

Role-play: A technique to improve communication in a foreign language

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Abstract

This article is the result of an investigation into the implementation of role-playing in the classroom as a technique to improve oral production in a foreign language with 20 sixth-grade students from an educational institution in Nariño. A field diary and a SWOT matrix were used, following a qualitative paradigm with a socio-critical approach. The general objective was to strengthen oral production in a foreign language using the role-play technique. The data analysis was carried out by emptying the information and extracting the categories and subcategories. It was found that the sixth-grade students did not have the level of English required by the Ministry of Education. Therefore, the role-playing technique was used as a strategy to improve their ability to express themselves in English as a foreign language because it is a way to increase their vocabulary, organize sentences, imagine, and represent characters.

Keywords: Technique; ability; speaking; communication; foreign language.



Research article; it is part of the research entitled: 'Role-Play as a technique for strengthening the speaking skill in 6th grade students of the Institución Educativa Fátima, Tablón de Gómez municipality.

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Juego de roles: una técnica para mejorar la comunicación en lengua extranjera

Resumen

El presente artículo es el resultado de una investigación sobre la implementación del juego de roles en el salón de clase, como una técnica para mejorar la producción oral en lengua extranjera en 20 estudiantes de grado sexto de una institución educativa de Nariño; para ello se utilizó un diario de campo y una matriz FODA y se siguió un paradigma cualitativo con enfoque sociocrítico. En este sentido, el objetivo general fue fortalecer la producción oral en lengua extranjera utilizando la técnica 'Role-Play'. El análisis de datos se hizo a través del vaciado de información, extrayendo las categorías y subcategorías, encontrando que los estudiantes de grado sexto no tienen el nivel de inglés exigido por el Ministerio de Educación. Por lo anterior, se recurrió a la técnica 'Role-Play', como una estrategia para mejorar la habilidad de expresarse en inglés como lengua extranjera, puesto que es una forma de aumentar su vocabulario, organizar oraciones, imaginando y representando personajes.

Palabras clave: técnica; habilidad; habla; comunicación; lengua extranjera.

Jogo de representação: uma técnica para melhorar a comunicação em língua estrangeira

Resumo

Este artigo é o resultado de uma investigação sobre a implementação da dramatização em sala de aula como uma técnica para melhorar a produção oral em uma língua estrangeira com 20 alunos do sexto ano de uma instituição educacional em Nariño. Foram utilizados um diário de campo e uma matriz SWOT, seguindo um paradigma qualitativo com uma abordagem socio crítica. O objetivo geral era fortalecer a produção oral em uma língua estrangeira usando a técnica de dramatização. A análise dos dados foi realizada por meio do esvaziamento das informações e da extração das categorias e subcategorias. Verificou-se que os alunos da sexta série não tinham o nível de inglês exigido pelo Ministério da Educação. Portanto, a técnica de dramatização foi usada como estratégia para melhorar sua capacidade de se expressar em inglês como língua estrangeira, pois é uma forma de aumentar o vocabulário, organizar frases, imaginar e representar personagens.

Palavras-chave: técnica; habilidade; oralidade; comunicação; língua estrangeira.

Introduction

The present research article reveals the importance of strengthening the teaching-learning process in a foreign language, especially in English, and also of forging in the students a meaningful learning that focuses on the interconnection of their basic knowledge with the new ones, favoring the development of the four skills in English: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, necessary to master a language. To this end, the research work proposed to strengthen the ability to speak in English using the technique of 'role play' with sixth-grade students of an educational institution in Nariño.

The teaching of a foreign language has been characterized as an ally in the search for alternatives to contribute to the current state of traditional teaching, so that the new generations have a command of this new language, in accordance with government requirements, although these results require perseverance in the work done inside and outside the classroom. Although the teaching of English is compulsory in this educational institution, there is no evidence in any of the documents on file of a search for methodologies that invite students to learn in a different way from the traditional one. This became even more evident when, at the beginning of the school year, the sixth-grade students showed their apathy towards the subject, not only with their gestures, but also with demotivating comments.

