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Abstract

This qualitative research project was carried out with a group of ninth graders at Institución Educativa Técnica Comercial (INETEC), a public school in San Martín de Loba, a town located in the Bolivar Department. The main aim of the study was to improve students' speaking skills through the implementation of role-plays. Setting real-life situations, pair and group work were pedagogical activities used to achieve the main aim of the project. Data were collected by means of questionnaires, students' journals, and video recordings during a period of five months and the grounded theory approach was used to analyze data. Results suggest that participants of this study improved their speaking skills in terms of pronunciation and vocabulary. In addition, the use of role-playing in the language classroom promoted collaborative work and interaction among participants.

Keywords: Role-playing, speaking skills, collaborative work, interaction.

Resumen

Este proyecto de investigación cualitativa se llevó a cabo con un grupo de estudiantes de noveno grado de la Institución Educativa Técnica Comercial (INETEC), un colegio público de San Martín de Loba situado en el departamento de Bolívar. El objetivo principal del estudio fue el de mejorar las habilidades de expresión oral de los estudiantes a través de la implementación de juegos de roles. Situaciones de la vida real, trabajo en parejas y en grupo fueron actividades pedagógicas utilizadas para alcanzar el objetivo principal del proyecto. Los datos fueron recolectados a través de cuestionarios, diarios de estudiantes y grabaciones de vídeo durante un período de cinco meses, y se utilizó el enfoque de la teoría fundamentada para analizar los datos. Los resultados mostraron que los estudiantes mejoraron sus habilidades de expresión oral

evidenciando mejoramiento de su pronunciación y vocabulario. Además, el uso del juego de roles en el aula de lengua promovió el trabajo colaborativo y la interacción entre los participantes.

Palabras clave: juego de roles, expresión oral, trabajo colaborativo, interacción.

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Chapter One: Introduction

English is a subject which is playing an important role in almost all professional careers around the world. Consequently, Colombian schools are working hard on the improvement of the teaching-learning process of this significant language through the implementation of meaningful activities that involve students writing about their favorite activities, discussion of controversial topics, readings about learners' interests. Thus, teachers are looking for new strategies to improve the speaking performance of students to involve them in their learning process actively; this strategy may be the use of role-plays in the English foreign language classroom.

At the Institution Educativa Técnica Comercial (INETEC), where this research took place, teachers are expected to devote more attention and time to the development of speaking, so that students may have better results in the official test: Pruebas Saber which is a test to contribute to improving the quality of education in Colombia by performing periodic measurements of skills development of basic education students, as a quality indicator of education. This study was conducted in the Colombian Bolivar Department, in a town called San Martin de Loba, where English teachers argue that students are showing poor performance in language oral production; therefore, the main goal of this research was the improvement of speaking performance in terms of vocabulary and pronunciation through the implementation of role-plays.

Baring in mind my teaching experiences as well as my colleagues' and based on meetings organized by La Secretaria de Educación y Cultura from Bolivar department carried out in the city of Cartagena, we have observed that learners face difficulties to express their ideas in the foreign language; what they tend to do is to produce isolated words without having an effective

communication in their speech. For this reason, it is important to further strengthen speaking skills of EFL learners to increase their communicative competence.

According to Harmer (2007), the use of role-plays simulates the real world and students are assigned with specific roles where they play the role of a new person and give opinions on certain subjects. In addition, students have to speak and act as if they were the new person they have to represent.

Finally, it could be argued that through the implementation of role playing in the classroom there could be a possibility to help learners overcome the difficulties they have with the development of their speaking skills.

Statement of the Problem

The interest of this research report was born when the teacher-researcher observed that students use English only inside the English classroom. It has been evident that the students at INETEC School did not use the language outside the English classroom, and in class, they tend to avoid speaking activities. Another important factor that motivated the development of this specific study is related to the students' low score in the Saber 11 test which is to know how the quality of secondary education in Colombia is. Thus, the teacher-researcher's experience, the need analysis implemented at the beginning of the study, and class observations, provided the teacher-researcher with enough evidence to identify that the population under study needed to work harder on the development of speaking. Bearing in mind the aspects mentioned above, learners were provided with the opportunity to participate in the creation of role-plays taking into account their interests and their proficiency level which is A1 according to the Common European Framework (CEF). However, the results obtained in the needs analysis suggest that

learners have limited oral production; therefore, they need to carry out activities that promote speaking, and more specifically vocabulary building and pronunciation improvement.

Research Question

How does the use of role-plays impact students' speaking performance in an EFL class?

Research Objective

To analyze the impact of role plays in student's speaking performance.

Rationale

Educational settings in which English is taught as a foreign language need to provide learners with real and meaningful opportunities to develop, practice, and reinforce speaking skills. Therefore, the language classroom is one of the best environments in which learners can take advantage of these opportunities by interacting with their classmates and the teacher. In general, this research contributes to the field of foreign language teaching-learning by helping learners develop their speaking skills in a foreign language through the implementation of role-plays.

Consequently, the importance of this project lies on the fact that by helping learners to develop their oral communication skills, the results obtained will not only be enough for the official tests, but they might also be useful for their future academic settings where learners have the possibility to study in an official university of the country. Thus, it is important for the institution that students pass these tests because it gives recognition to the school and highlights the pedagogical work of teachers. In general, the teacher-researcher of this study would assert that through the implementation of this research, learners will be provided with opportunities to use the target language in academic situations that eventually could be used in real settings.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical perspectives regarding the main constructs of this study. First, the concept of role-playing in the context of learning a foreign language is explored. Second, the theory of speaking as a skill developed through role-playing activities in the classroom is analyzed. Third, collaborative work is included as one of the benefits of using role-plays. Finally, the Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLT) or Communicative Approach is presented including a list of author's opinions that support the language interaction needed to improve students' language oral production by creating role-plays based on real life situations.

Role-playing

Role-plays may prove to be an excellent teaching technique that foreign language teachers might use in order to help learners improve their speaking difficulties with the language while enjoying the process of representing real life situations. In this way, learners might well demonstrate their abilities in performing speaking skills, and in which they will feel really involved. In other words, the integration of role-playing activities in the classroom may well prove to be a positive technique for helping learners feel confident with the language and to help them improve their speaking performance. So that, a list of author's opinions is presented to focus on the definition about what role-play in language teaching is, the interaction process that it promotes in the development of students' language oral production, its main characteristics, and the benefits of using it in the English foreign language classroom.

Hand (n.d) argues that:

"The effective use of role-plays can add variety to the kinds of activities students are asked to perform. It encourages thinking and creativity; lets students develop and practice new

language and behavioral skills in a relatively safe setting, and can create the motivation and involvement necessary for real learning to occur" (p.1).

Thus, the use of role-plays in this research allowed learners to create and to interpret different roles, to ask and answer questions regarding the grammar rules worked in class, to order, maintain, and to improvise dialogues, and to learn in a comparatively short time by increasing learners' memory capacity.

Authors and researchers have defined role-play in different ways, for instance, Budden (2006) argues that role-playing is any speaking activity when you either put yourself into somebody else's shoes, or when you stay in your own shoes but put yourself into an imaginary situation (as cited in Susanti, 2007, p. 15). This means that the use of role-plays involve learners in an imaginary situation where they have to act, think, and speak as they play the role of another person. This also implies that learners will have to assume the interpretation of a specific role which is assigned by the teacher.

Klippel (1984) suggests that "role plays are quite demanding foreign language situations in which the players have to use the foreign language correctly and adequately both in terms of the foreign language itself and the particular role that is acted out" (p.122). This means that the use of role plays requires a language challenge for learners because this technique is focused on speaking and it requires that learners perform at their best in their interventions.

Susanti (2007) defines role play "as a method of acting out particular ways of behaving or pretending to be other people who deal with new situations" (p.13). According to Wong (2010), "Role-playing involves participants to 'act' in a given role which is clearly defined on a role-card" (p. 1). The author also expresses that this is team work where the rest of the participants also have to play their roles in any specific moment, and that role-plays can be simple or

complex dialogues to practice language items taking into account the students' level. Wong (2010) also mentions the use of script; the author explains that students can create their own script by themselves. The implementation of role-playing activities in the English classes may well promote interactions and team work among the learners. The creation of scripts by learners may also be really useful to promote language English interaction because teachers might then be able to observe language performance in terms of writing and speaking. In addition, "role plays improve the students´ oral performance generally" (Klippel, 1984, p.122).

According to Littlewood (1981), "in looking for ways of creating more varied forms of interaction in the classroom, teachers of foreign languages in common with their colleagues in mother-tongue teaching have turned increasingly to the field of simulation and, within that field, especially role-playing" (p. 49). This appreciation is really significant because apart from promoting a variety of language interaction in EFL, it also shows the importance of using role-plays in the teaching of the mother-tongue, namely, Spanish in the case of this study.

In order to expand the information related to the use of role-play, Bartle (2010) adds the concept of game arguing that "role playing games are an effective method of increasing awareness, enhancing participant analysis of field situations, and familiarizing participants with the roles, aims, perspectives and positions of people whom they will meet in the field" (para. 32). Through this affirmation it could be argued that role-playing can be useful for language teaching purposes because it promotes awareness which leads to a reflective process about something which might be relevant to learners' lives. In this case, by using role-playing in the classroom, teachers may be able to promote awareness of the students' learning process.

