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USING ROLE PLAYING IN ORAL EXPRESSION SKILLS COURSE: VIEWS OF PROSPECTIVE EFL TEACHERS

Research Article

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Abstract

Conducting the lectures with effective approaches and methods is of prime importance for the acquisition of the necessary skills and competencies in the field of English language teaching. This study aims at determining the opinions of the pre-service teachers of English regarding the effects of the use of role playing technique in expression skills course, which is offered in the 2nd year at the Department of Foreign Languages Education, the problems experienced during the application process and the suggestions for the use of the technique. A semi-structured interview was implemented to gather the data. The data of the research were arranged and interpreted within the framework of the themes created for the purpose of the research with the descriptive analysis technique. The data obtained from the study results generally emphasize that role playing technique is an efficient method for students to improve their expression skills. Based on the results of the study, the application of the role-playing technique, may also be beneficial to the professional development of prospective teachers. Using drama in foreign language learning classes can improve the self-confidence of prospective teachers in terms of applying drama activities in their professional lives. However, when we consider this process as a whole, the difficulties students experience in this process should not be ignored. In order to minimize the problems participants made suggestions about the importance of space and equipment for the role-playing technique to reach its goal efficiently.

Keywords: English expression skills, role-playing technique

1. Introduction

Effective use of a language includes having a good command of reading, listening, speaking and writing as four basic language skills. Foreign language teaching programs are structured around the goals of helping students acquire these skills. Considering the involvement of language user, Widdowson (1978) distinguishes these skills as receptive and productive. While reading and listening belong to receptive skills, speaking and writing are classified as productive skills. Effective foreign language learning requires all four skills to be acquired, so learning foreign languages seems to be both a complex and time-consuming process (Kuśnierek, 2015).

In Turkey, to ensure effective foreign language teaching, English as a foreign language (EFL) classes have been introduced to the curriculum as early as the second grade. However, it is seen that increasing the number of lessons only is not sufficient to increase the quality of foreign language teaching. Undoubtedly, English teachers play an important role for students to acquire English language skills, because the conduction of English lessons according to effective teaching and learning approaches and methods depends primarily on teachers' having good command of language skills, content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Supporting language teaching, especially through different methods and activities, positively affects learning outcomes. In this sense, having different methods and technical knowledge to increase

professional competencies in teacher education is within the scope of professional knowledge courses.

Teacher education curriculum, which consists of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and general culture courses, aims to provide prospective teachers with skills and competencies related to their fields. Conducting the lessons with effective approaches and methods is of prime importance for the acquisition of the necessary skills and competencies.

The syllabus of the expression skills course that prospective English language teachers take in the first semester of the second year includes skills of speaking in front of the community, preparation and presentation of a speech, preparing and making comprehensive research-based presentations, examination of successful presentations in terms of content, form and suitability of audiovisual elements, verbal and written communication skills to be used in business environments such as interview, social environments, phone calls, presentations, meeting management, writing resume and letter of application. It was thought that it would be beneficial to use interactive methods that require active participation of students in acquiring these skills.

1.1. Literature Review

Many studies carried out both in Turkey and abroad have a positive impact on the development of learning outcomes of teaching courses with different methods and techniques in foreign language teaching. One of these methods, the drama method, is regarded to be useful for achieving learning outcomes effectively.

Drama is defined as the process of activities aimed at extemporarily restructuring a concept, behavior, sentence, idea, experience or event with the help of old cognitive patterns by developing plays in a group work, using theater techniques such as improvisation and role playing. Drama includes different techniques such as role playing, simulation, sketch, parody and pantomime. Role playing is the dramatization of a thought, situation, problem or event by an entire group or by a few people selected on a stage. In the role-playing technique, students assume the roles of the people and objects in the scenario and act out (Elitok Kesici, 2015). The purpose of playing a role is to teach a concept or develop a skill or an ability (empathy, communication, etc.). If the student is afraid to speak in front of the group as himself, he can speak in another person's role more easily. Reviving the personality of others and thinking like someone else helps the student develop more positive behavior patterns (Gözütok, 2006).

Budden (2004) defines role playing as a speaking activity in which one either puts himself in someone else's shoes or enters an imaginary state as himself. Contemporary theories about second language acquisition support approaches advocating that drama activities improve speaking skills in foreign language learning and thus accelerate language learning in general. Research shows that using drama techniques such as playing a role in foreign language teaching is effective in gaining various language skills, creating a positive classroom atmosphere and reducing language anxiety. The results of the study conducted by Demircioğlu (2010) reveal the positive effect of drama activities on vocabulary learning. The results of the study conducted by Atas (2014) support that drama techniques reduce students' speaking anxiety in learning English. Pointing out that traditional foreign language lesson hours are limited in school programs, Schenker (2017) studied the effects of extracurricular drama activities on the language skills of students of different age groups.

Role playing is very important in teaching English because it gives students the opportunity to practice communicating in different social contexts and in different social roles. The benefits of using the role-playing technique in the classroom can be listed as follows (Dorathy and Mahalakshmi, 2011): i. Role playing helps students cope with real-life situations and commonly used expressions, and gets them to think, ii. Role playing helps students work

together in teams or groups where they communicate to understand each other, because role playing is not simple actions such as reading or duplicating information from a piece of paper, iii. Role playing can be adapted to the needs of students in certain situations they can use certain words to achieve a specific learning outcome; iv. Role playing gives students more responsibility in learning and stimulates interaction; vi. Role playing offers students the chance to learn, assess their progress and learn English.

It is believed that playing role improves speaking fluency of students. In role plays, language functions, such as apologizing, greeting etc. are used more compared to other traditional language activities. The focus of the students should be drawn to the transmission of meaning rather than the proper use of language. Therefore, teachers can improve students' speaking skills in any social situation through role play. It means that students are provided with conditions that require more speaking than that is required by their curriculum (Porter-Ladousse, 1987 cited in Kowalska, 1991). Through role playing, students have the opportunity to develop the language required in social contexts.