This has become a challenge for teachers, who are constantly searching for adequate methodologies that allow them to successfully teach their classes. Therefore, in order for teaching to be seen as a commitment to the learners, it is necessary to meet the educational expectations set by the Ministerio de Educación Nacional (MEN, 2006), responding to current social demands. Therefore, the general objective was to strengthen the oral skills in English by using the role-play technique with sixth-grade students, even knowing that the basic standards of competence in foreign language (English) include monologue and conversation as the only technique to practice oral skills. So, with the technique of role-playing, based on every day and recurrent vocabulary, we tried to improve the fluency and accuracy of their

conversations, so that from the lower grades they could be placed at the appropriate level to complete their high school studies, given the current demand for people who have mastered a second language. While it is true that there is an urgent need for educational institutions to promote the learning of English, as it is a universal language, learning it should not be a torture for students.

Accordingly, this research article has been carried out for the academic motivation of presenting a technique for teaching a foreign language that emphasizes the strengthening of communicative skills (speaking) and, likewise, to show a way for students in a certain grade to reach the level proposed by the MEN and thus comply with governmental and social requirements regarding the mastery of a foreign language, which is why learners should be in contact with communicative skills without producing negative emotions and adverse effects on their learning that prevent them from effective communication (Moreno et al., 2018).

For all of the above, it is intended to involve students in the use of role-playing, as a different and novel technique with respect to the traditional ones normally used in some educational institutions; thus, the technique mentioned, taken to its practice, tends to improve communicative ability in the foreign language, since oral communication allows the transfer of information of any kind, including interaction (Nunan, as cited in Vinueza, 2017).

Concern about the teaching and learning of second languages has led many researchers to get involved and provide initiatives that try to remove the barriers to progress so that the instruction provided produces the results needed for learning. Under this understanding, it is necessary to mention Otoya (2019), who proposed as a general objective, to determine the influence of the application of role-playing in the oral expression of the English language in students of a private university in Lima, Peru. A quantitative methodology using the hypothetical-deductive method was used. The technique used was structured observation through a checklist. The author found that the application of the technique increased the students' level of oral expression in English, improving comprehensibility, intonation, and the use of non-verbal resources.

We also allude to the work of Vargas (2018), developed in Bogotá, Colombia, with fourth-grade students of a private school, with the general objective of analyzing their oral fluency through worksheets based on role-playing games. The methodology used was qualitative. The techniques used were: focus group and participant observation, carried out through instruments such as the questionnaire and the field diary. The author concludes that the role play helped the students to improve their speaking skills as well as interaction and teamwork.

Third, we highlight the study of Barrera (2016), who tried to implement a methodological proposal to improve orality in English among eleventh-grade students of an educational institution in Chía, Cundinamarca, Colombia. The methodology was mixed. The techniques implemented were: a survey with closed questions and non-participant observation, which led her to conclude that oral communication in English improved significantly with the diverse combination of work done at home and in class, with the help of electronic media, and the continuous efforts of teachers inside and outside the classroom, allowing students to lose their fear of speaking and expressing themselves in a foreign language.

Therefore, it is essential to point out that in order to learn a foreign language, it is necessary to find an adequate teaching methodology, with the intention that students develop their communicative skills in that language, emphasizing the practical mastery of English (López, 2018). However, today's society demands that a person not only be able to understand texts, but also have the ability to communicate and interact in the foreign language, which has given way to the development of the communicative approach as a different and innovative alternative (Retreage, 2017). It should be clarified that the previous teaching methods have not been abolished, but their principles and foundations have been re-adapted to improve English language teaching.

Accordingly, the contribution of the communicative approach is highlighted, since it allows students to make use of real language in the classroom, where they try to immerse themselves in real communication. Authors such as Allen and Widdowson (as cited

in Saura, 2017) refer to the need for a new approach to language teaching that minimizes the emphasis on grammar and focuses on the communicative aspects of the target language. It can be inferred from this that the methods that preceded the communicative approach gave great importance to grammar and translation, which caused students to learn far from their contexts and thus prevented them from facing real communicative situations.

On the contrary, the communicative approach intends that students learn to express themselves in a foreign language in an appropriate and real way; this suggests that they should know the linguistic system and, at the same time, use it correctly, since every language is a social phenomenon and the learning objective is focused on interaction, as a basis for exercising their mastery among subjects of a given group (García, as cited in Moreno et al., 2017). In this sense, this approach aims to give more importance to the language itself, so that the learner uses the language correctly and thus generates appropriate communication in the foreign language, trying to imitate a real context in an interaction between them.