A further analysis in terms of the characteristics of role- playing is proposed by Littlewood (1981), who suggests three main aspects to implement this technique. First of all, the author

suggests that learners need to be asked to imagine themselves in a situation which could occur outside the classroom. Subsequently, they are asked to adopt a specific role in this situation, and finally, they are asked to behave as if the situation really existed, in accordance with their roles.

According to Andreu, Garcia, & Mollar (2005), "the emphasis of role-playing is on playing; this means, in interpreting a specific role, doing the mimicry or acting out some behaviors during a short period of time and generally with guided information" (p.1). This is truly important because through the interpretation of specific roles, the speaking performance is developed and the main purpose of this research is to help learners to improve their speaking performance through the use of role-playing into the language classroom. In addition, the target language becomes a tool that facilitates the task and helps students to communicate through the exchange of information, discussion, negotiation and decision making (Andre et al., 2005, p.1).

For Tompkins (1998), "role playing clearly promotes effective interpersonal relations and social transactions among participants" (para. 6). This means that learners can improve their speaking performance by interacting and by taking account the simulation events they are going to face, which makes part of the learning environment where learners develop their teaching-learning process regarding the speaking performance.

Learning activities are not only for children, therefore, it is necessary to take into account that young and adult people are not exempt from participating of these ones. Because of this, Gaete (2011) proposes the use of role plays as a strategy to put into practice in the teaching-learning process of university students. He argues that when analyzing role-playing in the context of university teaching, it is possible to identify specific benefits in the formative process. Thus, according to Schaap (2006, p.48), learners relate to the promoting of a deep learning holistic approach, that requires students to interact and collaborate to complete an assigned task.

The context of role-plays requires that students adopt different perspectives and think reflectively about the information that the group presents and which offers benefits related to the interaction; so undoubtedly, through this methodology, it is possible to achieve meaningful learning in the development of university teaching. Gaete (2011) thus argues for the importance of using role-playing in the teaching-learning process, and he focused on the teaching of university students. In addition, this same author mixes the use of role plays in the classroom with meaningful learning, which is very important considering what we tend to do as teachers is to develop activities that represent something meaningful for learners.

Gaete (2011) also refers to the importance of using role-playings into the classroom because it increases learner´s motivation for the learning process, promotes team work, high level of decision making, and more attendance to classes by learners. Therefore, teachers need to consider the previous reasons in their teaching process in order to provide learners with a meaningful way of learning.

Susanti (2007) conducted a pre-experimental study at Islamic Junior High School Soebono Mantofani Jombang-Ciputat which involved the use of role play in teaching speaking and which showed benefits of the use of this important tool in the development of spoken language in English. Susanti (2007) argues that "role play is very important in teaching speaking because it gives students an opportunity to practice communicating in different social contexts and in different social roles" (p.2). Susanti's project provided the teacher-researcher with many ideas about the way this project might be carried out in order to meet learners' needs and to answer the research question which focuses on the improvement of speaking performance among students of English as a foreign language.

Howl (n.d) proposes interesting strategies and activities for Japanese students to work on their speaking skill by integrating the four communicative abilities. This is an important study because it allows to practice listening, reading, and writing by improving their speaking gradually, and by following the instructions given by the teacher.

Rodríguez, Lozano, Castaño & Díaz (2007), refer to role-plays in a study called "Aplicaciones pedagógicas del Juego de rol en la Educación Virtual: Una experiencia en el contexto del Examen de Estado." This study was carried out at the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá-Colombia, where the authors propose an interesting use of role plays which is related to the use of technology for virtual education and state examination. The authors argue that the use of role plays must be implemented to facilitate the teaching-learning process for virtual education due to the interactions that role play offers. If the use of role plays can facilitate the teaching-learning process for virtual education, then it may prove to be a successful tool to improve speaking performance between students of English as a foreign language who study in a public sector school.

Speaking

For the purpose of this research, only two aspects of speaking were considered; vocabulary, which included the learning of new words and pronunciation. Nurhakim (2009) argues that "speaking is the productive skill in the oral mode. It, like the other skills, is more complicated that it seems at first and involves more than just pronouncing words" (p.10).This assertion could also be supported by personal opinions provided by some of the participants of this study. They have argued that speaking is difficult and that they do not like it because the words are not pronounced as they are written.

Speaking is a skill that implies taking risks to demonstrate a better development of the language fluency. According to Urrutia and Vega (2010), "every language has two kinds of skills. The first is the receptive skill which involves two aspects: understanding and reading; and the second is the productive skill, which involves writing and speaking" (p.15).

From a language teaching communicative perspective, a variety of definitions regarding speaking exist to support this research report, but all of them have commonalities which are related to the interaction process among individuals and the improvement of the students' language oral production. According to Chaney (1998, as cited in Susanti, 2007, p. 6), speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts. Bygate (1987) argues that:

"Speaking is a skill which deserves attention every bit as much as literary skills, in both first and second languages. Our learners often need to be able to speak with confidence in order to carry out many of their most basic transactions. It is the skill by which they are most frequently judged, and through which they may make or lose friends" (p.vii).

Because of this, developing speaking skills in foreign language is a crucial issue for English teachers because they have to prepare learners to develop their pragmatic competence; it refers to the ability of using the language. To achieve this teaching goal, English teachers need to ensure that learners know a certain number of grammatical elements as well as vocabulary which provides language learners with the opportunity to implement a comprehensible speech among the participants.

According to the Professional Development Service for Teachers from Ireland (n.d), language teachers need to focus on specific elements in order to be effective in the teaching of speaking. These elements are: to provide learners with a model of effective speaking in formal

and informal manners, to provide opportunities for students to engage in conversational-style speaking, to give students tasks which involve observing and recording effective speaking, to use role-playing to teach and reinforce good conversational skills, and to carry out activities where the whole class read aloud, among others. These elements are relevant for language teachers since they facilitate speaking practice among students giving them varied and interesting classes and contributing to the development of speaking.

Additionally, Kayi (2006) describes thirteen activities to promote speaking, which seem to be appropriate and interesting to be applied in the foreign language classroom. These activities are discussion, role play, simulations, information gap, brain storming, storytelling, interviews, story completion, reporting, playing cards, picture narrating, picture describing, and find the differences (Kayi, 2006, as cited in Susanti, 2007, p. 10). Interestingly, the use of role plays is included in the activities proposed by Kayi (2006) to promote speaking; this means that the use of role-plays in this study is a suitable technique to promote speaking and it may help learners to improve their speaking performance by increasing the learners' vocabulary and improving their pronunciation.

Through the implementation of role-playing activities, learners may have the opportunity to have language interaction; they could speak with others and listen to the answers of classmates taking into account the situations stated. This way, they would be working on their speaking development with the language. This is an important consideration because it is closely connected with the activities the teacher-researcher planned to apply in the methodological implementation of the project in which learners will work on their speaking performance. To support these ideas, Brown & Yule (1983) argue that "in the production of speech, however,

each speaker needs to speak. He needs to speak individually and, ideally, he needs someone to listen to him speaking and to respond to him" (p.25).

On the other hand, Brown &Yule's work (1983), related to the assessment of spoken English production, suggests that:

"One of the main aims of most English teachers is to make their students be able to communicate information effectively in spoken English. In pursuing this aim, the teacher may wish to be able to assess, at regular intervals, how his students are progressing and also to find out if there are areas of performance which are consistently weak and require additional attention" (p.103).

This process is a challenge for English teachers, and it is essential for teachers to identify the weaknesses learners have related to speaking in order to start setting teaching goals which help learners to overcome these difficulties.

Collaborative work

Collaborative learning requires working together toward a common goal. This type of learning has been called by various names: collective learning, community learning, peer-teaching, peer- learning or team learning. What they have in common is that they all incorporate group work (Dooly, 2008, p. 2). Thus, during the creation of role-plays learners interacted and worked together sharing knowledge with their partners and reducing the stress that they experience when they work alone.

According to Fitch & Sanders (2005):

"Interaction of any kind is made possible through participants sharing certain communicative competencies. These consist partly of knowledge about the language, of

the ways that elements of the language (including lexis, grammar and syntax, intonation, prosody, etc.) are put together and deployed (Fitch & Sanders, 2005, p. 75).

Accordingly, interaction which experienced learners in the development of this research provided them with the opportunity to learn more from their peers and to be able to speak in English by themselves by representing a specific real situation given by the teacher. Additionally, learners' interaction was appreciated by means of the social relationships that participants built while working together in small groups and by orally sharing their representations and experiences with their classmates in order to show improvement of their speaking performance collaboratively.

In this study, learners worked in groups and interacted orally with their peers, and this interaction made that students reached specific learning goals together. For this study, the students' goal was to create different role-plays to improve their speaking performance.

Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLTA)

In terms of the approach on which the presentation research project is based, the CLTA can be understood as a set of principles about the goals of language teaching, the way learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom (Richards, 2005, p. 2).

According to Susanti (2007):

"Communicative language teaching is based on real life situations that require communication. By using this approach in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, students will have the opportunity to communicate with each other in the target language. In brief, ESL teachers should create a classroom environment where students have real-life communication, authentic activities, and meaningful tasks that promote oral

language. This can occur when students collaborate in groups to achieve a goal or to complete a task" (p. 9).

In other words, the use of role playing in the language classroom provides learners with the opportunity to communicate in the target language by taking into account their interests and the different real life situations which encourage learners to interact and to work collaboratively, while potentially demonstrating improvements in their speaking skills. It has been argued that this often occurs when learning is organized in terms of CLTA principles.