Smith (1984), who believes that theatrical acting training show parallelism with foreign language learning, emphasizes that players and students share the same goal and face the same obstacles when dealing with new roles and new language in delivering the desired message. Smith argues that applying techniques used in theatrical art to language learning will be beneficial for language students in linguistic and social-linguistic terms. Role playing technique is reported to improve the problem solving and communication skills, and to support the development of students and their self-confidence. Çelen and Akar-Vural (2009) emphasize that language skills teaching programs, including theatrical art, allow students to create an imaginary world. This, according to Savignon (1983), gives students the opportunity for real use of the foreign language by discovering situations that they will never encounter in class settings.

In a study conducted by Akpınar Dellal and Kara (2010), the levels of awareness of foreign language prospective teachers and teachers about drama techniques were examined. According to the data obtained, although the level of awareness, knowledge and skills of prospective teachers and teachers about drama techniques is generally good, 90% of the teachers who participated in the questionnaire find themselves and education they received in drama techniques insufficient.

In the study conducted by Dunn and Stinson (2011), the effect of language teachers' having theatrical experience on their classroom applications of drama activities in language teaching programs was examined. The results of the research revealed that the artistic / theatrical experience levels of teachers who use drama techniques in language teaching lessons have an effect on the success of second language learners.

It can be said that experiencing different methods and techniques in courses will be effective in helping the pre-service English teachers to acquire language abilities, as well as skills of using different methods and techniques in their prospective lessons. Within the scope of the research, role playing technique was used in the expression skills lesson. It is thought that getting the opinions of prospective teachers about the use of role-playing technique will provide information about the effectiveness, strengths and weaknesses of the technique.

1.2. Research Questions

The aim of this study is to determine the opinions of the pre-service teachers of English regarding the effects of the use of role playing technique in expression skills course, which is offered in the 2nd grade at the Department of Foreign Languages Education, the problems

experienced during the application process and the suggestions for the use of the technique. For this main purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are the opinions of English prospective teachers regarding how role-playing technique affects their expression skills in the Expression Skills course?
2. What are the opinions of the English language prospective teachers regarding the problems / difficulties they faced during the application of the role-playing technique in the Expression Skills course?
3. What are the suggestions of the prospective English teachers regarding the use of role-playing technique in the lecture skills course?

2. Method

2.1. Design

This study, which attempts to determine the opinions of prospective English teachers regarding the use of role-playing technique in the expression skills course, is a case study, which is one of the qualitative research methods. Case study in qualitative research is related to intensive study of an event (Glesne, 2012; Punch, 2005). Factors related to a situation (environment, individuals, events, processes, etc.) are investigated with a holistic approach and the focus is on how they affect the situation and how they are affected (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). One of the main components of the term education is the process. Educational research contains information about the process and how the research group was affected in the process. Case studies are used when research questions are related to the process and allow to analyze the process in a context-dependent manner (Ozan Leymun, Odabaşı and Kabakçı Yurdakul, 2017). This study aimed to find out the effects of drama activities on English language skills of 16 students who took the expression skills course and to reveal the current situation based on the views of the students.

2.2. Participants

The study group was determined according to the typical case sampling, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods that allows in-depth analysis of situations that are considered to have rich information. The study group consisted of 16 students (6 males, 10 females) who took the course in the 2nd grade at the Department of Foreign Language Education. The students in the study group were coded as S1 - S16 according to the number of participants.

2.3. Data Collection

The data of the study was collected via questions prepared reviewing the literature and examining the studies on the subject. The questions aimed to reveal the opinions of students about the effects of the role-playing technique on the expression skills in English expression skills course, the challenges they faced during the application of the role-playing technique, and their suggestions regarding the use of this technique. The questions were reviewed and corrected based on expert opinions. The questions asked to the participants in the semi-structured interviews are as follows: 1. What are your opinions about how the role-playing technique applied in the expression skills course affects your expression skills? 2. What kind of problems did you experience during the application of the role-playing technique? 3. What are your suggestions regarding the use of role-playing technique in the expression skills course? Semi-structured interviews were made with the prospective teachers, and the interviews were recorded with a voice recorder.

2.4. Data Analysis

The data of the research were arranged and interpreted within the framework of the themes created for the purpose of the research with the descriptive analysis technique. In this approach,

one summarizes and interprets their findings through the lens of pre-determined themes. In this analysis, direct quotations are often included to reflect the views of individuals interviewed or observed (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). In this context, the main themes of the research have been created to be in compliance with the research questions. The first main theme of the research is how role playing technique affects the expression skills, the second main theme is problems / challenges encountered in the implementation of role-playing technique, and the third main theme is the suggestions for the application of role-playing technique in the expression skills course. When the views related to each theme are examined, the views emerged were descriptively reported as sub-themes and supported with direct quotations. Voice recordings were transcribed based on student views. By reading the written data with a holistic approach, sub-themes that are intensively emphasized for each theme are identified. Students' views on sub-themes were interpreted by giving direct quotations under the main theme titles.

2.5. Validity & Reliability

In qualitative research, "validity" refers to the accuracy of scientific findings and "reliability" refers to the repeatability of scientific findings (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). The data collection tool used in the research was arranged as a semi-structured interview form. The interview questions were prepared based on the literature review in a way to reflect the characteristics of a case study, and shaped by presenting them to the expert opinions. As the study is a case study, the researcher strengthened the credibility of the research through long interactions with participants and depth-focused data collection. In the research, transferability was increased in the research through detailed explanations and direct quotations. Also, in determining the sub-themes, two experts read the data with an aim to determine reliability by making comparisons.

3. Findings

In this section, the opinions of prospective teachers regarding the use of role playing technique in the expression skills course, *effects of role playing technique on expression skills, the challenges they faced in the implementation of role playing technique and suggestions about the implementation of role playing technique* are descriptively explained in themes.