For Irmawati (cited in Sánchez & Pérez, 2020), the communicative approach is characterized by promoting effective and efficient communication, emphasizing fluency and precision; in this way, the objective of learning the language is for communicative purposes, highlighting the appropriate use of its meaning and understandable pronunciation, combining the four skills and resorting to the native language or translation when necessary, obtaining beneficial learning.

As for the students, this approach allows them to take ownership of learning, since teamwork or, to a greater extent, working with their peers, gives them the opportunity and availability to listen carefully to their classmates, give feedback and, at the same time, generate autonomy during the process, leaving aside the teacher as the center of the class, turning him/her into a facilitator and guide of knowledge (Richards & Rodgers, cited in Hernández, 2021). This approach promotes communicative practices in a more effective way, valuing the role of the teacher and the peers, since the achievement obtained is achieved together, through effort, dedication,

and desire to learn, from their autonomy and the support of the teacher.

For its part, the teacher's role is to be an advisor who intervenes when students have a problem with the content or design of the activities, becoming an interlocutor who promotes dialogue, interaction and reflection between them, which allows him/her to take mistakes as a means to strengthen skills and make them progress in their learning process. Based on this, it is possible to carry out activities to improve communication deficiencies (Richards & Rodgers, cited in Hernández, 2021); with this, it is evident that he/she is a mediator to give them the opportunity to appropriate knowledge and become actors of learning, with varied activities and tasks that allow them to develop their skills in the communicative process.

On the other hand, meaningful learning becomes relevant when using the role-playing technique because it allows students to learn English in a real way without being forced to perform activities that cause unpleasant sensations. The aim is for them to feel pleasure in what they are doing in the classroom, tending towards significant learning, which helps them to connect their previous experiences with the situations they are living, facing daily challenges, so that their learning is real and true, and these are correctly directed by the teacher, consequently that they go towards the knowledge of the students (Ausubel, as cited in Madero, 2018). Likewise, this significant learning, in accordance with the role-play technique, makes the students have direct contact with the language they are going to learn, helping them to acquire the necessary skills so that they can express themselves; their role is that of a main character, being the architects of their learning, making connections between previous knowledge and new knowledge (Fernández et al., 2018).

Consequently, to learn a foreign language, students must make a mental process that allows them to gradually understand and use the different rules and structures of the new language; in this way they can make an involuntary contrast between the target language and the mother tongue; this means that the more interest, curiosity, and self-evaluation of the knowledge learned about

the foreign language, the more effective control they will have (Mirmán-Flores, 2018). Although a person learning a new language can use his or her native language as a medium, it is important that he or she tries to change various elements that can cause frequent confusion. Buitrago et al. (2011) point out that students go through a process of assimilation into the new linguistic system, which will allow them to communicate effectively with the new language they have learned.

It is true that the foreign language is used and developed only in the classroom, and when students leave this space, they continue to use their mother tongue as a means of communication; however, the development of the classroom is fundamental to achieve adequate acquisition and comprehension of the language; this includes the constant use of it, the use of different visible and tangible means for the students to understand and deduce what is spoken (Rivera, 2015), helping them to feel the taste of using the language they are learning in the classroom through role plays; this can become a motivation because they are the protagonists of their own learning.

Therefore, there is a need to address the linguistic skills, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking, that people need to make themselves understood in a given language so that they can generate an appropriate conversation (Valles et al., 2019).

In the learning of a foreign language, it is necessary to use the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in an integrated manner, with the aim of achieving that the student reaches efficiency in the mastery of the language he/she is learning, highlighting that the ability to speak in a foreign language is considered one of the most important to develop, because through it you can express ideas and therefore have an effective communication. (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). In the same sense, Hamidova et al. (2020) affirm that for the teaching of speaking it is necessary to make an adequate use of words, since they must have a correct order, with an adequate pronunciation; in this way the message will be well received, since it will be clear and precise, making clear who is the speaker and who is the receiver, in addition to the circumstances in which the interaction takes place, as well as the what, why and for what reason.

In view of the above, it is necessary that the teaching of language skills is carried out and managed in such a way that the students want to express themselves voluntarily and use the language they are learning, trying to make themselves understood, arousing self-confidence and the desire to continue using it, always trying to improve every day.