Nunan (1991 as cited in Nurhakim, 2009) lists five basic characteristics for this communicative approach. The first is an emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language. The second is the introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation. The third is the provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language but also on the learning process itself. The fourth, is an enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning, and the fifth, is an attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom. For this research, all these aspects were considered, but the most enjoyable and the most meaningful experience for learners was the fifth one in which learners recorded their role-plays about shopping in a real store of San Martín de Loba.

It is necessary to take into consideration that these five characteristics averred by Nunan (1991) are focused on the teaching of speaking by using the CLTA. One could therefore argue that these characteristics are included in the use of role playing to improve speaking skills. For instance, an emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language could be observed while learners create the role plays bearing in mind the situation stated by the teacher. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation could be observed when

the teacher gave learners the situations to be represented in class and useful language expressions.

The provision of opportunities for learners to focus not only on language but also on the learning process itself, could be observed when learners interact with their classmates to exchange knowledge and to overcome language difficulties among them and with the teacher's help. An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences, as important contributing elements to classroom learning, could be observed when learners try to represent situations which they have experienced in real life by learning new vocabulary. Finally, an attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom could be observed when learners propose to record role plays outside the school and without uniform.

Chapter Three: Research Design

In this chapter the design of this research study, which is focused on the improvement of speaking performance through the use of role-plays among students of English as a foreign language, is described. Additionally, the type of study, context, participants, instruments used to collect data, ethical issues, validity, reliability and triangulation are presented.

Type of Study

This research is a qualitative study because the issue of speaking performance was explored to understand the way how pronunciation and vocabulary were improved. Additionally, a specific question was addressed, and data collection and interpretation were developed to help to answer the main question of the study which is: How does the use of role-plays impact students' speaking performance in an EFL class?

Ferrance (2000) explains that action research "follows a process in which participants examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research" (p.1). This study follows a systematic process in which a needs analysis was carried out during the first semester in order to identify the learners' difficulties regarding the use of speaking. In this way, the focus of the pedagogical intervention of this research was to improve speaking skills among students of English as a foreign language, and instruments were carefully selected for data collection and for data analysis in order to find the answer to the research question stated at the beginning of the project.

This is a qualitative action research study in which the teacher as a researcher reflects on the teaching practice regarding the difficulties learners face when using speaking skills. According to Sagor (2005), "action research is an investigation conducted by the person or the people empowered to take action concerning their actions, for the purpose of improving their

future actions" (p.4). Because of this, action research looks for the improvement of the strategies and knowledge that researchers put into practice in their teaching context and where they identify the problems to solve which constitute the main reason to start the development of an action research. In addition, Hancock (1998), states that "qualitative research is concerned with finding the answers to questions which begin with: why? how? in what way?" (p.2). This is the reason why the development of an action research project implies a reflective process focused on a problem solving led by individuals.

Context

Institución Educativa Técnica Comercial (INETEC) is a school located in the south of the Bolivar department and in the North of Colombia. Learners live in a town called San Martin de Loba, near Cartagena. They have three hours of English per week, this is a public school, and it is not bilingual. Teachers have to work firmly not only in the students' motivation to learn English but in the motivation to learn in a general way. There, most people live from farming, mining, and fishing, the cultivation of yucca, sesame, and corn. In addition, students in this institution come from the town and many from the rural area.

The institutional educational project aimed at describing the syllabus of the school where the researcher works, it is focused on an integral education where learners grow up with knowledge that let they interact with other people without difficulties. The syllabus emphasizes the respect each human being must have for him/herself and for others as a part of human interaction. The syllabus also includes the teacher's ability to take the lead in that is potentially the most profitable manner of teaching the processes of knowledge and human behavior, which is a hard task we, as teachers, deal with every day of our lives.

Bearing in mind the language teaching in the school, it is necessary to highlight that the contents of the syllabus were designed according to the students' linguistic, affective, and social needs and the activities proposed by teachers must follow the pedagogical model about teaching for understanding in which learners are motivated to discover their own learning process.

Participants

The target population of this study was a group of 25 students who were in ninth grade. They were 17 girls and 8 boys whose average age ranges from 13 to 16, and most of them had A1 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference. Particular strengths of the group included good discipline in the classroom; they were good at working in groups or individually, and their current needs were focused on the use of their language oral production, aspect which is considered the most difficult to learn according to what students have expressed on many occasions at the INETEC School. They have said that English is the most difficult language to learn because words are not pronounced as they are written, making pronunciation and speaking a hard process. Despite the difficulties students face with speaking, they are aware of the importance that English represents not only for their academic purposes but also for personal needs.

Data Collection Instruments

The instruments used to gather data were two questionnaires: an initial questionnaire at the beginning of the implementation process to observe the feasibility of the research report and a final questionnaire which was applied at the end of the pedagogical intervention to observe the impact of role plays in students' speaking performance. The students' journals that were applied at the end of each didactic module to observe the progress of students' language oral production. Video Recordings that were used to observe in a concrete way the improvement of students'

speaking, and a checklist which was used at the end of the implementation of modules as a means of providing evidence regarding the role-plays that learners created. To ensure the learners' comprehension of the items in the questionnaires and their confidence in responding to journal topics, these instruments were designed in Spanish.

Questionnaires.

The initial and the final questionnaires were considered for the study because they helped gathering information regarding the learners' impact had about the use of role-plays to improve speaking performance. For instance, the initial questionnaire was composed of three questions (Appendix A). The first question intended to determine whether the learners enjoyed using role-plays. This was therefore aimed at unveiling the perceptions learners had about the use of role-playing in the classroom. The second   focused on the improvements that the use of role-playing might generate in students' speaking. The third attempted to determine whether the continued use of role-playing in the classroom could help the improvement of speaking skills among students. This was designed in order to discover whether the use of role-playing helped learners to improve any other aspect of the language.

Additionally, the final questionnaire (Appendix B) was applied at the end of the implementation of the didactic modules as a way of observing how and whether there was an improvement in learners' spoken English from the use of role-plays.

The use of questionnaires in the research report was a useful technique to collect data and to organize and to classify the information gathered. So that, according to Bell (1999), "a questionnaire is essentially a structured technique for collecting primary data. It is generally a series of written questions for which the respondent has to provide the answers" (as cited in Beiske, 2002, p.3). This means that the use of questionnaires allows the researcher to reduce time

to analyze data and in this study it was helpful to focus the action research on the effectiveness of the use of role-playing among students of English as a foreign language.

Students' Journal.

Through this instrument, learners have a means of giving their opinions about the use of role-plays and the impact that it may have had on their learning process. Bearing in mind that journals look for specific information about a particular topic, it is necessary that learners feel confident with the questions and the environment to answer all the questions without difficulties (Appendix C). For instance, learners wrote the students' journals at the end of each didactic module and the teacher-researcher guided learners to reflect by means of five questions. The first, referred to discover what the student learned from each module. The second, to know whether the student improved in any aspect. The third, to determine the impact that the use of role-plays had in students' speaking ability. The fourth, to know if they had any difficulty with the use of role-plays, and the fifth, where learners wrote their questions, comments, or suggestions for each module.

Consequently, the application of students' journals for the development of the research report had a positive effect because learners wrote important aspects that helped to answer the main question of this study. According to Finley (2010), "the benefits of students integrating journal writing across the curriculum are amply documented. From a teacher's perspective, there are few activities that can trump journal writing for understanding and supporting the development of student thinking" (para. 3). Because of this, the use of journals may be seen as a potentially challenging instrument to use in the research project because they take into consideration the way learners think and reflect upon their own learning process.

Video Recordings.

The use of video recordings benefitted this study in the way the researcher had to observe and analyze the students' speaking performance in a concrete way. According to Smith (1981), "the use of mechanical recording devices usually gives greater flexibility than observations done by hand" (as cited in Bowman, 1994, p. 1). Video recordings make easier data analysis because they offer the researcher the opportunity to listen to and observe the information gathered the times the investigator considers necessary in order to be effective and save time with the data analysis process. An important characteristic of video recordings (Appendix D) is that they combine images and audio. "Video recordings combine many of the issues of photography and audio recordings. An individual's image is linked with their comments, thus making their data more easily identifiable" (Institutional Review Board, 2013, para. 5). This means that through video recordings the researcher could identify the learners' language performance and the improvement of speaking by observing and listening to the students to put into practice the different English grammar rules and the new vocabulary worked in class in oral way. Improvement of pronunciation was clearly observed when learners tried to express their ideas in English, although some students had more difficulties to speak in English than others, but this is part of the language learning process.

"Videos can be valuable classroom tools if they depict interesting, authentic scenarios in which relevant English is used. Effective videos should grab students' attention; they may do this in a variety of ways. Students will be interested in videos that are aesthetically pleasing, present useful information, deal with pertinent social topics, have engaging characters, and are short in duration (viewing breaks should be given every two minutes)" (Graham, 2010, para. 2).

Checklist.

A checklist was considered for this research because it made the process easier to analyze the information gathered in the vide-recordings regarding the students' speaking performance, which was focused on pronunciation and vocabulary. According to Hales & Pronovost (2006), "a checklist is typically a list of action items or criteria arranged in a systematic manner, allowing the user to record the presence/absence of the individual items listed to ensure that all are considered or completed" (p. 231). This indicates that the use of checklists in research allows the organization of data in a concrete way which contributes to the development and understanding of the investigation. Additionally, checklists in this study were useful to record the observed performance of learners regarding speaking, and to save time.

