

Role Play As A Key Method In Developing Oral Skills Of Young Foreign Language Learners

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Abstract: This article explores the significance of role plays for shaping oral speech in young learners aged 6-7 years through English. Based on in the competency-based approach of Uzbekistan's State Preschool Education Curriculum, the article highlights why role plays serves as a good means in early childhood education, particularly within English language classes. It outlines not only games with roles, but also emphasizes the importance of role plays from educational, psychological, social and linguistic point of view. The integration of these competencies is essential for expressing inner feelings, starting communication without hesitations and giving children a sense of freedom while interacting with others, which is considered more important in our culturally diverse and competitive world.

Keywords: Role plays, Gamification, Project-based learning, Preschool Education, Key Competencies, English Lessons, Cognitive Development, Communicative skills, Social-Emotional Learning, Uzbekistan Educational System.

Introduction: Role play is one of the most effective ways in shaping oral speech of young learners as it provides various types of dialogues, which stimulates to make appropriate conversation, children imitate sounds, talk about everyday topics that empowers for real life situations. Role plays helps to enrich preschool children's social skills, develops their imagination and creative abilities and also stimulates to the formation of communication skills.

- The development of dialogic speech: role plays encourage children to start conversations, teaches to give questions and to answer them and coordinate their actions with other participants.
- Enrichment of active vocabulary: while interacting children use and imitate various sounds (such as

humming or animal voices), which stimulates and activates their speech. They will learn how raise and lower intonation appropriately and feel themselves in real life.

- Formation of coherent speech: children not only verbalize their character's lines, but also actively develop the ability to construct extended utterances.
- Social interaction: during the play children learn to follow social rules, assign roles, negotiate, and interact with others, which is directly related to their speech development.
- Modeling real-life situations: children can reproduce real-life scenarios, which allow them to use prior knowledge and put them into practice. [1]

Table 1. The effect of role plays on preschool children's speech development at public kindergarten [2]

Vocabulary	Role plays help to enrich topic based vocabulary and during the game children unconsciously learn by herat every day
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	topics effortlessly. For example: topics such as “weather”, “driver”, hospital”, “bazaar” facilitate to learn new words in one field.
Grammar	During the game children make conversations related to the past, present or future. Sometimes they will talk about possibilities and general topics that include imperative, interrogative, negative or positive sentences. They will learn grammar rules naturally.
Communication	Based on their roles, children learn to show initiative, to start conversations first, to discuss or disagree, to express themselves with own opinions, which are crucial in develop communication skills.
Freedom	Role plays reduce children’s internal psychological barrier. They express their thoughts freely, they do not have fear to be ashamed which makes the learning process interesting.
Context	The practical application of the language ensures the solid assimilation of the studied units. The child learns not only the meaning of the word "apple," but also where and in what situation it should be pronounced.
Dialogue	Each role-playing game includes speech acts such as questions and answers, suggestions, refusals, and expressions of

	gratitude. This forms the child's ability to engage in dialogue.
Pronounce	During the game, children try to speak in a natural tone of speech, which develops their phonetic competence.
Politeness	Phrases like "Please," "Thank you," "Excuse me" are quickly and naturally assimilated through role-playing.

METHODOLOGY

Language learning is not a separate activity, but as a process integrated into all aspects of a child's life. In this process, through role-playing games, the child imagines themselves in various roles, enters into interpersonal communication, and has the opportunity to use language in a real context. Especially between the ages of 5 and 7, children are rich in imagination, and it is natural for them to express their thoughts through imagination, figurative thinking, and communication. At this stage, the presented language structure, lexical combinations, and grammatical forms become more deeply embedded in the child's consciousness. For example, phrases like "I would like some juice" or "Where does it hurt?" include not only the grammatical structure, but also the speech function. Role-playing games serve the practical application of these expressions, since the child uses them in live communication, repeats them, and understands them in context. This is important for speech automation and preparation for quick communication. [3]

One of the most well-known Methodists Maria Montessori offers her own method, where the learning process is organized in full accordance with the stages of the child's natural development. In her famous work "The Absorbing Mind", she evaluates language not only as a product of mental potential, but also as an internal constructive process formed through emotional experiences and social communication. She writes: "Language is not a function of the mind, but an internal construction process directed through sensory experience and social communication" [1]. According to this approach, language development is based on naturalness, experience, and free communication. In the Montessori system, children aged 6-7 are in the second sensitive period, at this stage they strive to express complex thoughts in oral communication. Interest in language and the need for self-awareness

through it increases. Therefore, it is during this period that dramatic role-playing games are used as an important educational tool for the development of oral speech.