In this order of ideas, and in line with Tabak and Lebron (2017), the role-playing technique is generally carried out in a group way, in which there is a great participation of the students, as they play different roles according to a proposed situation; this implies that they think and act in the way the character they have decided to reproduce in their representation would do it. According to Domene and Romero (as cited in García-Barrera, 2015), the role play can be worked by forming small groups, since each of them will have different themes to show and each team will present individually, so that the other participants can pay full attention to them and make some comments about them if they think it is necessary. It is also possible to use the same theme with all the groups, with the aim of creating contrasts in the presentations.

Role-playing in the classroom serves as a teaching technique that encourages students to participate in the activities, allowing them to learn English as a foreign language in similar situations to those that occur in a real context, thus allowing them to lose the shyness and stress that other activities can generate (Tompkins, as cited in Mizhir, 2017), because they work in small groups, where everyone takes their place and focuses on their role, which inhibits the aspects that can create fear and uncertainty.

Similarly, the role-playing technique helps to develop certain skills in English related to speaking. Cornet (as cited in Neupane, 2019) emphasizes that the trainees not only improve some communicative aspects, which allows them to reach a certain fluency and ability to express themselves in their interpretations, but they also manage to use their body language as a support tool in direct communication with their peers. In this sense, working in groups and teams generates mutual learning among peers, since they have the opportunity to listen to their friends and colleagues and to express their opinion on the work developed by themselves and by others. After that, they

have to do a collective work so that their presentation to the audience is pleasant and, of course, understood, as Mitchell (as cited in Mizhir, 2017) affirms when he mentions that all teamwork is based on receiving feedback from teachers and peers, which strengthens the group so that in future presentations they improve their weaknesses and increase their abilities to achieve the goals they have set.

Methodology

The methodology used was the qualitative paradigm, action-research with a critical-social approach.

Research Paradigm

A paradigm is understood as a model that allows determining how research should be understood and how it should be conducted (Ñaupas et al., 2018); it can be classified as qualitative and/or quantitative. The former alludes to the fact that all research revolves around the researcher and his or her environment; in addition, it allows attention to be paid to the process developed in the research and not only to the results obtained.

Considering the above, this qualitative paradigm is of great importance for this study, because it is intended to obtain information in an educational institution in Nariño about the difficulties that sixth-grade students have in speaking in English, to then carry out the application of the role-playing technique and analyze the results.

Research Approach

Type of research. It is framed in action research and, through a deep reflection, it aims to achieve a significant change in teaching-learning, based on the socio-critical approach, because it allows a social transformation of the practical and observable aspects; in addition, social needs and particular interests cause the development of knowledge to turn the human being into a critical subject (Orozco, 2016).

Accordingly, this approach is characterized by the fact that the real environment is the main protagonist as an object of study; that is, it is essential to observe the context to generate greater knowledge, always making a constant

reflection to provide solutions to the various problems that arise (Ñaupas et al., 2018).

Therefore, with the use of this approach, it is intended to know the educational reality of a certain group of students and try to improve the ability to speak in English through the participatory practices of role-playing, in a combination of theory as a foundation and practice as a technique to promote the development of the participants' abilities in spaces where embodiment is possible, to analyze the daily reality of their context in a way that benefits the group that carries it out, becoming a socio-reflexive experience, combining theory and practice to achieve appropriate changes in the place of study, without distinguishing between researcher, object of research, and research process (Rojas, as cited in Miranda & Ortiz, 2021).

Unit of Analysis and Unit of Work

Unit of Analysis. The work was carried out in a public educational institution in Nariño, with the participation of one hundred students in the high school section, corresponding to the population.

Unit of Work. To describe the unit of work of the students, Table 1 is considered; it shows the grade and the number of boys and girls with whom the work was done; thus, this unit was constituted by twenty sixth-grade students.

Table 1

Number of students who participated in the research

Grade	Girls	Boys	Total
6°	11	9	20

Source: author's elaboration.

For this purpose, according to Otzen and Manterola (2017), non-probability sampling was used in the research:

Sampling techniques of the non-probability type imply that the selection of the subjects to be studied depends on certain characteristics, criteria, etc., that the researcher considers at that moment, so

they may not be very valid and reliable or reproducible, because this type of sampling does not conform to a probabilistic basis; that is, they do not give certainty that each subject to be studied represents the target population. (p. 224)

Similarly, the non-probabilistic convenience sampling technique was used because it allowed the selection of accessible cases that agreed to be included based on the convenient accessibility and proximity of the subjects to the researcher (Otzen & Manterola, 2017).