Ethical Considerations

The teacher-researcher considered ethical principles to develop the study to maintain the moral integrity of the participants during the study. The teacher-researcher sent a letter to the principal (Appendix E), in which the specific objectives and expectations of the research were presented as well as permission was requested. Afterwards, the students' consent letter (Appendix F) and parents' consent letters (Appendix G) were presented in which the purpose of this study was clearly explained. In addition, confidentiality and anonymity of participants by using fictitious names in the papers they wrote was included.

Another important ethical consideration included was voluntary participation in the development of the project. It is relevant to bear in mind that participants were assisting the researcher and they should be invited to participate, with a clear understanding that they were under no obligation to participate in the development of this study and that there will be no negative consequences for them if they decide do not assist the researcher in his or her

investigation (Polonski, 2004, p.76). In addition, the researcher had to be responsible and honest with data gathered and with the analysis of this information bearing in mind that responsibility in qualitative research is an ongoing process. Finally, the researcher paid careful attention to other studies to avoid plagiarizing any information and the researcher also respected the intellectual property of other researchers by citing their works adequately.

Validity, Reliability and Triangulation

These terms were experienced in this research in the way the researcher associated and analyzed data gathered in order to come up with conclusions. The process of validity, reliability, and triangulation started by stating the questions and objectives for the action research project, selecting the instruments to apply, designing the instruments, piloting them, receiving feedback from my project's director, application of the instruments, and analyzing findings. To develop the validity and triangulation it was necessary to take into account the constructs of the theoretical framework.

Validity refers to the degree to which a study accurately reflects or assesses the specific concept that the researcher is attempting to measure. While reliability is concerned with the accuracy of the actual measuring instrument or procedure, validity is concerned with the study's success at measuring what the researchers set out to measure (Colorado State University, 2012). This means that instruments will be valid and reliable if they measure what they are intended to and if they achieve the purpose for which they were designed. This way, data collected will be possible.

Similarly, according to Bryman (2004), "triangulation refers to the use of more than one approach to the investigation of a research question in order to enhance confidence in the ensuing findings" (p.1).This way, it facilitated validation of data through cross verification from

different sources. In addition, the analysis of data gathered from different instruments allowed for a triangulation process that permitted the project to answer the research question which was stated at the beginning of this chapter.

Chapter Four: Pedagogical Intervention and Implementation

This chapter describes the pedagogical intervention that was already implemented in the teaching context of this research and it deals with the pedagogical activities designed to improve students´ speaking when using role-playing.

Methodology

The pedagogical intervention process for this study was conducted during the months of July, August, September, October, and part of November, 2012. The implementation was carried out in 21 hours and it was divided into seven didactic modules. Each module lasted three hours and had a topic that was developed including a set of activities focused on the use of role-playing. During the development of these modules, learners were encouraged to use role-playing activities to foster their speaking performance.

The implementation of this project was developed taking into account the sequence of a pre, while, and post-stage (Table 1: Didactic Modules). For the pre-stage, it was essential to take into account the students' assumed knowledge (Appendix 8: ICELT Lesson Plan) and to engage them with the topic through a little game or fun activity. In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching (ICELT) is a component of the Master Program in Language Teaching which offers La Universidad de La Sabana in partnership with Cambridge University and that focuses on training teachers to help them to improve their skills and to develop the ability to reflect on and improve teaching. The lesson plan model ICELT was used for this research and it helped the researcher with the implementation process because different features like main and subsidiary aims, assumed knowledge, anticipated problems, and planned solutions helped. The main goal of developing a pre-stage was to prepare learners for the next stages and make them feel confident in the class to get them to participate actively.

During the while-stage, learners put into practice the main goal of the activities that was always based on the use of role-playing. The idea was that learners incorporate role-playing in their oral productions following the instructions given by the teacher. Activities that the researcher implemented to prepare learners to face the role-plays were a talk on the importance of speaking English accompanied by a video and the importance of working in groups or pairs, a review of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and language structures worked in last terms and which were needed to work on the different situations of role-plays. For instance, the simple present, past, and future, the use of would, and general vocabulary. The idea of doing this review was to encourage learners to use all the language they could in the creation of their role-plays. Additionally, teaching strategies implemented by the researcher were providing learners with language support which included the target vocabulary, good language models, scripts of the different situations, and short videos where learners could observe what was expected from them.

Finally, the post-stage was designed to observe the advances that learners had regarding their speaking. The main idea was that learners showed their understanding of the use of role-playing for communicative language purposes. These three stages of didactic modules were designed to foster the learners' speaking skills during the second semester of the school year, and they were distributed in the following way:

Table 1. Pedagogical Intervention Modules – Role-playing implementation.

MODULE	AIM	PRE-STAGE	WHILE-STAGE	POST-STAGE	TIME
1 Introduce yourself to a group!	By the end of the module learners will be able to introduce themselves to the group by talking about their personal information, likes, and dislikes.	The teacher engages students with the module by introducing herself to the group.	Learners will prepare their introductions by following the sample provided by the Teacher.	Learners will introduce themselves to the group.	3 hours

2 Meeting new people!	By the end of the module learners will be able to initiate, maintain, and end a conversation with someone they just met.	The teacher will present a video where someone meets a new person.	By pairs, and with teacher´s help, learners will create a role-play in which they simulate meeting someone.	Learners will present their role-playing. The teacher will take into account the students´ creativity.	3 hours
3 Phone call / leaving a message!	By the end of the module learners will be able to make a phone call and leave a message.	The teacher will use her cell phone to make a real phone call in English. She also will bring to the class a listening exercise where learners will listen to a phone call in which two girls talk about an invitation for a happy birthday. The teacher will also bring a video where a boy leaves a message.	By pairs, learners will start to prepare their phone calls. They will record a video.	The teacher will bring the projector to watch the students´ videos.	3 hours
4 Demanding apology?	By the end of the module learners will be able to apologize to someone else.	The teacher will deliver some papers with different situations. She also will present a video where some friends are demanding apology for a specific situation.	Learners will prepare their role-playing with the teacher´s help.	Learners will present their role-playing taking into account the situation provided by the teacher.	3 hours
5 Shopping!	By the end of the module learners will be able to make a role-playing where they simulate going shopping.	The teacher promotes a discussion to talk about who spends more money on purchases; if men or women.	By groups of three, learners will prepare their role-playing taking into account the topic selected: Shopping.	Learners will present their role-playing about shopping and it is going to be in a real store from the town.	3 hours
6 At the restaurant!	By the end of the module learners will be able to create a role-playing about any situation in a restaurant.	The teacher will present a video about a funny situation in a restaurant.	Learners will create their role-playing with the teacher´s help.	Learners will present their role-playing about any situation in a restaurant.	3 hours
7 At the party!	By the end of the module learners will be able to share all the knowledge learnt in the past modules by talking in English with their classmates and with the teacher in a party that the teacher is going to prepare.	The teacher will bring English music and candies to the classroom. The idea is that learners enjoy the moment talking in English about the past modules.	Learners will talk about their experience doing role-playings in the class. They will prepare their opinion about the classes and the teacher will record the students' opinions.	The teacher will record the opinions given by the students.	3 hours

After describing the activities designed for the use of role-plays to improve speaking performance amongst students of English as a foreign language, the association each module has with the students' improvement of this important ability is observed validating the implementation of role-plays in this research. This aspect was analyzed and described after the data was gathered, and that was also analyzed in the pedagogical intervention.

Chapter Five: Results and Data Analysis

This chapter focuses on the presentation of the analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data generated from the participants' journal, questionnaires, and video recordings regarding the impact of role-playing in their speaking performance. The chapter also presents the categories that emerged from the analysis of this information bearing in mind the research question of this proposal which is: How does the use of role- plays impact students' speaking performance in an EFL class? as well as the process followed to analyze data.

Procedures for Data Analysis

After four months of collecting data, different steps and procedures were followed in order to organize the information gathered in developing the process of analysis and interpretation of data. It is important to mention that the analysis of data of this study is based on the Grounded Theory approach described by Strauss & Corbin (1990). According to these authors, "the purpose of Grounded Theory method is, of course, to build theory that is faithful to and illuminates the area under study" (p. 24).This means what the researcher is trying to prove is whether the use of role-plays in the language classroom is useful or not for the improvement of speaking performance.

The process of analyzing data started by reading the students' answers found in the questionnaires and journals after the implementation of role-plays in the classroom. This process was simplified in codes by using an open coding procedure which is the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data (Straus & Corbin, 1990).Once common patterns started to emerge, they were grouped in order to reduce the number of units that the researcher has to work with. The process of grouping concepts that seem to pertain to the same phenomena is called categorizing (Straus & Corbin, 1990). In order to

analyze the learners' answers regarding the impact of role-plays in learner's speaking performance, it was necessary to assign a specific color to each unit code found. The unit codes used to identify each category were green (pronunciation), blue (learning of new vocabulary), red (aspects related to the use of role-plays which include the creation and interpretation, to ask and answer questions, order and maintain dialogues, and learning in short time), and yellow (participation and interaction with classmates and teacher).

Subsequently, these unit codes were analyzed to discover the relationship between them and they were colored and grouped in the following way: green for pronunciation and vocabulary; and pink for the use of role-plays and interaction. Later, questionnaires that were developed during and after the implementation of the modules were read, in order to identify information about the impact of role-plays in learners' speaking performance.