Role-playing games, organized within the framework of the "Practical Life" and "Language" blocks in the Montessori kindergartens, are enriched with special visual materials, which strengthen children's skills of oral expression, interpretation, and expression of opinions. [3] With the help of such games, children practice following speech activities:

- asking questions and answering them;
- sentence construction and expression of thought;
- Entering and continuing communication.

English scientist Dr. Angeline S. Lillard in her scientific research "Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius" analyzed the main factors ensuring freedom of oral speech in Montessori classes. She says: "In Montessori classes, children often develop verbal fluency through controlled plot games and socialized activities." [3] A similar approach was supported by Gina Riley. [4] In her 2016 study, she concluded: "Children in the Montessori system demonstrate strong oral expression skills due to the ability to freely choose dramatic play activities." [5] These ideas are also confirmed by Russian methodologists. D. Orlova in her book "Montessori: a big book" (2008) states: "Role-playing games in the Montessori environment are built on imitation, communication, and free choice, which allows the child to naturally develop their speech." [6]

Y.F. Ivanova, in her scientific work emphasizes that through role-playing games, it is possible to achieve not only vocabulary richness, but also the development of dialogic speech. In addition, the famous psychologists [7] L.A. Venger and A.V. Zaporozhets deeply studied the leading role of game activity in the speech development of children. In their work "Psychology of

Play", they write: "Play is the main type of activity in which a child's speech behavior is formed." [8]

Such role-playing games in the Montessori method serve children to master functional language in the context of real-life situations. That is, when a child participates in the role of a doctor, salesperson, postman, or guest, they apply the language units they are learning in practice, and through this, their speech skills are firmly formed. Also, through this method, children acquire a number of skills, such as independent thinking, oral expression, understanding the contextual meaning of words, and effective communication.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

By the end of preschool, children are expected to demonstrate well-rounded competencies across all developmental areas [9]. The process of learning a foreign language for 6-7-year-old children is closely related to the stage of natural speech development and socialization. At this age, the child's imagination, emotional perception, and need for communication are very strong. Therefore, role-playing games are considered one of the most effective methods in foreign language teaching. During the game, the child does not limit themselves to memorizing words and phrases, but also learns to use them in real communication situations.

In role-playing games, children perform various roles - for example, as a salesperson, teacher, doctor, tourist, or friend. Such activity naturally develops their listening comprehension skills, vocabulary expansion, and sentence construction. In a playful situation, the child learns to wait in line for communication, ask questions and answer them, and coordinate their actions with other participants. Another important aspect of role-playing games is the creation of an atmosphere of psychological comfort. During the game, the child's inner fears and anxiety about speech errors decrease. The child learns to express their thoughts freely, which increases confidence and activity in language. As a result, the student begins to speak more freely in a foreign language and the naturalness of speech increases.

Through role-playing games, children not only learn the language, but also develop social communication, cooperation, emotional expression, and cultural awareness. Through experience, they understand how to speak and react in certain situations.

Thus, role-playing games in foreign language teaching:

- enriches active vocabulary,
- forms correct pronunciation and intonation,
- develops dialogic and monologic speech,

- enhances motivation and engagement.

CONCLUSION

Teaching English in preschool education on a competency-based basis represents a progressive change in primary education. It allows children to learn not only language, but also through language - it forms the competencies necessary for lifelong learning. English lessons based on the "First Step" program in Uzbekistan make an effective contribution to the social, emotional, intellectual, and moral development of each child. Teachers should design lessons that are not only linguistically appropriate, but also developmental, playful, and appropriate to children's cultural and individual contexts. [10] As Uzbekistan continues its reforms in the field of education, for long-term success, investment in teacher training, research, and the development of primary educational resources in English will be crucial.

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