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A Role Play Activity in Modern Classroom English

In recent years language teaching has focused on the learning process rather than the teaching of the language. The emphasis is not only on linguistic competence of the language learners but also on the development of their communicative ability. In order to develop the learners' communicative ability, the teacher needs to create a scenario to teach the target language in a vibrant, active and interesting manner. Thus, extended activities in the form of role play, simulations and problem solving are vital in developing the communicative ability of the learners. These activities require the learners to go beyond a text. They require the learners to have a sound understanding of a text and be able to apply their knowledge outside the classroom and their own experiences into the activities. Extended activities can be carried out at different levels depending on the learners' language proficiency. The role of the teacher in such activities will often depend on the learners and their language abilities. However, the teacher is not wholly responsible for the learners' language acquisition as students must also play their part to be motivated in following the lesson.

Role play was chosen as one of the tasks to create a situation for the learners to actively interact in the language, thereby making the language learning more meaningful. At the same time, the learners are introduced to the different learning styles - listening, remembering, discussing, writing and presenting. This is important for any activity based learning as it helps to reinforce the aim and purpose of the activity. Besides that, learners develop awareness and confidence in their own ability and learning strategies.

The activity was explained and short role descriptions were provided. The amount of time for the role play was negotiated. For the purpose of obtaining feedback from the learners, the teacher recorded what the learners had expressed at two different times. First their feedback was recorded when the teacher started explaining the role play and the procedure to the class. The learners' feedback was recorded for the second time after the presentation. Besides recording, casual interviews were conducted with the learners in order to allow them to reflect on their presentation. Learners' feedback was divided into three categories: the preparation stage, the presentation stage and the learners' overall impression regarding the activity.

It is crucial for us as teachers to think and plan what should be done to stimulate and facilitate the use of spoken English for academic purposes effectively when making oral presentation, participating in discussions and in a variety of other classroom situations. We need to think of what kind of approaches can be created for distance learners to participate actively in class and how to successfully achieve the needs especially of the weaker learners who have limited face -- to- face interaction. Language teaching can be an interesting challenge when teachers make the effort to explore a variety of approaches. Role play is just one of the many methods available for exploitation. With some attention given to the needs of the learners, both the teacher and the learners can play active roles in the classroom, making language classes livelier, challenging and above all rewarding.

Literature

1. The Internet TESL Journal, Vol. VII, No. 7, July 2001.
2. Techniques & Principles in Language Teaching. Oxford: Oxford University Press.