The researcher then read and analyzed the students' journal and teacher's journal in order to identify more supporting aspects related to the improvement of speaking performance through the use of role-plays in EFL.

Finally, the selective coding process was carried out in order to identify the core category of the investigation. Strauss & Corbin (1990) define selective coding as "the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development" (p. 116). The codes that emerged from the instruments were grouped, aimed at supporting the issues provided from the data in order to check for validity. In this case, the researcher had to read carefully the aspects that learners mentioned in the questionnaires and journals to find the possible relationships between the categories.

As a result of this process, one core category was found integrating the main constructs that were identified during the triangulation of data: pronunciation, vocabulary, role-plays, interaction, and collaborative work. In the following chart the core category and subcategories that emerged from the analysis process are shown.

Table 2. Categories and Subcategories

Research Question	Category	Subcategories
How does the use of role-playing shape students' speaking performance in an EFL class?	Students speaking performance through the use of role-plays.	The continued use of role-plays improves pronunciation and the learning of new vocabulary. The use of role-plays promotes collaborative work and interaction.

The main category, S*tudents´ speaking performance through the use of role-plays,* deals with the impact of students' speaking development through the use of role-plays in the language classroom. From this category two subcategories emerged. The first, *The continued use of role-plays improves pronunciation and the learning of new vocabulary* refers to the ability of learners of communicating in English by improving their pronunciation and learning new vocabulary through the continued use of role-plays. In this process learners showed improvement of their pronunciation while they work on the construction of role-plays according to their interests, and they also showed improvement of their vocabulary by learning new words and by discovering them according to the different situations of role-plays. Figure 1, corresponds to the graphic information of the first question of the Initial Questionnaire ¿Le gusto utilizar el juego de roles en la clase? SI __ NO__ ¿POR QUÉ?.

Figure 1. Initial Questionnaire.
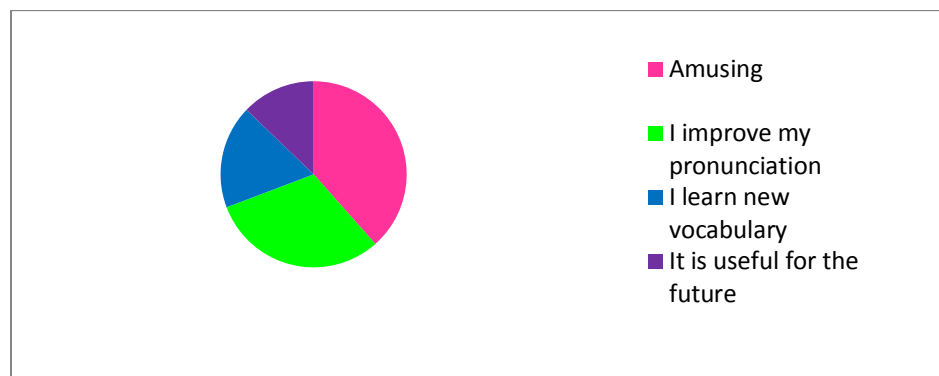
By analyzing the answers that students gave to this question, it is observable that pronunciation and vocabulary were aspects that students mentioned in their replies. This means that learners found the implementation of role-plays useful for the improvement of their pronunciation and the learning of new vocabulary. Learners also expressed that the use of role-plays was amusing; this information was really essential for learners and for this study because the teacher-researcher discovered that participants enjoyed working on the creation of role-plays. In other words, they were motivated to participate in the development of this project and this motivation encouraged them to improve their pronunciation and the learning of new words. Besides, this was a way the researcher had to discover that the goals of this project were attained and it also motivated the researcher to continue working on the development of this research.

On the other hand, learners expressed that they liked the use of role-plays in the class because it is useful for the future; what the researcher interpreted from this answer is that learners have seen in the use of role-plays an opportunity to enrich their knowledge about the language and be prepared for future situations in which English is present.

Figure 2 corresponds to the Question 2 of the Final Questionnaire ¿Mejoró en algún aspecto de la lengua? SI _____ NO _____ ¿Cuál?.

Figure 2. Final Questionnaire Q2.

Pronunciation and vocabulary were the elements which learners improved during the continued use of role-plays in class, as highlighted in Figure 2 above.

The following excerpts provide evidence of how the implementation of role-plays improved pronunciation and the learning of new vocabulary. It is important to underline that in order to triangulate the data collected in the previous research instruments and in following excerpts, the researcher used information from different questions and instruments (questionnaires and students' journals) which belonged to different participants. For example, one of the students expressed:

"*Sí. Porque aprendí otras palabras desconocidas y a saber cómo pronunciarlas, como manejarlas*" *(S12, Initial Questionnaire, May 9th,-12)*.

Through this student's answer, it was possible to identify the improvement of speaking and vocabulary. Thus, although this was the first time learners had worked on the use of role-plays in the language class, they claim to have found the implementation of role-plays for improving speaking and vocabulary useful.

Other students expressed the following:

"*Me parece que es una nueva forma más rápida y eficaz para aprender, comprender y mejorar la pronunciación de palabras en inglés*" *(S7, Students´ Journal, October 1th-12)*.

"Si, como pronunciar palabras nuevas en el role-play" (S10, Students´ Journal, October 4th-12).

Data from the students' journal, learners also showed evidence of the improvement of pronunciation and vocabulary in their answers because they argued that they found the use of role-plays as a new quick and effective way to learn, understand, and improve speaking. In other words, learners found the use of role-plays a useful technique which may contribute to the improvement of speaking, vocabulary, and the language learning in general. In terms of the impact of role-playing in the students' speaking performance, one student suggested:

"Sí. Porque me ayuda a mejorar la expresión oral del inglés y nos ayuda a mejorar nuestro vocabulario y a poner en práctica el inglés y nos enseña cada día más de esa lengua" (S8, Initial Questionnaire, May 9th,-12.

The acquisition of new words as well as the improvement in pronunciation was identified by the participants, as a result of the role-play experience. For instance, one of the students stated:

"Me pareció muy bueno porque cada vez que hacíamos un role-play aprendí nuevas cosas, aprendí nuevas palabras, como pronunciarlas y cómo manejarlas. Verdaderamente para mi esos roles me parecieron muy importantes, pues me han servido de a mucho en otras partes que he ido y he tenido diálogos con personas que ya manejan el inglés muy bien" (S10, Final Questionnaire, October 30th-12).

The following student's answer reaffirms the role-play as a means for the improvement of pronunciation and the learning of new words:

"Sí. Si mejore en la expresión oral porque en los role-plays hacemos mucho uso de nuevas palabras y mejoramos la pronunciación" (S15, Final Questionnaire, October 30th-12).

One could say that students' answers in the final questionnaire showed a significant improvement of speaking and vocabulary not only for academic, but for personal language purposes.

In addition, through the video recordings, two components of the speaking skills were observed. The first, pronunciation which includes vocal expression, intonation, and voice volume, and the second, vocabulary which includes the use of recycle words and the learning of new words. Table 5 illustrates the previous statement through the following checklist which was created as a way to summarize the information gathered from the videos where learners participated when presenting the role-plays.

Table 3. Checklist.

Speaking aspects	First Video				Last Video			
	Not to standard	Standard	Good	Very Good	Not to standard	Standard	Good	Very Good
PRONUNCIATION								
Vocal expression		X					X	
Intonation		X					X	
Voice volume			X					X
VOCABULARY								
Recycle words		X					X	
New words			X					X

This checklist exemplifies the speaking performance of learners through the implementation of role-plays. What the researcher did was to compare the first role-play, which was about meeting new people, with the last, which was about a specific situation in a store, in order to analyze the speaking performance of learners through the implementation of role-plays.

The checklist provides evidence of the improvement of learners' speaking, because from a low to a higher level of the spoken language. In addition, from a comparison of the videos, it is also possible to detect the improvement of learners' speaking performance in the way learners performed orally by putting into practice the components observed through the checklist. This is

because in the first video learners were somewhat shy to represent their roles and with the fear of not making mistakes. On the other hand, in the last video learners evidenced their speaking performance by representing their roles without fear of making mistakes, trying to speak and to act naturally, pronouncing the new vocabulary correctly, showing role-plays with a length greater than the first ones, and enjoying the recording process. This is a meaningful support to prove that the implementation of role-plays in the foreign language classroom was a useful technique for improving speaking performance in EFL learners.

Other aspects that were observed through the video recordings were the capacity to act and the ability to use the students' body language to complement the speaking process in the different role-plays. Evidence of the body language used by learners during the creation of their role-plays could be observed in the videos recorded by the researcher. This data makes reference to the face, eye contact, gestures, movement, and voice used by participants when they were recorded.

The second subcategory, *The use of role-plays promotes collaborative work and interaction*, focuses on the process of interaction among learners while they work together when building role-plays taking into account the different situations. This subcategory also refers to the process of exchanging knowledge while learners construct new understandings together during the creation of role-plays. A sample of this process is when learners grouped to organize the situation assigned to be represented.

This subcategory emerged from the analysis of the different instruments to support the research objective of this project which is to analyze the impact of role plays in student's speaking performance when they worked collaboratively. During the activities proposed by the teacher-researcher, where learners worked in groups on the creation of their role-plays, patterns

of collaborative work, including the integration with classmates and teacher and mutual support among group members were observed. In addition, note was made of the interaction and strategies learners implemented to make the process of creating their role-plays easier. For instance, learners exchanged and shared knowledge, assigned functions to each member of the group, interacted, and helped each other. All these strategies are included in the collaborative learning process which is strongly tied to the process of collaborative work.