3.1. Findings about How Role-Playing Technique Affects Expression Skills in Expression Skills Course

When the questions aimed at revealing the effect of role playing technique on expression skills are examined, it is seen that interviewees expressed the following themes: *adjusting tone, controlling excitement, overcoming fear of speaking in public, effective transmission of message, preparing a presentation, pronunciation and diction, body language (eye contact, posture), self-confidence and courage, fun, social interaction cooperation, other language skills (writing) and vocabulary, vocational preparation (gaining the ability to apply the technique), positive classroom atmosphere (fun), assuming different roles and awareness.*

3.1.1. Adjusting the tone of voice

Participants emphasized the effect of role-playing technique applied in the lecture on *adjusting the tone of voice*. S1 states that "*I had never made a presentation before the community, we learned and practiced better with the techniques and strategies we applied across the classroom, how to adjust our tone of voice, and how to convey a message across the community.*". This statement supports the proposition that this practice is effective in reaching the objectives of the course. S2 stated that:

As I said, it (expression skill) is a skill that requires speaking in front of the society. And you try to pay attention to such things as deciding whether to make eye contact, adjusting

the tone of voice; you try to speak with a proper diction. I definitely think that playing a role has a great contribution as these make up a big part of expression skills".

This expression suggests that drama allows students to improve their expression skills in the classroom. The opinion that this technique is absolutely compatible with the objectives of the lesson is expressed by S3 as follows:

For example, the objectives of our lesson are to be able to address to a specific audience or a certain community, to prepare and present a speech, to choose the messages appropriate for this audience and to use technology effectively. I think that we can develop these skills effectively with this technique and we can benefit from its effects and we properly realize and acquire them.

Comparing traditional presentations used to increase effective presentation skills in English with the role-playing technique, S11 stated that *"First of all, we felt more comfortable playing on the stage, for example, compared to normal presentations, we were more comfortable playing a role. This made a positive contribution to our ability to use tone of voice"*.

Whether in daily life or in professional life, everyone knows how important the tone of voice is in the transmission of a message. It can be said that it is possible to have an effective tone of voice thanks to breathing techniques. It is clearly seen from the expressions of the students that the role-playing technique is very effective in adjusting the tone of voice, which is regarded as one of the public speaking skills.

3.1.2. Controlling excitement

Under the public speaking theme, it is seen that the participants mostly emphasize *controlling excitement aspect*. S3 expresses the positive effects of the role-playing technique on her/him as follows:

I am a little excited when I get on the stage, but when I started to play my role, I realized that my excitement was decreasing. It is a positive situation for me to get less excited when I go on stage.

S6, on the other hand, explains what this technique they use in their expression skills course offers to them as follows: *"We also beat our excitement by conveying what we want to tell using body language, by adjusting the tone of voice, and by expressing ourselves in this way"*. S7 states that *"That day, I had an individual presentation later in the class hour. Thanks to role-playing, I was able to control my excitement and body language at that time. And this has already been very positively reflected in my individual presentation."* In her statement, she says that this experience on stage was reflected positively on her performance in other lessons and she learned to control her excitement thanks to this technique.

3.1.3. Overcoming the fear of public speaking

Fear of public speaking is seen as a problem area for a significant number of students. S16 expresses a similar experience of overcoming their fears:

I was afraid of not being able to speak in front of the stage and the community I think role playing as a technique requires a lot of practice. Since it was a group work, the support of my friends was effective in overcoming this fear.

S10 explains that it was exciting for him to find himself on stage in front of the class, and later he overcame his excitement, fear and received positive feedback with this technique. S9, on the other hand, states that he is aware of the fact that he has stage fear, but at first he does not think that this technique will be effective in overcoming stage fear. S9 explains that this idea changed in the following weeks by saying *"Frankly, I was afraid, because I had stage*

fright. When I started using this method, I realized myself, I got over my fear.” This expression by this participant may be perceived as a proof that his fears disappear without any special effort as he adopts the role-playing technique. S1 expresses the negative effect of the technique by voicing the feeling that he experienced before the presentation with the role playing technique *“...before my presentation I was afraid that I would do something wrong ...”* *this is the worst negative feeling I have ever had...*” She tries to explain the reason for this by the fact that s/he had almost no stage experience before. If we interpret what S1 said about the effects of the technique with his own words, it can be perceived that this *“short drama activity”* has helped her overcome her excitement to speak in public and created a foundation for her future presentations.

3.1.4. Effective transmission of the given message

The participants expressed their views on the effect of role-playing technique on their ability to effectively deliver the given message. In their views about this dimension, which coincides exactly with the objectives of the narrative skills course, students believe that they have developed their ability to address to people, to express their thoughts to the public properly, and to appropriately convey a message to a certain community. S1 expressed his opinion as follows *“... we learned and practiced better how to convey a message before an audience. We learned how to give a message, how to adjust our voice, how to control our excitement.”* It can also be considered as evidence that the participants are aware that these qualities, which they emphasized when talking about the effects of role-playing technique, will be important for them in their professional lives. S4 expresses his experience with this statement: *“... you have never been in front of the community, and this opportunity for you can make you speak more confidently and more comfortably.”* By saying *“... to be able to express oneself, to master and to explain it well”*, S6 indicates his belief that the technique has a strong effect on foreign language expression skills. Believing that this technique used in the lecture lesson improves the ability to appeal to people and supports the larger communities, S12 supports the opinions of the participants who share their opinions on this issue. By evaluating this experience in the expression skills lesson as an opportunity offered to them, S10 points out the positive effect of the role-playing technique by saying:

If we were not in such an organization, perhaps we would be deprived of the chance and ability to express ourselves correctly and we would not be able to express our thoughts to society properly. Thanks to this drama technique, it was possible to express our thoughts and ourselves to the society correctly.

It is emphasized by the participants that the way the message is conveyed is as important as the content of the presentation for any purpose.

