the sub skills are grammar, collocation, vocabulary etc.” Vocabulary and grammar are vital parts of English language among the sub skills. So their learning in an effective and efficient way is very important. Lajoee (2013) wrote, “the most important task, which a language learner faces, is the vocabulary acquisition. Course books consist of such activities, which targeted certain vocabulary.”

Lajoee and Barimani (2013) stated, that for an EFL learners, it is very much important to learn vocabulary and get command on its various situational contexts in order to get command upon the English language. For this purpose, teachers try to enable the students to increase their vocabulary and correct their grammar by involving them in different drills, activities and techniques, so that they could use both vocabulary and grammar properly and appropriately in real life situations.

Al-Tawairish (2012) stated that the relationship of language with vocabulary and grammar is like the house with bricks and architect’s plan, vocabulary is like the bricks of a house, and grammar is like the plan of the architect. Without the architect’s plan thousands of bricks cannot make a building. Similarly words without knowledge of grammatical rules cannot enable a person to communicate properly.

Syntax is taken from Greek word which means “together” and “in ordering”. It basically describes the sequence of a language in a sentence. It shows us where subject, object, verb etc should be put in a sentence to convey correct information. In this regard we see that over 85% languages use the sequence of subject (S), verb (V), object (O) or S O V structures. Some languages also use the sequence of V S O, V O S, O V S or O S V structures. 20th century could be rationally and reasonably called the era of syntactic theory, because in this era the role of theoretical linguistics became clear (Graffi, 2001)

Role Play is acting the part of a particular character or person. It is the adopting of a person performance to adopt a role unintentionally to fill a common or social role, or intentionally to play an assumed role (Oxford Dictionary, 2015).

Shankar *et al.* (2012) stated, Role Play is an approach, that familiarizes learners with such professional and social environments which they are expected to face and adopt in future life. In this approach learners are exposed to various situations to behave accordingly.

Budden (2004) said, “Role Play is any dialogue activity in which we put ourselves into another person shoes or when we put ourselves in our own shoes, but keep ourselves in imaginary situation. Imaginary situation means that learners can adopt the personality of anyone profession e.g. a millionaire, a king, a queen, a pop star etc. for a short while”. She further said that learners can also play the role of some ones in the form of groups, by dividing the class into groups and expressing their views in favor or against the debate.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Shankar *et al.*, (2012) said, “Role Play familiarizes learners with new social environment. It helps the learners to learn about the new social environment. Through Role Play students are

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exposed to different social situations, which are helpful for them in their carriers.” For EFL learners Role Plays are assumed more reliable sources of learning. It is usually difficult to enable learners to talk about their feelings. Due to the fright of being ridiculed or dismissal, they are unable to talk about a lot of issues. Permission should be given to the learners to play and explore. Role Play helps the students in the solution of their personal problems. It enables the learners to release their creative energy. It is such a method, which is very simple and brief to organize. There is a lot of flexibility in Role Play for the exercise of individual variations, as well as imaginations and imitations.

Principles of Role Play

Chausiya (2012) described the following principles of Role Play:

i. Careful preparation

The activity should be presented in such a manner, that all the learners understand it well, and become able to describe it as well.

ii. Set outcomes and goals

It should be kept in students’ minds that what are the outcomes of the Role Play. It should be made clear, that the objectives of Role Play are; a plan, a group opinion, a schedule or some other product and then role play activity should be made according to the outcomes.

iii. Use role cards

Each learner should be given a card which describes the role to be played. Weak students should write the words on the card which they use during Role Play.

iv. Brain storm

Students should be well-versed of the importance of vocabulary, use of grammar and idiomatic expressions before the starting of the Role Play.

v. Keep small groups

In small groups, those learners who are lacking confidence feel more confident, because they do not have to contest a lot of expressions.

vi. Give time for preparation

Learners should do individual work to make their ideas clear and to select appropriate language for their expressions.

vii. Allow learners to work at own level

Each learner plays a specific role in the Role Play. They work in groups according to their approaches and according to the specific roles they play in the group activities. Every learner cannot express each vocabulary item and every grammatical rule.

viii. Follow up

The teacher should provide reports to the class about their outcomes in the Role Play.

ix. Linguistic follow up

At the conclusion of Role Play activity feedback should be given about vocabulary, grammar or syntax problems, which took place during Role Play.

Role Play Procedure

Huang (2008) said, there are six main steps which are mostly used in the procedure of Role Play classes.

First of all discussion should be taken on the teaching materials.