It could be argued that the participants of this research project worked collaboratively in the achievement of specific learning goals focused on the development of speaking performance when they worked in the creation of role-plays. During the analysis of the information found on the instruments, the researcher observed that collaborative work and interaction were aspects that participants highlighted on their answers of the different instruments. For instance, the students' journal and the final questionnaire revealed answers such as:

Table 4. Students' Excerpts 1.

Students' journal	Final questionnaire
¿Mejoró en algún aspecto? ¿Cuál? Sí, en el aspecto de comunicación con mis compañeros (Excerpt No.18, Students' Journal, Student Nº 18, September 27th-12).	¿Mejoró en algún aspecto de la lengua? SI ____ NO ____ ¿Cuál? Sí. Compartir con mis compañeros y explicándole en donde no entendían y me explicaban cuando yo no entendía.(Q2,ST9) (Excerpt No.9, Final Questionnaire, Student Nº9, October 30th-12).

In addition, the researcher observed through the video recordings that collaborative work and interaction were elements that played an important function in the elaboration of the different role-plays because first, learners identified the role they had to represent, and then, they helped their teammates with the development of their roles in order to record a highly commendable role-play.

Similarly, interaction was an aspect identified in the students' answers and in the groups they formed. It was evident that participants interacted with each other while they worked collaboratively on their role-plays.

During the pedagogical intervention learners showed the following patterns of interaction: First, from the Teacher to Students (T-Ss) which was when the Teacher was addressing Students and involved all the class; second, from the Teacher to Student (T-S) which was when the Teacher clarified some participants' doubts individually; third, from Student to Student (S-S) which included pair work, and from Students to Students (Ss-Ss) which included group work. Figure 3 which corresponds to Question 1 of the Students' Journal ¿Qué aprendió en este modulo?, illustrates the information provided in the previous paragraph.

Figure 3.Students' Journal Q1.
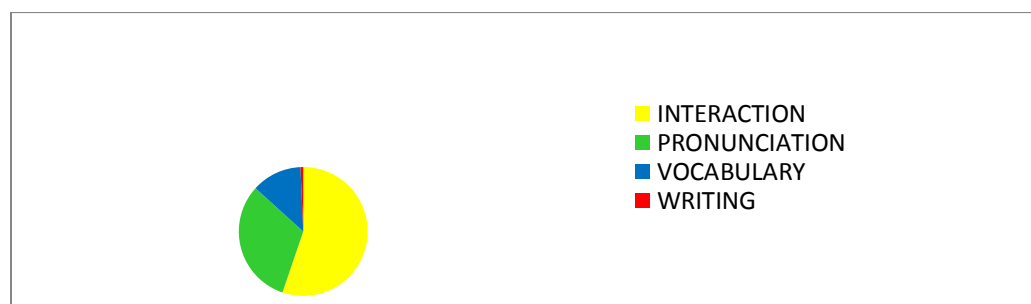
The figure above provides evidence that half of the participants expressed their views focused on interaction. This also means that the use of role-plays promoted interaction among learners of EFL. The following table includes certain of their answers:

Table 5. Students Excerpts 2.

Q2M1: ¿Mejoró en algún aspecto? ¿Cuál?	Q1: M2-M3: ¿Qué aprendió en este módulo?	
ST9: Sí, en que me integrara más con mis compañeros y mi maestra.	ST11: Aprendí a comunicarme con mis compañeros por medio de role-plays. ST13: A sostener diálogos pequeños.	ST2: En este módulo aprendí a saberme comunicar con otras personas hablando en inglés.

	ST15: Aprendí a como se saluda, como se presentan amigos, pronunciar mejor las palabras, a relacionarme con personas desconocidas.	
(Excerpts No. 9, Students´ Journal, September 27th-12)	(Excerpts No. 3, 5, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15, 16, Students´ Journal, October 1th-12)	(Excerpt No. 2, Students´ Journal, October 4th-12)

Figure 4 provides further support for the second subcategory. This graphic was interpreted taking into account the second question of the final questionnaire ¿Mejoró en algún aspecto de la lengua? SI _____ NO _____ ¿Cuál?.

Figure 4. Final Questionnaire Q2.
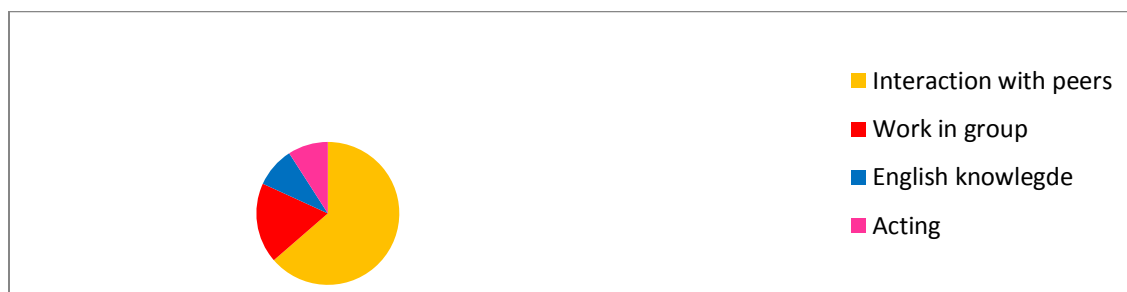
In this graphic, the interaction with peers and group work in first and second place is observed. This means that learners worked together in the creation of their role-plays, with the teacher, with the different situations, with the learning of new words, and with their own construction of knowledge focused on their speaking performance. In addition, the graphic also shows improvement of English knowledge in a general way.

To summarize the analysis of the two subcategories, Figure 5 which corresponds to the second question of the students' journal ¿Mejoró en algún aspecto? ¿Cuál?), illustrates the corresponding evidences.

Figure 5. Students' Journal Q2.
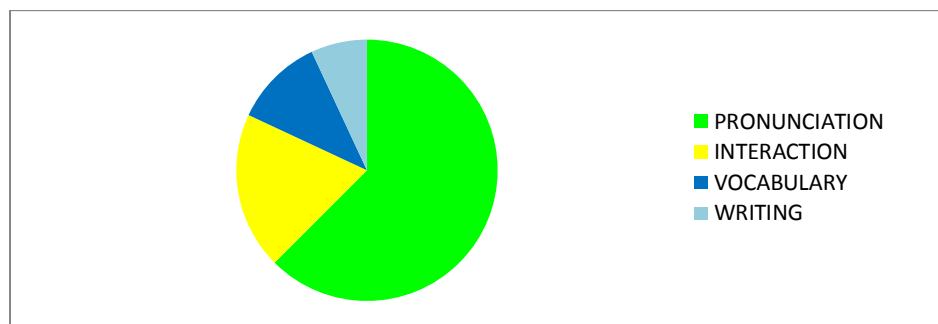
It is evident that pronunciation is the aspect which demonstrated most improvement, and vocabulary, which, in the third place, represents a very important support for the first subcategory. In addition, interaction which is in second place implicitly includes teamwork because the process of language interaction involves the participation of other people. For instance, during the development of this research, this element was observed not only among learners but also with the teacher and students when they wanted to clarify doubts or showing to the teacher the practice of their role-plays.

To sum up, during the implementation of the project and the data gathered from the aspects mentioned by learners in the questionnaires and journals regarding the impact of role-playing in the speaking skills, it is evident that pronunciation and the learning of new vocabulary were improved through the use of role-plays. This means that the use of role-plays in the language classroom in EFL had a positive impact which is supported by the construction of collaborative work and language English interaction. All previous examples provided by the researcher in the explanation of the first and second subcategories support this affirmation. In addition, the strategy of giving students the opportunity to work with their peers in the creation of their role-plays where they exchanged and shared knowledge, opinions, and experiences promotes collaborative work too.

Group work and pair work have been popular in language teaching for many years and have many advantages. They both foster cooperative activity in that the students involved work together to complete a task. They may be developed by discussing a topic, doing a role-play or working at a computer in order to find information from a website for a web quest or they may be writing up a report. In pairs and groups, students tend to participate more actively, and they also have more chance to experiment with the language than is possible in a whole-class arrangement (Harmer, 2007, p.43).

The interaction process with the implementation of role-plays provided evidence that participants interacted in different forms which were illustrated in the excerpts and Figures 4 and 5. This benefitted the development of the students' speaking in a meaningful way which might well be useful for personal and academic language purposes.

To summarize, based on the data analysis, it was evident that the implementation of role-plays in the language classroom gave learners different benefits because it helped students to improve their pronunciation and the learning of new vocabulary through collaborative work promoting language English interaction.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

In this chapter, conclusions, pedagogical implications, limitations, and suggestions for further research are presented taking into account the research question of this study: How does the use of role- playing shape students' speaking performance in an EFL class?

It may be concluded that the constant use of role-plays in the language classroom enhanced students' speaking performance, which could be seen through the role-plays that participants performed in class and by analyzing the students' journals according to each module. In addition, the improvement of speaking performances was also evidenced in students' pronunciation and the vocabulary they used in the presentation of their role-plays.

The implementation of role-plays in the language class and the observation of results led to the conclusion that collaborative work is a useful learning strategy to explore speaking skills because it provides learners with the opportunity to learn by doing, sharing, and promoting language English interaction with the members of their groups and with the teacher. This, in turn, tends to make learners feel more comfortable with the class and feel interested in working because of the support that they feel when they worked in group. According to the participants of this research project, it is preferable to work together than alone.

