



UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO CEARÁ

CENTRO DE HUMANIDADES

**DEPARTAMENTO DE ESTUDOS DA LÍNGUA INGLESA, SUAS LITERATURAS E
TRADUÇÃO**

CURSO DE LETRAS INGLÊS

EURICO MAYER VAZ

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER AS A PROTAGONIST

FORTALEZA

2020

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Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado ao Curso de Letras Inglês do Departamento de Estudos da Língua Inglesa, suas Literaturas e Tradução da Universidade Federal do Ceará, como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Licenciado em Letras Inglês.

Orientadora: Prof^ª. Dra. Lídia Amélia de Barros Cardoso.

FORTALEZA

2020

Dados Internacionais de Catalogação na Publicação
Universidade Federal do Ceará
Biblioteca Universitária

Gerada automaticamente pelo módulo Catalog, mediante os dados fornecidos pelo(a) autor(a)

- V1t VAZ, EURICO.
THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER AS A PROTAGONIST / EURICO VAZ. – 2020.
33 f. : il.
- Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso (graduação) – Universidade Federal do Ceará, Centro de Humanidades,
Curso de Letras (Inglês), Fortaleza, 2020.
Orientação: Profª. Dra. LIDIA AMELIA DE BARROS CARDOSO.
1. Role-play. 2. Desenvolvimento Oral. 3. Aprendizagem de Língua Inglesa. I. Título.
- CDD 420
-

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Aprovado em ___/___/_____.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Professor Dr. Lídia Amélia de Barros Cardoso, for the unparalleled advising and heartwarming reception. Thank you for helping me keep sane and focused going through this year.

Professor Dr. Diana Costa Fortier Silva and Professor Dr. Paulo Roberto Nogueira de Andrade, for the guidance and support during the Languages without Borders experience and throughout the course.

Professor Dr. Carolina Morais Ribeiro da Silva, for the availability and collaboration for this paper.

My colleagues from NuLi, for sharing such an enriching experience.

My directors and fellow actors, for understanding my limitations due to academic purposes.

My family and friends, for always being there and for the everlasting encouragement both on my studies and in the craft.

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to discuss the use of role-play as a tool for negotiation of meaning by learners in a foreign language class environment. Taking the propositions of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal as theoretical compass, this qualitative research intends to use theater games as a means to improve oral production and communication. Hypotheses are that clear task instructions and pedagogical goals have a direct relation to, respectively, difficulty and usefulness levels as perceived by the subjects. Nine role-play experiences were conducted over the 48 hours of the course. Data collection emerges from a reflexive journal kept by the researcher and 102 responses to nine forms surveying students enrolled at a course offered by the program Languages without Borders at UFC during the first semester of 2019. The results, though suggesting no support for the hypotheses, seem to corroborate the importance of clear task instructions and to indicate the development of communication skills of the subjects throughout the course.

Keywords: Role-play. Oral development. English Language Learning.

RESUMO

Este artigo tem como objetivo discutir o uso da dramatização como ferramenta de negociação de sentido por alunos em um ambiente de aula de língua estrangeira. Tomando como norteadores teóricos as proposições de Paulo Freire e Augusto Boal, esta pesquisa qualitativa pretende utilizar os jogos teatrais como meio de aprimorar a produção e a comunicação oral. As hipóteses são de que instruções de tarefas claras e objetivos pedagógicos têm uma relação direta com, respectivamente, os níveis de dificuldade e utilidade percebidos pelos sujeitos da pesquisa. Nove atividades de role-play foram realizadas ao longo das 48 horas do curso. A coleta de dados emerge de um diário reflexivo mantido pelo pesquisador e 102 respostas a nove formulários aplicados com alunos matriculados em um curso oferecido pelo programa Idiomas sem Fronteiras da UFC durante o primeiro semestre de 2019. Os resultados parecem corroborar a importância de instruções claras das tarefas e indicar o desenvolvimento das habilidades de comunicação dos aprendizes ao longo do curso.