For the procedure, the phases proposed by López-Fuentes (2011) were considered:

1. A diagnosis: in this research, the way in which students received their English classes was identified. Specifically, how speaking skills were being developed in sixth graders, using the technique of information gathering and non-participant observation, which allowed us to describe and understand what was really happening in class.
2. Planning: identifying the existing problem in the institution, setting the goal to be achieved, designing and implementing the role-play technique, and describing the process of improving oral production skills.
3. Observation: this phase was very important because throughout the research different observations were made that allowed to obtain information before, during, and after the application of the technique.
4. A reflection: at the end of the study, a self-reflection was made on what was achieved or what was missing for the objective to be fully achieved, which allowed an explanation and some conclusions to be drawn regarding the whole process developed.

Data Collection Techniques and Tools

Observation of participants, non-participants, and workshops.

Observation is a technique that, according to Marshall and Roshman (cited in Kawulich, 2006), "allows for the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (p. 2). It is divided into participant and non-participant; the first consists of obtaining information from the context in which the research is conducted, thus

obtaining accurate data, since the researcher is directly involved in the field of study. The second tries to recognize some aspects of the context being studied, without having to enter it; it is only an external observer (Campos & Lule, 2012).

For the present study, both types of observation were used because the researcher was not a teacher in the educational institution and it was necessary to have a direct approach with the students, but also to look from the outside at some aspects relevant to the research.

The workshop, according to Cano (2012), is a technique that helps to study and evaluate different factors in the classroom; it allows working in groups and follows certain objectives, making it possible to unify both the theoretical and the practical.

Data collection tools. Workshop guide, field diary, and SWOT matrix. The first, because it is a flexible tool that facilitates the adequate organization of the workshops that were applied, designed according to the needs and/or objectives to be achieved. The field diary allowed the researcher to record the different events that occurred during the observations to obtain important information that would allow her to continue her research process. The objective of the SWOT matrix was to provide aspects that would allow the identification of situations that occurred in a given space, in this case the classroom, and thus be able to combine strategies that would help to have a progressive and significant progress. Thus, strengths refer to activities or aspects that are done correctly; opportunities are the possibility of implementing mechanisms that allow improvement; weaknesses are elements that are still fragile and need to be consolidated; and finally, threats refer to the situation that is generally difficult to control and may affect the process being carried out (Sanchez, 2020).

Results

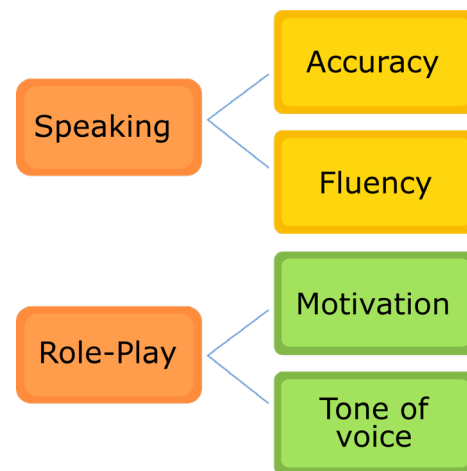
For the analysis of the results, the application of the role-playing technique workshops, the collection of information in the field diary, and the completion of the SWOT matrix were considered.

Field Diary Analysis

This section specifically describes the information collected in the field diary during the application of the role-play technique. This collection was done by recording in detail what happened in the classroom during the development of the activities; thus, special emphasis was placed on the categories related to speaking skills and the role-play activity. (See Figure 1)