3.1.5 Preparing a presentation

As can be seen from the participant's opinions, the stage experience was probably an activity for many of the teacher candidates that they encountered for the first time in their student life. Therefore, the participants pay particular attention to the pre-performance preparatory stage in order to be successful on the stage. Speaking of the effect of the role-playing technique on her narrative skills at the preparation phase of the presentation and in line with the objectives of the lesson, S3 states that *“it was a good experience to be able to produce content suitable for the level of my audience when I present.”* uses the expression. Emphasizing the importance of pre-presentation preparation in making the presentation effectively, S4 is of the opinion that a planned and disciplined preparation before the presentation provides self-confidence and comfort in speaking to the community: *“We used a new technique and when I apply something new about any subject, I am making a very good plan. So, I'm getting very well prepared on*

that topic." S8 stated that "they were very nervous at the beginning of the preparation phase, and that they were very happy when they realized that they succeeded when they started working after the consensus was reached on the content of the presentation. *"But when we later decided on the subject of the text and got together and started working, the rest came easily after the first sentence."* S11 says that the preparation process before the presentation started with the creation of the whatsapp group, then they determined the subject by brainstorming and continued with the distribution of tasks. S11 pointing out that they paid attention to all details in the preparation phase such as appropriate role distribution, tools and equipment they will use, rehearsal days to meet indicated that they were successful on the stage at the end of such preparation process by saying: *"We all came prepared, communicated between friends, and when I got there, I was making a presentation for the first time, I was excited, but I think I did very well."* As can be seen from the opinions of the prospective teachers participated the study, it can be understood that the preparation stage before the presentation coincides with the preparation of a teacher. The teacher preparing a lesson plan somewhat guarantees an efficient lesson presentation. It can be thought that this experience of prospective teachers in the practice of role-playing technique will be positively reflected on their professional lives.

3.1.6. Pronunciation and diction

S5, one of the participants who emphasized the importance of pronunciation and diction in communicating the message effectively while speaking in front of the community, stated after the application of role-playing technique that *"I realized that I had to improve myself on pronunciation"*, which indicates the conclusion he reached as a result of his experience. S9 expresses that pronunciation and diction improvement as the strongest aspect of the role-play technique *"In terms of speaking, you become more fluent and more understandable. We can talk without getting stuck. I think it is effective on these issues"*. Believing that pronunciation and diction are an important part of narration, S2 says that they take care to perform their roles with proper pronunciation and diction in order to make their speech fluent during the stage performance. Expressing his thoughts on pronunciation and diction during the rehearsals before they act out, S13 expresses his thoughts as follows: *"I can say that my speaking in the class improved as well. Maybe I will speak in front of a crowded community in the future, maybe I did a rehearsal for this."* S16 supports the opinions of his friends, who expressed its positive effects on pronunciation and diction by saying that *"The role-playing technique we applied in the lesson helped us speak more fluently."* It can be considered natural for foreign language teacher candidates to attach importance to diction, pronunciation and fluency in expression. Considering the challenges they face in learning foreign languages, it can be thought that role playing technique is a very effective method in this regard.

3.1.7. Body language (eye contact, posture)

Majority of the participants think that role-playing technique is a very effective tool in developing skills that are considered as striking during presentation, such as body language, eye contact, appropriate mimics, and stage stance. S7 stated:

Role-playing is an activity that requires us to actively use body language, we also paid attention to eye contact on the stage and paid attention to our tone of voice. So I think these have a positive effect on us. It was in line with our goals.

Stating that he has a general interest in stage plays and is willing to work with the first group in the first week of practice, S10 links his success on stage to body language, eye contact, gesture, mimic, and eye contact practices during rehearsals. S10 believes that these skills are important in expressing themselves effectively to the community *"I think I express myself well with my body language and tone of voice."* S5 by stating that *"It shows us how important it is*

to use our tone of voice as teacher candidates...” emphasizes the strength of the role playing technique. It is known that being able to use body language, eye contact, voice tone effectively is as important as the content explained to the audience in classroom communication. The posture of the teacher and his ability to use the mimics properly, transforms him into an effective source of motivation during the learning process and saves the environment from being boring. It is understood from the participant's opinions that the role-playing technique is a good tool for foreign language teacher candidates to develop these skills.

3.1.8 Self-confidence and courage

Descriptive analysis of the findings also reveals the social cultural and psychological effects of role-playing technique on students. In this relationship, the opinions of the students were regarded as overcoming their shyness, gaining self-confidence and courage. S14 stated:

I am a very shy person, as I said I have never done anything like this before and this practice really helped me overcome shyness. It helped me to be a more confident person because being in front of that audience on stage is definitely not an easy thing to me.

Believing that the way to achieve academic success passes through self-confidence and courage, prospective teachers think that the main task of creating academic courage is up to teachers. Teachers apply different methods and techniques in order to give students confidence and courage in the classroom. In this regard, as one of the teacher candidates who argue that role playing technique is an effective tool, S8 states that *“It provides self-confidence in guiding students to do teamwork, enable them to combine their thoughts in a composition, to share roles and to achieve this in front of a community.”*

3.1.9. Entertainment

Majority of the participant students also mentioned entertainment aspect even while expressing their opinions about different dimensions. They stated they had a lot of fun during the presentation on the stage and in the preparation stage. S13 stated they had fun in every stage of the experience by saying that *“We can say that we had a lot of fun during the creation of the script, it was a very enjoyable experience. Then we rehearsed and had fun in the same way during the rehearsals.”* S10 also thinks that they have a pleasant experience as well as difficulties by saying that: *“It was a really nice and fun experience because we had a lot of fun, knitted up, we always found each other working in harmony with different people, not always with our closest friends.”* It is known that game-based education has positive effects on achievements, improving learning skills and ensuring the long-term persistence of the knowledge gained. The pre-service teachers, who believed that learning with fun allows students to get motivated and learn faster, stated that the role-playing technique is effective in this sense. The statement of S15 expresses this belief *“In fact, it encouraged us to speak English first because it was fun and we learned daily expressions because role plays involve a lot of daily expression.”*

3.1.10. Social interaction

It is known that as role play naturally involves teamwork, it is an activity that contributes to the social interaction of students. Thanks to this activity, pre-service teachers stated that they had the opportunity to meet the students, with whom they had never been friends in the classroom, and to expand their social relations. S8 states that *“By directing students to teamwork, enabling them to combine their thoughts in the form of a composition, to share roles, this technique instills team spirit and causes students to come together to share and brainstorm.”* This enables prospective teachers to strengthen their social ties. The opinions of S2 support this idea:

Then when we said that we needed more people than our friends, they never turned it down, they did not break us they supported us. I also felt the kindness of this support, frankly, in a friendly environment. Therefore, as I said, I think it is an effective method not only on the stage, but also in terms of friendship relations.