When learners participated in the creation of their own role-plays and by following the situations and instructions given by the researcher, they worked as autonomous learners experiencing an active role in their own learning process and could show meaningful English interaction bearing in mind their level of proficiency which is A1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference.

Finally, to give students the opportunity to work in groups in the creation of their role-plays was a better way to improve speaking performance and to promote language English

interaction because most of the time learners interacted with their classmates and with the teacher. Learners were aware of the support given by their peers when they had doubts and this factor also helped them to become more familiar with their classmates while sharing their strengths and weaknesses as a team.

Pedagogical implications

This research study suggest that the continued use of role-plays in the foreign language classroom is a beneficial technique English language teachers can implement to improve speaking performance among students. Furthermore, the use of role-plays provides elements, including team work, language interaction, decision making, improvement of pronunciation and vocabulary, no fear of public, among other useful elements, which may well help to overcome the weaknesses learners face regarding speaking in a foreign language like English. In this way, role-plays are useful for children, teenagers, and adult people. In other words, they are useful for any person who wants to learn to speak a foreign language.

Based on my teaching practice, when learners work individually in the achievement of a specific learning goal focused on the development of the speaking performance, learners spend a great deal of time and become stressed. The suggestion is that teachers promote opportunities for learners to work in group in the achievement of common speaking goals. This suggestion is not only for language teachers, but I think it could also be useful for any educator. The researcher found that pair or group work in the language classroom encourage learners to feel more confident to talk, to experience social interaction, to become more autonomous learners finding learning strategies they can share, negotiate, and put into practice to achieve the tasks assigned in the developing of their speaking. Thus, learners can explore their speaking abilities more deeply

and teachers can focus on the overcoming of learners' weaknesses proposing useful, challenging, and meaningful learning strategies.

This study may also help teachers with class organization because it was carried out with a group of twenty five ninth graders and it could be useful for larger groups with different language levels because role-plays involve participants in an active way. In addition, this research may offer elementary language teachers the possibility to engage learners in speaking activities as a way to foster interaction among beginners. I also hope that this study can help language teachers to discover new benefits of role-plays in the language classroom.

Limitations

Limitations of this research project are related to the hours of English of the course which the participants are part of, and the different activities organized by other teachers which affected the development of the project. Time was a huge limitation because it affected the schedule organized for developing the pedagogical activities. In addition, time was claimed by learners to practice their role-plays at school and receive teachers' feedback regarding their speaking performance. It was thus necessary to use extra time during the afternoons to finish this implementation. The drawback with this extracurricular time was that learners arrived at the classroom at different moments and the purpose of the class changed somewhat, learners lost their attention, and time for speaking practice was reduced.

On the other hand, a limitation of this research was the use of technology devices. For instance, the teacher-researcher used the LCD projector to show students samples of role-plays and for making easier explanations regarding grammar, among others elements. For the development of this study the projector was used with some limitations regarding availability because at school there are only three of them. Additionally, the difficulty learners experienced

with pronunciation at the beginning of the pedagogical intervention was a big limitation for this study because of the extra time and activities the teacher-researcher had to implement to help learners to overcome their pronunciation needs.

Further Research

Based on the experience of developing this action research project, further issues to be explored by language teachers or researchers are focused on the improvement of speaking through the creation of social communities where theatre takes place. For this purpose, it would be interesting to explore the implementation of role-plays and theatre for elementary learners with the support of their parents, as a way to integrate them with the foreign language and the institution in a meaningful way. This integration can be possible in the space called "escuela de padres" which is organized by many institutions in Colombia and that is established at INETEC School each academic term. Additionally, writing that was another element which was improved through the implementation of this research project may be explored in the creation of scripts for the plays.

The present study may contribute to the teaching field by offering language teachers the possibility to engage learners with their own learning process by using role-plays which are focused on meaningful topics chosen by learners themselves and by working in peers or groups. This way, teachers can get success of students not only for improving speaking performance but, to improve other language skills like writing.

To sum up, I would like to invite EFL teachers to consider role-plays and collaborative work to promote speaking as a strategy to help students learn a foreign language and that help them become confident enough to express their ideas when speaking. In addition, it could be claimed that the implementation of role-plays in EFL had a positive impact because learners

showed improvement of their pronunciation, they learned new vocabulary, and they also improved their language English interaction by working collaboratively.

Finally, through the development of this action research project the teacher-researcher gained knowledge about the benefits of using role-plays in the language classroom and about collaborative work.

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Appendix A

Initial Questionnaire

INSTITUCIÓN EDUCATIVA TÉCNICA COMERCIAL (INETEC)

NOMBRE: _____FECHA: _____

GRADO: _____

Después de utilizar el juego de roles en el desarrollo de la clase. Por favor responda las siguientes preguntas:

1. ¿Le gustó utilizar el juego de roles en la clase? SI __ NO__ ¿POR QUÉ?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

2. ¿El uso de juego de roles le ayudó a mejorar su expresión oral en inglés durante la clase?

    SI _____ NO _____ ¿POR QUÉ?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

3. ¿Considera usted que el continuo uso de juego de roles en las clases le ayudará a

    mejorar su expresión oral en inglés? SI _____ NO _____ ¿POR QUÉ?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

Gracias por su colaboración y por su tiempo ☺

Appendix B

Final Questionaire

Por favor responda el siguiente cuestionario teniendo en cuenta su proceso de aprendizaje y participación en el proyecto: *Role-play: a way to improve speaking skills among students of English as a foreign language.*

1. ¿Cómo le pareció el desarrollo del proyecto sobre el uso de role-plays en la clase de inglés?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. ¿Mejoró en algún aspecto de la lengua? SI _____ NO _____ ¿Cuál?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

¡Gracias por su colaboración! ☺

Appendix C

Students´ Journal

NOMBRE: _____ FECHA: _____

MODULO N°: _____   TEMA: _____

1. ¿Qué aprendí en este módulo?

   _____
   _____
   _____

2. ¿Mejoré en algún aspecto? ¿Cuál?

   _____
   _____
   _____

3. ¿Qué incidencia tuvo el juego de roles en mi habilidad de expresión oral?

   _____
   _____
   _____

4. ¿Tuve alguna dificultad con el uso de juego de roles? SI _____ NO _____ ¿Cuál?

   _____
   _____
   _____

5. Mi pregunta, comentario o sugerencia para este módulo es:

   _____
   _____
   _____

¡Gracias por su colaboración! ☺

Appendix D

Video Recordings

Para realizar al final de la implementación.

INTEGRANTES: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

FECHA: _____

Teniendo en cuenta los conocimientos adquiridos en los módulos trabajados, prepara un Role-play que será grabado para observar las mejoras que has tenido con el desarrollo de tus habilidades orales.

Appendix E

Principal´s Consent Letter

San Martín de Loba, Bolívar, Junio 5 de 2012

Señor

José Luis Tinoco

Rector

Institución Educativa Técnica Comercial (INETEC)

San Martín de Loba

Apreciado Rector:

Actualmente estoy realizando una investigación titulada "Role-play: a way to improve speaking skills among students of English as a foreign language" dirigida a estudiantes de secundaria de la Institución Educativa Técnica Comercial, la cual busca contribuir y enriquecer los procesos de aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera y al mismo tiempo reorientar las prácticas docentes en la implementación de estrategias metodológicas en el aula.

El objetivo de este estudio es ofrecer a los estudiantes las herramientas necesarias para mejorar su comunicación oral en la lengua extranjera incrementando su vocabulario, a través del uso de Juego de roles en el aula. Cabe anotar que dicha investigación hace parte de mi trabajo de grado de la Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés con énfasis en Ambientes de Aprendizaje Autónomo de la Universidad de la Sabana.

Por lo anterior, comedidamente solicito su consentimiento y colaboración para realizar mi propuesta de investigación, que se llevará a cabo durante el segundo semestre académico del presente año. Esto implica recolectar datos y analizar los resultados, por lo cual debo tener acceso a los escritos de los estudiantes y filmar algunas clases con el fin de conocer y analizar el mejoramiento de las habilidades orales.

Igualmente, a los participantes se les garantizará el uso de nombres ficticios para mantener su identidad en el anonimato, así como estricta confidencialidad con la información que se recolecte. El proyecto no tendrá incidencia alguna en las evaluaciones y notas parciales y/o finales de la asignatura.

Agradezco de antemano su valioso aporte para llevar a buen término mi investigación.

Atentamente,

_____

Luz Amanda Rubiano Camargo

Docente de Inglés

Institución Educativa Técnica Comercial

Appendix F

Students' Consent Letter

San Martín de Loba, Bolívar, Junio 5 de 2012

Señores

ESTUDIANTES GRADO 9°A

Institución Educativa Técnica Comercial (INETEC)

San Martín de Loba

Apreciados Estudiantes:

Actualmente estoy realizando una investigación titulada "Role-play: a way to improve speaking skills among students of English as a foreign language" dirigida a estudiantes de secundaria de la Institución Educativa Técnica Comercial, la cual busca contribuir y enriquecer los procesos de aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera y al mismo tiempo reorientar las prácticas docentes en la implementación de estrategias metodológicas en el aula.