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Secondly situations should be selected and dialogues should be created.
Thirdly, dialogues should be taught for the Role Plays.
Fourthly, students should be motivated to practice the Role Play.
Fifthly, students should be made able to modify the dialogues and situations.
Sixthly, students' comprehension should be checked through evaluation.

Importance of Role Play

For many years Role Play is considered as an authentic course for the teaching of language. It is equally popular and important for both teachers and learners. According to Rogers and Evans (2008), Role Play is important because firstly, it is the practical experience of the majority of instructors, that Role Play technique is essential and central to students' experiences, because it enables the learners to develop their social skills for the communication with others. Secondly Role Play improves the imaginations and creativities of the learners. Thirdly, it is used for the reinforcement of learning. They further said, that through Role Play, learners' skills can be developed, because they find opportunities, to interact each other openly over Role Play approach of teaching. They suggested that Role Play empowers the learners to comprehend and respond. Through Role Play learners become able to practice in a safe and protected environment. They proposed, it will be useful and beneficial if the teacher practice Role Play on grade level.

Pulkkinen (2014) summarized the significance of Role Plays in four points.

- i. For all languages, speaking is important and Role Play provides this opportunity to a great extent.
- ii. They enable the learners to take out of schoolroom for a "test run" to the actual world and use language in real world situations.
- iii. They provide opportunities to the learners to adopt the roles of someone else for a short while or part of lesson forgetting their worries and inhibitions.
- iv. With the involvement of Role Play activities in the course contents, they become interesting and enjoyable and a rapport is developed among the students.

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

Sample of the study

The sample of this experimental study was consisted 48 male students of class 8th at "The Knowledge School Khall" Dir Lower. The students were divided to control and experimental groups on the basis of their pretest result scores, via using pair random sampling technique. The number of students in each group were 24.

Design of the Study

Pre-test Post-test Equivalent Group Design was used for conducting this study

Research Instruments

For finding the academic levels of the control as well as experimental group students, before and after the study in the subject of English in 8th class in vocabulary, grammar and syntax, a pretest made by the teacher was taken before the division of the learners to experimental group along with control group. After the accomplishment of the treatment the same teacher

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made posttest was administered to both the control and experimental groups. These achievement tests (pre-test along with post-test) were based on class 8th English book contents, specified in the National Curriculum. These tests were designed to test the skills of vocabulary, grammar and syntax of the sample students. The duration of pre-test and post-test was one hour each and every test carried 80 marks. Contents validity of the achievement test was confirmed through making a chart of specification, consultations with the experienced class teachers their comments and the supervisor's precarious guidance and advice. The researcher made these tests after a vigorous analysis of the techniques of test formation and selected last five units of 8th class English text book. Achievement tests (pretest and posttest) were based on multiple choice items, synonyms, antonyms, verb form items, comprehension items, and grammar items. The reliability of the pretest was ensured by administering it to 48 students studying in 8th class which were not included in the sample. The reliability coefficient between the achievement tests as estimated through test-retest technique was 0.92.

Procedure of the Study

The permission of the principle "The Knowledge School Khall" Dir Lower was obtained for the experiment. The Head Master directed the class teacher to provide the required help to the researcher. The English teacher of the class provided the researcher information about what subject matter in English text book the students had already studied and what contents they had to study in the coming few weeks. Accordingly pre-test and post-test were designed. The experiment started on December 7th 2018 and ended on January 17th 2019. The pretest was administered to the students in their class room. The students were informed that the pre-test has nothing to do with their examination however they were instructed about the importance of the test. Two groups i.e. experimental and control groups were formed on the basis of pre-test by using pair random sampling technique. Twenty four lesson plans were implemented by the experimental group and control group teachers. Each of the lessons was taught to the experimental group in the light of the lesson plans prepared by the researcher himself. The lesson plans were developed on the principles of Role Play techniques. The experiment lasted for a period of six weeks. After the experiment was over, post test was administered to both the groups in the same venue. The same post test was used as a retention test after six weeks of post-test. The researcher was present in the class room throughout the experiment in order to help and guide the teacher.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Significance of difference between the mean scores of both the groups on pre-test.

Groups	N	Df	M	S.D	SE _D	t-value	t _{tab}
Experimental	24	23	24.75	7.37	0.23	0.36	2.069
Control	24		24.83	7.37			

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By looking at Table 1, the difference between the mean scores of experimental and control groups on pre-test was found to be statistically insignificant at the level of 0.05. Therefore, null hypothesis No.1 “there is no significant difference between the mean scores of experimental and control groups in vocabulary, grammar and syntax on pre-test” was accepted. Both the control group and experimental group were almost equal as far as their prior knowledge and competence of English vocabulary, grammar and syntax was concerned. Table 2: Significance of difference between the mean scores of both the groups.