Participants who describe the performance before and on the stage think that the role-playing contributes a lot to social interaction and making new friends.

3.1.11. Cooperation

Concepts such as social interaction, teamwork, group activities lead to collaboration, role sharing and task sharing. Participants believe that the role-playing instills them the spirit of collaboration. S3's sincere expression that *"I also adopted the group work very well, because I could never have created a script by myself. Although I have added something, we have achieved something thanks to the group"* proves the spirit of collaboration. One of the distinctive features of team spirit is to contribute not only to his/her own success but also to that of the other members of the team. Collaborating and brainstorming at the preparatory stage, determining topics, distributing roles equally, and rehearsing are activities that require collaboration. S12's statement that *"Going on the stage and acting out the scene was not an easy task. But I think that I was able to adapt comfortably as I do not have much difficulty in this aspect. And I tried to help other friends about this..."* indicates that S12 supported his teammates even on stage. Thanks to cooperation in group activities, students acquire new knowledge and skills from each other by mutual support. On this issue, S16 described his own experience as follows: *"Thanks to the rehearsals we did with my friends before the stage, my self-confidence increased on the stage. As it was a group work, the support of my friends also had an effect on overcoming this fear."* Conveying his thoughts in line with the opinions of his friends, S4 shared the positive effects of the technique in terms of collaborative learning by bringing together different talents. As understood from the expression of S14 that *"Then, we come together (we are always together in this process, we are in a group), according to the characteristics of the people we have distributed roles... If we have, we also determined the costumes by helping"* successful implementation of the role-play technique requires social interaction and cooperation among the group members.

3.1.12. Other language skills (writing) and vocabulary

Findings also reveal the effect of role-playing technique on students' language skills. Participants argue that the technique has an impact on different language skills than individuals. While some of the participants emphasized speaking skills, S13 stated that *"I can also say that my speaking has improved in the classroom"*, P16 marked that *"It helped us speak more fluently."* and S9 maintained that *"My speaking improved a bit more."* S14 explains the technique's effect on grammar, and S15 explains its effect on vocabulary. S15 states that *"We also learned more daily expressions because role-plays include a lot of such expression. Thus, the structures remained in our minds better and role-plays also improved our English in terms of vocabulary."* From the statement of S16 that *"While writing scripts with my group friends, we wanted to create something creative and interesting"*, we understand that while writing the script, prospective teachers had the opportunity to improve their English writing skills.

3.1.13. Professional preparation (gaining the ability to apply the technique)

The majority of the participants are of the opinion that the skills acquired through role playing technique will be very useful for them in teaching. It is stated by the participants that the skills required for the efficient presentation of the information that a teacher will convey to the student in the classroom environment are in line with the achievements of the expression

skills lesson in the program. It is emphasized that the technique is an effective tool in terms of professional preparation.

By stating that "...because teaching is a stage art and drama and theater are also the most important part of the stage." S6 compares teaching to stage art and teacher to an actor on stage, and points out that both should acquire similar techniques and skills in terms of professional preparation. Findings show that the vast majority of the participants think that the application of role-playing technique is very effective in prospective teachers' acquisition of these skills. S1 states that "...and since we will be teachers in the future, we need to use our tone of voice and body language effectively. Thanks to role-playing, we can overcome them and improve ourselves." S5 points out that "... It shows us how important it is to use our tone of voice as teacher candidates." With the following statement of S10 "We are currently studying teaching and I think that when we become teachers, we will express ourselves well to students using this technique." These indicate that the participants positively evaluated the effects of the technique professionally.

3.1.14. Positive classroom atmosphere (fun)

The fact that achieving positive and fun class environments facilitates language learning process is evidenced by field studies conducted by many foreign language experts. The statement of S12 that "Pretty fun lesson" is evidence of the positive reflection of the technique they tried in the classroom environment. S15 also states that they had fun on the stage during the presentation in the classroom, and also during the preparation phase as they compile the script. Comparing it to the traditional approach, S5 argues that they have had a very fun lesson by including their teacher in the process by stating that "As far as I can see, both my friends and our teacher had a lot of fun. Unlike other lessons, we were learning with fun, it seemed more attractive to us." The role-playing technique is compatible with the student-centered learning approach, which is evidenced by the students' views that the teacher sides with the students and takes over the role of the supervisor by changing the teacher's authoritarian role.

3.1.15. Taking different roles

It is known that taking different roles is a very effective technique in the elimination of stressful obstacles such as "I cannot do", "I will be disgraced", which occurs to learners when speaking foreign languages. In this case, language learners adopt the identities as a result of their roles and during the conversation, they think that possible mistakes are made by their new identities, not by themselves. This causes them to overcome their speech anxiety and excitement. The findings reveal that the statements of the participants are also in this direction. S2 state his/her feelings as follows: "I felt more comfortable in this technique in front of the class compared to presentations. Because you take on another identity and you feel as if someone else is in this environment for you, not for you." S6 thinks that "Putting yourself in a different role, putting yourself in a different role other than yourself..." requires self-confidence. A self-confident teacher is one of the factors underlying success in the learning process. It is understood that the ability to play different roles required by the role-playing technique has a positive effect on the teaching and learning process, either directly or indirectly.