Figure 1

Deductive Categories and Subcategories



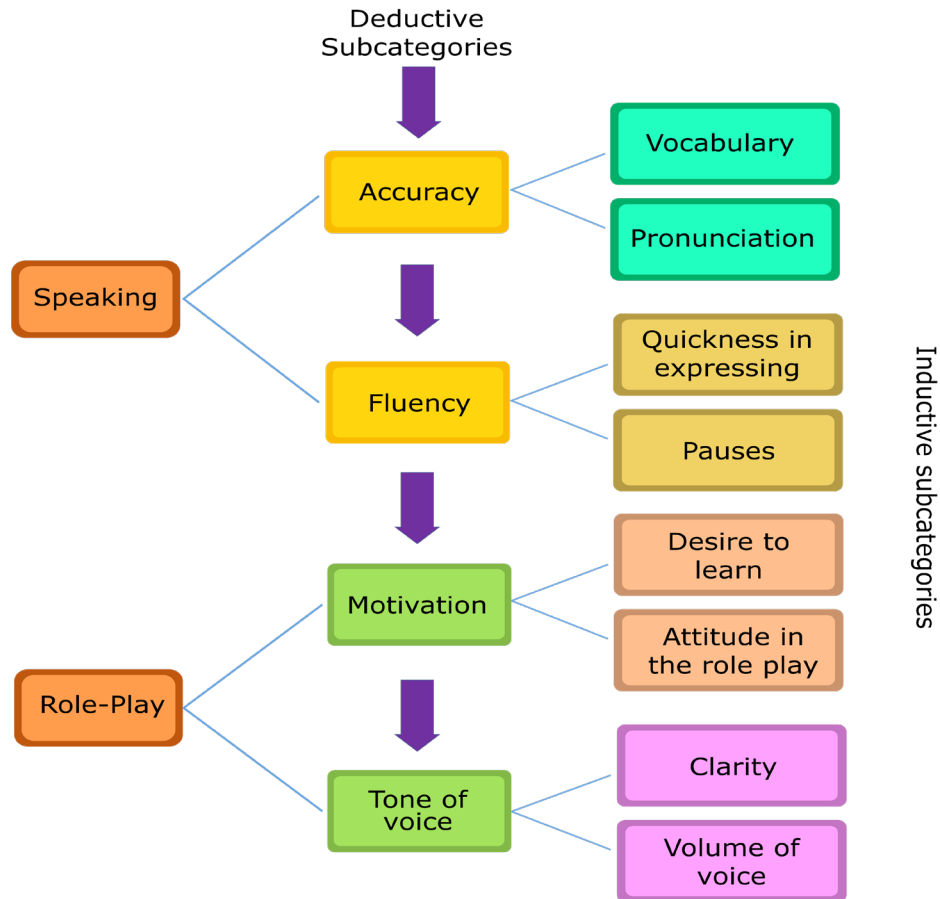
To discern the information collected in the field diary, it was necessary to empty it, allowing to determine a coding of the categories of Speaking and Role-play, each one with its deductive subcategories. The former includes precision and fluency, and the latter includes motivation and tone of voice; in addition, the inductive subcategories were obtained from this process.

It should be noted that when the information was collected, the content was organized in such a way as to make visible what really gave meaning to this research; therefore, the most relevant of what was collected was placed in bold. A spreadsheet was used to code the information: subcategories, diary information, and codes/recurrences. Recurrences refer to the number of times a particular phrase belongs to a subcategory, which refers to the number of times a phrase or word appears in the diary. Similarly, a matrix was created to analyze the information: Categories, Deductive and Inductive Subcategories, Unit of Meaning, which corresponds to the field diary, Theoretical

References and, Analysis, made by the researcher; this allowed a better understanding of what was recorded in the field diary, in addition to the elaboration of a graphic organizer, a taxonomy, in which the origin of the inductive subcategories is observed (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Taxonomy: deductive and inductive subcategories



The field diary reflects the progressive development made by the students in the deductive subcategories: accuracy, fluency, motivation, and tone of voice, as they followed the recommendations given in the previous activities to improve. A negative factor they presented was the volume of their voice, since they were too shy and spoke very slowly. At the end of the last role, they emphasized the importance of making themselves heard, especially when addressing a large audience. They also improved their vocabulary, adding new words to their lexicon, trying to use them with good pronunciation and, most importantly, using them in a communicative way. Finally, it can be said that this technique is presented as a different way compared to the strategies previously used in the subject of English; therefore, a motivation to learn the foreign language was achieved because, in some way, autonomy in learning and a taste for it were generated.

SWOT Matrix

The SWOT matrix owes its acronym to the words: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The purpose of using it was to consider the aspects that allow a global view of the application and effect of the *Role-Play* technique.

Figure 3*SWOT Matrix Analysis*

Source: adapted from Sarli et al. (2015).