Groups	N	Df	M	S.D	SE _d	t-value	t _{tab}
Experimental	24	23	42.16	12.98	3.14	3.06	2.069
Control	24		32.5	11.54			

By analyzing the responses in Table 2, it indicates significant difference between the two mean scores of experimental and control groups in vocabulary, grammar and syntax. Therefore, null hypothesis No. 2 “there is no significant difference between the mean scores of experimental and control groups in grammar, vocabulary and syntax on post-test” was rejected in favor of the Experimental group.

Table 3: Significance of difference between the mean scores of both the groups.

Groups	N	df	M	S.D	SE _D	t-value	t _{tab}
Experimental	24	23	11.25	3.59	0.85	2.16	2.069
Control	24		9.46	3.79			

Table 3 shows significant difference between the two mean scores of both the groups at 0.05 level. Therefore, null hypothesis No. 3 “there is no significant difference between the mean scores of experimental and control groups in vocabulary on post-test” was rejected in favor of experimental group.

Table 4: Significance of difference between the mean scores of both the groups.

Groups	N	df	M	S.D	SE _D	t-value	t _{tab}
Experimental	24	23	10.25	5.50	1.66	2.93	2.069
Control	24		5.5	5.97			

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Table 4 point out significant difference between the two mean scores of the control as well as the experimental groups. Hence the null hypothesis No. 4 “there is no significant difference between mean scores of experimental and control groups in grammar on post-test” was rejected.

Table 5: Significance of difference between the mean scores of experimental and control groups in syntax.

Groups	N	df	M	S.D	SE _D	t-value	t _{tab}
Experimental	24	23	20.21	4.74	1.21	2.07	2.069
Control	24		17.67	3.86			

Table 5 shows substantial difference between the two mean scores in syntax at 0.05 level. Therefore the null hypothesis No. 5 “There is no significant difference between the mean scores of experimental and control groups in syntax on post-test” was rejected in favor of the Role Play Approach.

CONCLUSIONS

From data analysis and findings, the following decisions were drawn.

1. On the whole, the Role Play Approach is more effective for teaching vocabulary, grammar and syntax as compared to the traditional teaching approaches. Learners taught through the Role Play Approach scored higher than their counterparts taught through the traditional approaches.
2. The experimental group students displayed better marks than the control group in vocabulary.
3. The experimental group got higher scores than the control group in grammar.
4. The experimental group learner outperformed than the control group in syntax learners

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of interpreted data and conclusions of the experimental study, the following recommendations were suggested:

1. The results of this experimental study proved that Role Play approach can produce better results as compared to conventional methods or approaches. So, it is commended that the policy makers should reflect the enforcement and applicability of the Role Play method at every levels of schooling.
2. It is also recommended that a shift should be made from the conventional English teaching to the Role Play approach of teaching; from the teacher centered class rooms to a students’-centered class rooms and from silent and passive class rooms to activity based class rooms.
3. It was discovered that the teacher was not skilled and expert in the Role Play method. The researcher gave adequate, extensive and broad training to the experimental group teacher. Therefore, in order to use the Role Play method magnificently, the teachers should be given pre-service and in-service trainings.

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4. The study found out that there were no audio visual aids like flash cards, toy tools, dictionaries, charts, electronic devices in the class room. The researcher himself provided these materials for the experiment. Therefore it was recommended that in each and every school language laboratory should be established for the teachers and students to get benefits from the role play approach of teaching.
5. The study also showed that if the text books are student centered and more communicative, then they improve and enhance the students' communicative competence and skills. Subsequently it is recommended, that curriculum planners and English subject text books writers should improve and develop such English course contents and books, which are according to the principles of Role Play method of teaching.
6. The present study was limited to male students in the rural schools. Therefore its results might not be fully generalized to female learners, and urban schools. Considering at the encouraging and hopeful results, it is recommended to conduct further research studies on Role Play approach in both the genders at every levels and in different contexts of education.
7. English being a compulsory subject at school levels, is a difficult subject for most of the students, It consists on prose, poetry, composition and dramas. It is therefore recommended that series of experiments at secondary and higher secondary level should be arranged to know the special effects of Role Play techniques in teaching of English as a second language.
8. It is recommended, that for the enhancement of students' attention and interest in the class, teachers should be motivated and encouraged to apply Role Play approach to achieve the teaching objectives in the best possible manners in the class.

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