3.1.16. Awareness

Participants highlight the awareness raising feature of this activity while explaining the effects of role playing. S8 stated that "Being able to do something that I haven't tried before and the feeling that I could do it also gave me happiness and awareness." S13 stated that "I turned 3 balls at the same time. Actually, I didn't think I would be able to show my ability in front of the class. I achieved this and realized my own talent as well." S14 stated that "...I think it reveals different talents. What talents people have is revealed when using this technique. I

realized that I could use body language and I had the ability to act.” These statements verify awareness raising effect of role playing. Again, S2 thinks that one of the strengths of the technique is that it allows to understand that people tend to different things and that they are talented for different subjects. S2 expressed his feelings as follows: *“In fact, I felt a little more relaxed as I realized that this was not that difficult. I couldn't believe what I did, so I was even surprised how easily I took it.”*. These statements show us that, evaluating themselves and their peers throughout the application of the role-playing technique, the students discovered different talents they and their peers have and gather around the opinion that they should not have prejudice in their professional life or in their relationships.

3.2. Findings Regarding the Problems / Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of Role-Playing Technique in the Expression Skills Course

Problems / challenges encountered in the implementation of the technique were determined to be *“the fear of failure, unwillingness, avoiding responsibility, lack of space and time, memorizing lines, crowded class, shyness, role distribution, finding a topic and writing a script.”*

3.2.1. The fear of failure

While the participants evaluated the process from the beginning to the end, some of them stated that they had fear of failure at the beginning of the role-play activities. S1 stated that *“I was worried about doing anything wrong. This is the worst feeling I had before I made my presentation.”* S2 stated that *“When you asked, I had a bias that I absolutely would not be able to do that. Not only me, but also my friends, thought that we cannot do such a work on the stage, I cannot do it absolutely.”* S9 stated that *“Obviously I was afraid because I had stage fright...”* S10 stated that *“First of all, I was a little frightened, I thought about how I could do, what I could do, I even kept asking myself if I should get involved.”* All these expressions indicate that the students have a fear of being unsuccessful because they have no stage experience before. It is known that the fear of failure is a very effective factor in people's life, for example, it is known to be a serious obstacle to action and achieving a goal. One of the biggest negative effects of fear of being unsuccessful on people is that it leads to reluctance. This is expressed as a problem in group work. Findings from the opinions of the participants also confirm these beliefs.

3.2.2. Unwillingness

The participants expressed the lack of willingness of some of their classmates as a problem / difficulty in the process. S3, one of the participants who expressed his opinion unwillingness, stated that he saw this situation as a problem and said that *“some students may feel that they will be embarrassed.”* and he actually links it with the fear of failure. S8 stated that *“...not everyone in the group is eager or motivated enough...”* S9 stated that *“I think it will be more efficient when the student voluntarily participates.”* S10 stated *“I would like students to be more volunteered.”* With these statements indicating their opinions on this matter, they evaluate the reluctance of some of his friends in the activity as a problem they experienced during the application of his technique.

3.2.3. Avoiding responsibility

As in all group activities, prospective teachers emphasize that group members are to take responsibility for the success of this activity. Group members who had problems in this regard during the event express this situation as their difficulty. When evaluating the process, S3 states that one of the drawbacks of the group work is that some group members are left behind, *“...or people who fail to take responsibility pretend to have worked without being involved in group*

work. According to S3, *“It can be difficult in the process to keep evasion of responsibility under control”*.

3.2.4. Lack of space and time

Finding a suitable place for rehearsals and allocating sufficient time for rehearsals is also included in the problems / difficulties experienced during the implementation of the role-playing technique. Two of the preservice teachers, S6 and S10, stated that they had difficulty in getting together *because of space and time shortage*. S6 states this situation *“There was a little shortage of place and time. Meeting and working together was a bit difficult”*. S10 stated that *“... We could not come together to rehearse; ... I wish we could work harder and presented something better...”* It is understood from the statement that they have a time and place shortage.

3.2.5. Memorizing lines

While the participants talked about the problems in the process, they also mentioned the difficulty they experienced in memorizing lines. Only two of the teacher candidates, S7 and S10, stated that they had problems memorizing their lines. S7 explains that he forgot his lines due to excitement, *“At times, I forgot my lines when I was excited.”* S10 says this is due to time constraints and states that *“Of course, from time to time we had difficulties, we couldn't memorize some parts, we couldn't rehearse...”*

3.2.6. Crowded class

S10 as a teacher candidate who tells that crowded calls is a disadvantage in the implementation of such a technique states that *“Classes are generally crowded and it is quite natural to get excited, we might forget what we will say and our motivation can decrease due to the fear of being disgraced.”*

3.2.7. Shyness

According to the participants, shyness is also one of the challenges encountered in the application of the technique. At the beginning of the process some of the teacher candidate explained that they suffered from shyness and it is due to different reasons. S9 stated that *“As I said before, I did not think this method would be effective. Obviously I was afraid because I had stage fright.”* S1 stated that *“I was worried about doing anything wrong. The reason for this was that I had no chance to experience presentation before.”* S2 stated that *“... I was biased that I absolutely cannot do.”* S8 stated that *“It was something that me and my group friends didn't do before and were worried about 'if we can we do it' or 'where we should start...”* and S3 said *“We were very excited when we started, none of us had that much idea, we were bewildered at first even if we had a little experience...”* As it can be seen from these statements, the participants generally experienced shyness at the beginning of the application process because they did not have enough experience in this regard.

3.2.8. Role distribution

One of the problems usually encountered in collaborative group work is the distribution of tasks. Some students felt as if they are doing most of the work, so some feel excluded. The participants express this issue in the application of the role-playing technique. Teacher candidates who stated that inequality may arise in groups if roles are not properly distributed and regard this situation as a problem faced in the process. S8 stated that *“Failure to share roles correctly and not being eager or motivated enough for everyone in the group can be a weak side.”* and S10 marked that *“... We had a hard time trying to act out the drama, there were inequalities in the role distribution.”* These comments indicate that difficulties may arise

in case of inequality in distribution of tasks in group work, and difficulties may arise in this process.