So, we start with the strengths that the students had; we highlight the motivation to learn English, because they found it very entertaining that the classes used the role-playing technique, because they had the opportunity to play different professions and even learn about some that they did not know; at the same time, they improved their speech, because they increased their vocabulary and optimized the way they addressed an audience using the foreign language.

The opportunities are linked to the correct use of time. Students used class time to practice English. This meant that in every room they reviewed the pronunciation of dialogues, recalled previously learned vocabulary, and asked questions about what was being developed in class. This attitude of

engagement in class was used to help them learn without them realizing that they were doing it; therefore, this knowledge was more meaningful to them.

Also, the existence of some weaknesses is noted, since not all students improved their speaking skills, due to the fact that some of them missed classes because of illness; this made the learning process different from those who attended regularly. Similarly, at the beginning of the application of the role play, some students did not follow the recommendations previously given to them; however, as they received feedback on the different aspects, they accepted the advice given to them and thus improved. Others did not agree on who should play a certain role, so it was necessary to explain to them in detail the function of each

part so that they could decide which one they liked the most and could play it best.

Finally, the threats that arose during the application of the technique: Among them, that due to different circumstances, such as the arrival of the rector in the classroom to give a lecture, or the visit of the psychologist to work with the students, some roles were prolonged beyond the established time and the step by step that was being carried out was interrupted; consequently, it was necessary to make a reminder of what was seen, so that they would again focus on the technique, running the risk of not liking it; but, since this was different from the way they had learned English, the attitude towards learning the foreign language gradually changed.

Discussion of results

The union of two or more theories, sources or methods that is carried out in a scientific research allows to take data from different sources and integrate them in an investigative process to compare the information and also to determine the relationship between what was collected, keeping what is relevant and discarding what is unnecessary (Feria et al., 2019). Therefore, for the discussion of the results, the SWOT matrix, the emptying of the information from the field diary and the theoretical contributions were used to support what was found during the research process. In addition, the researcher reflected on the results obtained and so used the aforementioned tools as a basis, highlighting the most relevant elements.

Thus, it is worth mentioning that the sixth-grade students showed difficulties in communicating in English, even when it came to basic, everyday personal information, since the results obtained were very poor, that is, extremely low; in addition, they showed a certain shyness in expressing themselves in the foreign language, which indicated the need for an intervention to help them become familiar with the language in question. In this sense, the lack of fluency and the excessive softness in the tone of their voice were evident, which significantly affected the understanding of what they wanted to express. In contrast, it is worth mentioning what was expressed by Hamidova et al. (2020): for good communication to

take place, it is necessary to have a correct pronunciation and understanding of the audience being addressed; thus, everything expressed will be clear.

Therefore, five workshops according to the role-playing technique were developed with the sixth-grade students, emphasizing the representation of professions, encouraging them as foreign language learners to acquire self-confidence and find pleasure in speaking another language, with a pleasant atmosphere to express themselves freely and confidently. In accordance with what was proposed by Tompkins (as cited in Mizhir, 2017), role-playing is a technique that constantly motivates students to participate in it and learn a foreign language, making them lose the shyness and stress that other activities can generate. In reciprocity with the above, it can be affirmed that by using this technique, it was achieved that students improved not only the communicative part, but also the way of acting and expressing themselves in front of an audience, as expressed by Cornet (as cited in Neupane, 2019): learners improve the ability to express themselves through their body language and also become more fluent in speaking.

The above leads to the idea that different ways of teaching English should be sought to create an environment of cordiality and tranquility, because, according to López (2018), to learn a foreign language, appropriate teaching methods should be required that aim to achieve a practical mastery of it. In this way, the technique of role-playing, which was applied in the form of workshops, promoted the improvement of speaking skills and had as an additional purpose to create a pleasant environment for the students, so that they could enjoy the step-by-step creation of these roles and could culminate in a successful presentation, thus achieving that to a large extent what was learned in each workshop is internalized and becomes part of their knowledge, encouraging them to be the main character of their learning and to be able to make connections between previous and new knowledge to achieve meaningful learning (Fernandez et al., 2018).