El objetivo de este estudio es ofrecer a los estudiantes las herramientas necesarias para mejorar su comunicación oral en la lengua extranjera incrementando su vocabulario, a través del juego de roles en el aula. Cabe anotar que dicha investigación hace parte de mi trabajo de grado de la Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés con énfasis en Ambientes de Aprendizaje Autónomo de la Universidad de la Sabana.

Por lo anterior, comedidamente solicito su consentimiento y colaboración como participantes de mi propuesta de investigación, que se llevará a cabo durante el segundo semestre académico del presente año. Esto implica recolectar datos y analizar los resultados, por lo cual debo tener acceso a sus escritos y filmar algunas clases con el fin de conocer y analizar el mejoramiento de las habilidades orales.

Igualmente, a los participantes se les garantizará el uso de nombres ficticios para mantener su identidad en el anonimato, así como estricta confidencialidad con la información que se recolecte. El proyecto no tendrá incidencia alguna en las evaluaciones y notas parciales y/o finales de la asignatura.

Agradezco de antemano su valioso aporte para llevar a buen término mi investigación.

Atentamente,

Acepto participar

_____

Luz Amanda Rubiano Camargo   Nombre Estudiante: _____

Docente de Inglés INETEC   Firma: _____

Appendix G

Parents' Consentletter

San Martín de Loba, Bolívar, Junio 5 de 2012

Señores

PADRES DE FAMILIA GRADO 9°A

Institución Educativa Técnica Comercial (INETEC)

San Martín de Loba

Apreciados Padres de Familia

Soy la Docente de Inglés de su de su hijo(a). Muy respetuosamente me dirijo a ustedes porque durante las últimas clases, he podido evidenciar la necesidad de trabajar mucho más el proceso de mejoramiento de las habilidades orales en inglés.

Teniendo en cuenta que debido a la globalización y a las necesidades del mundo moderno, tenemos en el colegio un gran interés en proporcionar a los estudiantes las herramientas necesarias para que sean capaces de comunicarse efectivamente en inglés. Para tal fin, tengo pensado implementar desde las clases de Inglés el uso de Juegos de roles para mejorar la expresión oral. Durante este proceso, los estudiantes generarán diversas ideas a partir de un tema determinado; estas ideas serán discutidas en clase y los estudiantes recibirán pautas específicas para crear role-plays sencillos teniendo en cuenta esas ideas.

De igual manera, este material servirá de apoyo para mi proyecto de grado de La Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés con énfasis en Ambientes de Aprendizaje Autónomo de la Universidad de la Sabana en Bogotá.

Durante las clases, recogeré información en forma de grabaciones en video, escritos de los estudiantes y notas sobre observaciones de algunos cuestionarios. Me gustaría contar con su aprobación o permiso para utilizar la información recolectada durante estos espacios, en los cuales aparecerá su hijo (a).
Al estudiante se le garantizará el uso de nombres ficticios para mantener su identidad en el anonimato y la información recolectada no tendrá incidencia alguna en el porcentaje del plan de inglés.

Cabe anotar, que esta idea ha sido previamente apoyada por el señor José Luis Tinoco González, Rector del colegio y usted podrá tener acceso a mis notas de campo, grabaciones o a su análisis en cualquier momento que lo desee o crea conveniente.

Agradezco su atención y en espera de su autorización para llevar a cabo este proyecto.

Atentamente,

_____
Luz Amanda Rubiano Camargo
Docente de Inglés
Institución Educativa Técnica comercial

Nombre Padre de Familia: _____ Firma: _____
Autorizo: Si _____   No _____

Appendix H

ICELT Lesson Plan

Name of teacher: Luz Amanda Rubiano Camargo	
Institution: Institución Educativa Técnica Comercial – San Martín de Loba, Bolívar	
Date of Observation: Next semester.	Time of observation: 21 hours - Length of module: 3 hours.
Class/grade: 9°	Room: A
Number of students: 25	Average age of Students: 13 - 16
Number of years of English study: 4	Level of students: Elementary Intermediate Advanced

Main Aim:

By the end of the modules students will be able to improve their speaking skills by using role-playing activities.

Subsidiary Aim:

Students will be able to create role-playing dialogues taking into account their previous knowledge and the new ones.

Assumed knowledge:

Language skills that students have include the use of the simple present and simple past with some regular and irregular verbs. They identify some adjectives and their vocabulary is according to A1 level.

Description of language item / skill(s):

Form: Ss will use their previous knowledge.

Meaning: Learning of new words.

Use: Students will use role playing to create dialogues.

Skill(s) and sub skill(s):

Speaking (Fluency and Accuracy):

Speaking as a communicate activity has a kind of scope or area that skills can apply. Speaking needs performance, expression, intonation, stressing, pronunciation, grammar and confidence to explore the idea or opinion" (Sholihah, 2010).

The mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for many second or foreign language learners. Learners consequently often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how well they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency. (Richards,n.d.)

Fluency: Fluency refers to the ability to produce rapid, flowing, natural speech, but not necessarily grammatically correct speech. (Retrieved from http://bogglesworldesl.com/glossary/fluency.htm).

Vocabulary: The speaking vocabulary follows, as a child's thoughts become more reliant on its ability to express itself without gestures and mere sounds. (Retrieved from http://universityofibnkhaldunbogor-indonesia.blogspot.com/2010/01/importance-of-vocabulary-in-english.html).

Materials: Blackboard, notebook, pictures, posters, readings, worksheets, project.

Explain how the aims of the lesson relate to the learners' needs:
They relate in the way how learners use the language to communicate their ideas effectively.

Explain how learners' needs will be addressed in the specific learning environment:
Learner´s needs will be addressed bearing in mind the context where they are and the context where they use the language.

Anticipated problems:

Confusion with the use of role playing.

Problems to connect ideas in speaking.

Planned solutions:

Explaining step by step the way how use role playing activities effectively.

Develop individual, pair, and group activities where learners feel confident with the development of speaking activities.

How do the anticipated problems and planned solutions relate to the above needs analysis?

In the way how learners use the language in a meaningful way.

Appendix I

Students' Final Questionnaire Sample 1

MASTER IN

La Sabana   ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

AUTONOMOUS LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

15

FINAL QUESTIONAIRE

Por favor responda el siguiente cuestionario teniendo en cuenta su proceso de aprendizaje y participación en el proyecto: *Role-playing: a way to improve speaking skills among students of English as a foreign language.*

1. ¿Cómo le pareció el desarrollo del proyecto sobre el uso de role-plays en la clase de inglés?

muy bueno Para nosotros, Por que hemos desarrollado muchas habilidades de expresion Oral y ademas hemos enriquesido mas nuestro Conosimiento hacerca de algunas Palabras en Ingles, y tambien fueron mas Prasticas y divertidas las Clases.

2. ¿Mejoró en algún aspecto de la lengua? SI **X** NO ___ ¿Cuál?

Si mejore mucho en la expresión Oral Por que en los role-plays hacemos mucho Uso de nuevas palabras y mejoramos la pronunciacion.

¡Gracias por su colaboración! ☺

Eirika Herrera Mtnz !!

Appendix J

Students' Final Questionnaire Sample 2

MASTER IN
ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
La Sabana
AUTONOMOUS LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

María Angélica Puerto Centeno

20

DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

FINAL QUESTIONAIRE

Por favor responda el siguiente cuestionario teniendo en cuenta su proceso de aprendizaje y participación en el proyecto: *Role-playing: a way to improve speaking skills among students of English as a foreign language.*

1. ¿Cómo le pareció el desarrollo del proyecto sobre el uso de role-plays en la clase de inglés?

muy bien, me gusto por la temática que utilizamos ya que nunca la había realizado porque es una forma facil y practica para aprender a hablar ingles

2. ¿Mejoró en algún aspecto de la lengua? SI X NO ___ ¿Cuál?

Durante todos y cada uno de los role-play la pronunciación y escritura de palabras, y obtuve un buen conocimiento.

¡Gracias por su colaboración! ☺

Appendix K

Students' Final Questionnaire Sample 3

MASTER IN

La Sabana ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

AUTONOMOUS LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

10

Kevin Gil León

FINAL QUESTIONAIRE   Kevin Gil León

Por favor responda el siguiente cuestionario teniendo en cuenta su proceso de aprendizaje y participación en el proyecto: *Role-playing: a way to improve speaking skills among students of English as a foreign language.*

1. ¿Cómo le pareció el desarrollo del proyecto sobre el uso de role-plays en la clase de inglés?

me parecio muy bueno por que cada vez que haciamos un Role-Play apiendia nuevas Cosas, apiendia nuevas palabra, como pronunciarlas y como manejarlas. verdaderamente para mi esos Roles me parecieron muy importantes, pues me han servido de o mucho en otras partes que he hido y he tenido dialogos con personas que yo manejan el ingles muy bien.

2. ¿Mejoró en algún aspecto de la lengua? SI ___ NO ___ ¿Cuál?

he mejorado en casi todo los Aspectos ya que tengo o una marstra muy buena que maneja el ingles muy bien y Claro nos explica como nadie lo habia hecho, nuestro tucher le decimos de cariño es la mejor que ha llegado a la escuela.

¡Gracias por su colaboración!

Role-play: a way to improve Speaking performance among students of English as a Foreign

Language

Luz Amanda RUBIANO CAMARGO

Research Report submitted

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master in English Language Teaching – Autonomous Learning Environments

Directed by Carolina CRUZ CORZO

Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures

Universidad de La Sabana

Chía, Colombia

November 2013