3.2.9. Finding a topic and writing a script

At the beginning of the process, most of the teacher candidates state that they had difficulty in *finding topics and creating texts* and after they had overcome this problem in the process, they entered into a fun process. S14 stated that *"We just had a hard time choosing the subject, whether it should just involve message or fun..."* S16 states, *"While writing scripts with my teammates, we wanted to create something creative and interesting. But this was not an easy process. We tried to find the best by brainstorming. This was a little difficult for us."* S5 stated that *"We had no problems. We thought what to do about choosing a topic but we had a lot of fun when we watched ourselves in rehearsal and after doing it in the classroom."* S7 stated *"... It may have been because we had no such experience before, or because we had our first experience, we had a hard time preparing the script"* and likewise, S13 stated *"We tried to find a topic first, maybe we might have some difficulty at that point..."* S15's statement that *"... but for example, finding a topic has been a bit of a problem"* indicates that they had difficulty in determining the topic of the play and writing the script.

3.3. Findings Related to the Suggestions for the Application of Role-Playing Technique in Expression Skills Lesson

Participants made the following suggestions for the application of role playing technique in the course: *this technique should be applied more frequently, sufficient time should be given for studies, individual assessment should be made, appropriate space and equipment should be provided, subject selection should be determined in advance and equal role sharing should be ensured, willingness should be ensured and English Drama Club should be formed.*

3.3.1. This technique should be applied more frequently

As it turns out from the findings, some of the participants found the application efficient and asked for its frequent use and continuation. For more frequent implementation of the role-play technique, S1 suggested that *"I think we can do more professional presentations, it should be used more often"* and similarly, S11 stated that *"I think we should continue using this technique"* and *"its content should consist of current issues to attract the attention of the audience."*

3.3.2. Sufficient time should be given for studies

Some of the participants emphasized that enough time should be given to the groups for the application of the technique. S2, who emphasized the need for enough time to achieve more successful results in the application of role-playing technique, complained that they could not enjoy the opportunity by saying that *"That's why we felt it was over just when we got into this event."* S5, who shares the same feelings, stated *"If we had more time, we could have better conveyed the message we wanted to give."* As seen from the opinions and suggestions of the students, the role-playing technique, one of the collaborative group work, requires proper planning from the beginning.

3.3.3. Individual assessment should be made

One of the participants emphasizes individual evaluation as well as group evaluation. Even if role playing is a group work S3, who thinks that individual evaluation is necessary stated that *"I think behind-the-scenes shootings can be done to see who is working on how much, or to be able to control ourselves and make self-criticism."* Teacher candidates think that such a task should be given by the teacher.

3.3.4. Appropriate space and equipment should be provided

Participants *emphasize the importance of space and equipment* for the implementation of such techniques as role play. The participants, who pointed out that the current classroom environment, fixed tables and chairs, and limited stage cause difficulties in the application of this technique, shared the belief that more efficient results can be achieved if appropriate space and necessary equipment are provided. S10 stated that *"A more theatrical environment can be created"*. Similarly, S5 said that *"There could be a better equipped class"*, and on the same issue, S6 suggested *"... I recommend it to be implemented in a wide area..."*

3.3.5. Subject selection should be determined in advance and equal role sharing should be ensured

Teacher candidates, who made suggestions about topic selection and role sharing, argue that they should make more proper use of this opportunity. S4 stated *"The ones with low narrative skills should not take the easy way out or the ones with higher skills choose the hard roles directly."* They maintained that role sharing should be done more equally. When determining the subject, S11 stated that *"Topics on the agenda should be selected"*, which can be considered as a correct strategy to attract people's attention.

3.3.6. Willingness should be ensured

Participants recommended that this technique should be on a voluntary basis and students will be more productive when they voluntarily participate in this activity. P10 stated that *"Students can be asked what they want to play and what roles they want to play."* S16, who argues that the principle of volunteering should be taken into account in *task sharing*, stated that *"For example, one group is responsible for script, while other friends may be responsible for the performance of the game on stage."* and similarly S9 also says *"I think it will be more efficient when the student voluntarily participates."* He shared the view that the distribution of role sharing in line with the abilities of the students would be effective in reaching more effective results for the purposes of the narrative skills course.

3.3.7. English Drama Club should be formed

Offering continuation of this practice, S7 suggested that *"Under the name of the English Club, we can show something together with other grades and we make a name for our English club and we can show our awareness."*

4. Discussion and Conclusions

In this section, the suggestions of the English language teacher candidates regarding the use of role-playing technique in the expression skills course are examined and the results are discussed and suggestions are made.

When the opinions of students about the use of role playing technique in expression skills lesson are examined, *it was seen that the effects of role playing technique on expression skills can be categorized under the themes of challenges they encounter in the application of role playing technique and suggestions for the use of role playing technique.*

When the views of the participants on how role-playing technique affects their expression skills in the expression skills course are examined, preservice teachers state that these effects are mostly positive and they are hardly exposed to negative effects. In addition, the participants emphasize that achievements of the technique match up with the learning outcomes of the expression skills course. Preservice teachers express these learning outcomes as *adjusting tone, controlling excitement, overcoming fear of speaking in front of the community, effective transmission of the given message, preparing presentations, pronunciation and diction, body*