In this scenario, the effectiveness of the proposal is reflected in the gradual change in the coherent participation of the students in the

Cadequate use of vocabulary, highlighting that the role-playing technique has contributed to their knowledge, since a significant change was noted in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and communicative interaction. Thus, it can be said that the use and application of the technique was of great importance, since a progressive improvement in their speaking was achieved. At this point, it is appropriate to mention Rivera (2015), who argues that it is essential to have an adequate management of classes to ensure that students learn a foreign language. With this, the researcher wants to emphasize that the progress achieved should be gradual in the different classes, without losing the main horizon, which is the development of the speaking skill, without downplaying the importance of the other skills, because the human being, to understand a certain language, must know how to read, write, listen, and speak (Valles et al., 2019).

Although the role-play technique is excellent, it can be seen that students need dynamic, attractive, interactive, and non-monotonous activities, especially those that seek to improve the level of communicative interaction, so that their learning has a clear purpose and is related, as much as possible, to situations that may be part of their daily lives, so that learning the foreign language becomes natural. Consequently, in classrooms, the way the foreign language is taught needs to be rethought, as more emphasis needs to be placed on the communicative part of the students. In this regard, Allen and Widdowson (as cited in Saura, 2017) point out that a new approach to language teaching is required, minimizing the emphasis on traditional teaching and focusing on the communicative aspects of the language being learned. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out a continuous review of planning and pedagogical work to generate real learning of the foreign language.

It should be noted that the majority of the students improved considerably; therefore, it is possible to understand them when they express themselves in a foreign language, since their pronunciation and interaction have been substantially corrected. For everything analyzed, it is essential to continue using the role-playing technique to ensure that the students as a whole improve in the four evaluation criteria: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and communicative interaction. The

technique used is very pedagogical because it allows students to simulate imaginary, real, and everyday situations that may occur in the short and long term.

Finally, it can be said that the students were influenced by autonomous learning, because they tried to recreate their minds by researching with their classmates or at home, with the little or much that their parents could contribute, and they allowed the teacher to be a guide in the process. Richards and Rodgers (cited in Hernández, 2021) point out that students can take ownership of their learning by allowing them to work to a greater extent with their peers, leaving aside the teacher as the center of the class and turning him/her into a facilitator and guide of knowledge.

Conclusions

After applying the proposal of this research, a series of conclusions were produced that are channeled to the role-playing technique and the teaching-learning of English as a foreign language, emphasizing the strengthening of speaking skills in sixth-grade students. Below are the relevant conclusions reached by the researcher, as a product of her research process.

To teach a foreign language, especially English, it is necessary to resort to different strategies so that students can develop their skills to facilitate the use of the language they are learning. Therefore, it is essential to use different techniques so that they have other options to learn and develop or strengthen their skills and competencies, which allow them to practice the foreign language in their immediate environment, offering them a friendly, trustworthy space so that when speaking in English they can overcome the barriers they encounter when trying to express themselves in this language.

In this way, the choice of techniques used to teach a foreign language becomes a fundamental tool to promote language practice among learners; the role-playing technique is a valuable element, since the students showed a taste for learning, reflecting in their actions a certain degree of motivation to use the foreign language, making the greatest effort so that their expressions would be understood by their interlocutors; from this it is concluded

that teaching and learning a foreign language requires a continuous search for strategies to carry out a successful process.

The use of this technique is promoted as the beginning of a pedagogical process that, when fully developed, serves to improve the ability to express oneself in a foreign language, which in this specific case refers to communicative competence and oral expression, since this way of learning makes students apply what they have learned in different situations in their context, giving them the opportunity to generate knowledge from the classroom to their daily spaces, making them build new realities from what they already have and, at the same time, it allows them to use the vocabulary when they need it.

On the other hand, it is essential to give feedback after the use of the teaching-learning techniques, so that weaknesses can be improved and strengths maintained, especially in the correct use of words, their pronunciation, their coherence and cohesion when communicating; in this way, current deficiencies can be corrected to the extent that the foreign language continues to be used; hence the importance of the role-play technique; its constant use makes students gradually lose their shyness and be able to express themselves by constantly working with their peers and assuming a role in the work team.

In this technique, the respect for the other person prevailed; this meant that they were not afraid of making mistakes, because everyone felt identified and the circumstances in which they found themselves meant that they could help each other; it also made it possible to improve the interpersonal relations between the students, since they always waited for what each working group was going to present, with the willingness to collaborate with each other.

Conflict of interest

The author of this article declares that she has no conflict of interest in the work presented.

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Contribution

The author participated in the preparation of the manuscript, read it and approved it.