language (eye contact, posture), self-confidence and courage, fun, social interaction, cooperation, competency in other language skills (writing) and vocabulary, professional preparation (gaining the ability to apply the technique), positive classroom atmosphere (fun), taking different roles and raising awareness . It is known to everyone that controlling excitement is one of the most important factors affecting public speaking. The fact that drama, which is a term of Greek origin meaning 'doing', 'acting', provides a friendly and stress free atmosphere for optimal learning (Miccoli, 2003; Gojian, 2010), and also acts as the main factor in language learning, improves body language, increases motivation and constantly involves students in the learning process. Gorjian, Moosavinia, & Jabripour's (2010) argument that drama is an effective tool for controlling excitement is supported by the results of the study conducted by Atas (2014). This study was conducted with high school senior students, and it was concluded that the drama lowered students' English-speaking anxiety and they started to speak without the fear of making mistakes. Most of the participants who expressed their views on the positive effects of the role playing technique, which is considered one of the techniques of drama, in the expression skills lesson, also mentioned the effects of this technique on their social skills, and its contribution to the improvement of their *friendships and collaborative working skills*. According to Millis (2001), who argues that cooperative learning is not a trend that will pass quickly, this method of learning and teaching provides students with social support to fulfill the complex tasks that cannot be achieved alone by satisfying the feelings of attachment and cooperation, which a human being desires. Moreover, students learn to share responsibilities and such a model of interaction helps make the classroom a cuter place (Harmer, 2001). In addition, collaboration provides students with the social and communicative skills necessary in their professional life. Participants expressed that having different roles is beneficial for the improvement of their writing skills besides creating fun atmosphere in the class and contributing to their speaking skills. Similar studies have revealed that the role-playing technique offers numerous possibilities for foreign language learners (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000; Gassand Mackey, 2006). The results of studies on the use of role-playing technique in foreign language learning (Chotirat & Sinwongswat, 2011; Seif, 2017) have also revealed that the role-playing technique, which also involves written scenario, has positive effects on students' linguistic achievements. The results of the study (Kuśnierek, 2015), which shows that taking different roles and speaking like others creates an entertaining atmosphere in the classroom environment and this environment also lowers down the excitement levels of students to speak in a foreign language, and thus improves the speaking skills of the students (Kuśnierek, 2015). Participants' opinions regarding the experience of a fun teaching and learning process during the implementation of the technique coincide with the study findings of Kumaran (2017). Kumaran, who advocates that students who take part in role play activities using foreign language enjoy their experience, believes that students' communication in a foreign language on real-life topics with their friends without hesitation and fear reinforces their foreign language acquisition.

The data obtained from the study results generally emphasize that role playing technique is an efficient method for students to improve their expression skills. However, when we consider this process as a whole, the difficulties students experience in this process should not be ignored.

Participants' problems / challenges encountered in the implementation of the technique were determined to be *the fear of failure, unwillingness, avoiding responsibility, lack of space and time, memorizing lines, crowded class, shyness, role distribution, finding a topic and writing a script*. In addition to the fact that group works have many benefits in terms of cognitive, psychological, social and emotional development, such as improving the sense of solidarity among the students, increasing the academic success of the students, ensuring the social

development of the students, helping the student develop a sense of responsibility and increasing the motivation of the student towards work. However, it is known that teachers experience problems in the process as well. According to the results of the study conducted by Yasul and Samancı (2015) with class teachers, the difficulties experienced by the teachers during the implementation process include the inability to organize the division of work, the mismatches in groups, the difficulties experienced in making a common decision, and some students' avoidance to take responsibility for their homework and attempt to burden it on their classmates. Prospective teachers in our study also express similar problems in the application of role-playing technique. Rojas and Villafuerte (2018), who examined the effect of role-playing technique on foreign language learning, implied that some teachers refused to use role playing technique in the classroom environment because it created chaos (noise, laughter, discomfort). In addition, Kumaran (2017) states that most of the teachers in the study did not use the role-playing technique as a speaking activity due to time constraints, insufficient role-playing materials and challenges in classroom control. In order to minimize the problems experienced during the practice, according to Duxbury and Ling (2010), teachers should motivate students as much as possible to perform well when using the role-playing technique. The experiences of well-motivated students enable them to retain their knowledge in mind for a long time (Tran, 2014).

The results of the study reveal that the underlying reason why some students are reluctant, unwilling, and escaping from their duties in the implementation of the role-playing technique is that they in fact experience of the fear of failure. The data from their findings also reveal that most of the teacher candidates participating the study did not have stage experience during their school years, and therefore, experienced emotions such as 'I can't do it', 'I will forget the lines', and 'I will be disgraced'. Based on these data, it can also be thought that some students' reluctance to take part in group studies stemmed from inexperience.

As for the opinions of the participants regarding the suggestions for the application of the role-playing technique in the lecture skills lesson, teacher candidates made the following suggestions: *it should be applied more frequently, sufficient time should be given for studies, individual assessment should be made, appropriate space and equipment should be provided, subject selection should be determined in advance, equal role sharing should be made, and English Drama Club should be created.* In order to minimize the problems experienced by teacher candidates in the application process of role-playing technique and to provide a more effective and efficient teaching and learning environment, their suggestions can be taken into consideration in group works. Preservice teachers believe that after the stage performances, evaluation will be more effective when it is made individually not collectively. The results of the study by Erdamar and Demirel (2010) support this belief. According to Erdamar and Demirel, some of the important problems that should be emphasized and resolved are that some pre-service teachers do not fulfill their responsibilities in group work and do not contribute to group work. Some of the participants are of the opinion that they have difficulty in choosing the topic and spend a lot of time for this. In order to eliminate this problem, they suggest that it would be more appropriate for the topics to be determined beforehand by the instructor. According to Yasul and Samancı (2015), in order to use time more effectively, group activities should be carried out within a certain plan and program, and the performance of each student in the group should be evaluated separately. Preservice teachers believe that the application of drama techniques will positively contribute to their professional competences. The creation of the English Drama Club may provide opportunities for frequent use of this practice. Participants made suggestions about the importance of space and equipment for the role-playing technique to reach its goal efficiently. For such applications, having an equipped

classroom with a large stage in the faculty can provide a more suitable environment for both rehearsals and presentations.

It can be claimed that role-playing technique has a significant effect on students' achievement of learning outcomes. It can be concluded that foreign language teachers' using drama activities in lectures can help make lessons more enjoyable and achieve permanence in learning. According to Dündar (2012), drama activities facilitates the learning of four language skills by integrating reading, writing, listening and speaking activities in the same context. As a result of the study, it was concluded that students think that drama activities lead to effective learning despite the challenges involved. Based on the results of the study, it is known that the application of the role-playing technique, which is considered as one of the drama activities, may be also be beneficial to the professional development of prospective teachers. Using drama in foreign language learning classes can improve the self-confidence of prospective teachers in terms of applying drama activities in their professional lives.

5. Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

6. Ethics Committee Approval

The author confirms that the study does not need ethics committee approval according to the research integrity rules in their country.

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