Palavras-chave: Role-play. Desenvolvimento Oral. Aprendizagem da Língua Inglesa.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The research aims to explore the emancipation of the learner of English as a foreign language out of an oppressed position, and the multiple possibilities of language learning combined, moreover, with theater in all its plasticity. A group of forty-one learners enrolled in a course focused on oral production undergoes a systematic employment of role-playing and other theater games so as to expose them to the decision-making process of language usage in situations as close to authentic as possible. Using the philosophy of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and the methodology of Augusto Boal's *Theater of the Oppressed* as the main theoretical basis, the research intends to explore role-playing activities as a tool for teaching English as a foreign language.

The focus is to place learners at the center of their language acquisition process, having their previous knowledge and life experiences highly valued, as well as putting in practice and experimenting what is discussed as their needs towards such process. Accordingly, the present research intends to imbue said learners through this approach with confidence and skills necessary to perform and reflect upon aspects such as phrasing, intonation, body language, politeness, and cross-cultural issues. Speech acts are used as connecting thread, spreading through the five components of communicative competence: linguistic, sociocultural, discourse, actional and strategic competences (SHRUM and GLISAN, 2010).

A brief introduction and overview of both theorists will be followed by an explanation of the methods and specific theater games used for data collection. Most of the focus will be on analyzing the array of applications of Freire's and Boal's precepts to a communicative class of English as a foreign language, and on how it could affect language acquisition. The research concludes with an analysis of the feedback collected from the learners after the activities were performed.

In addition to being the protagonists of the method, learners are also contributors to this research in the way that they answered surveys about their experiences throughout the course as well. Their impressions are used by the researcher to analyze the impact the theater factor had on them along the way. Combining these analyses to the observation of the outcome of the exercises, the researcher is provided with information to assess the entire experience.

2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Education sociocultural approach is best represented in Brazil by Paulo Freire, whose theory suggests the overcoming of the relation between "oppressor-oppressed", which is to say there is a development of a process of awareness-raising of the learner's own reality. A horizontal dialog between teacher and learner is of the essence to this method, resulting in an evaluation process of the other as well as of the self (FREIRE, 1996).

Freire's goal with this approach is to become aware of the reality as well as act on it in order to transform it by reading the world through words associated to life experience, background knowledge, and politics under a critical perspective (FREIRE, 1966). The content learned could never be dissociated from real life, from the real-world experiences, being these the basis for all learning process and knowledge construction that comes to be. According to Freire (1987), transforming the learner in a culture producer rather than a culture consumer is what constitutes the subject-learner instead of the object-learner, and only as a subject can a person actually critically reflect and learn.

Boal, in consonance with Freire's ideas, originates the Theater of the Oppressed, according to which the spectator should be no longer in a passive role: the goal is to transform audience in the protagonists of their own stories (BOAL, 1991). Past beyond the Aristotelean identification of the audience with the protagonist, being imbued of emotions and reactions unwillingly, Boal defends the detachment from what is being experienced. Even further than Brecht (1978), Boal leaves the mere reflection behind in order to achieve true transformation of reality by the audience – now actor, in the best conception of the word (BOAL, 1983).

Theater, in Boal's ideas, is a tool to develop self-esteem, to free body and mind, normally so oppressed by society. It can be used to reach creativity potential, widening one's ways of dealing with the various situations of life (BOAL, 1991). By the engagement in games and exercises, non-actors can participate in representations, taking part and actively altering the dramatic development of events, experimenting with multiple possible solutions. Using theater as a tool to teaching languages is a way of placing the learner in a leading role: not as an object, a receptacle of culture or depositary of information, but as a subject, a culture-creating information-inducing knowledge-negotiating protagonist of their own learning process.

The background analysis comes in order to make meaningful all discussion held to the learners, and the role-plays allow them to take part in the development of the real-life situations, creating possibilities, exploring variations, negotiating meaning in non-rehearsed, non-drilled contextualized situations.

3 METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

Using the theoretical analysis of Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Boal's *Theater of the Oppressed*, in addition to precepts of the *Communicative Language Teaching*, this study aims at exploring the learner's second language acquisition in a more active role and how theater affects such acquisition.

The present research focuses on an oral production course offered in two groups during the first semester of 2019, under the program *Languages without Borders* – at the time, funded by CAPES. The course was forty-eight hours long and aimed at students ranging from B1 to C1 levels according to the CEFR. It took place in the Federal University of Ceará facilities meeting twice on weekdays or on Saturdays. Forty-one students enrolled for this course, having 19 of them successfully finished it. They were all either students or staff members of the University.

Before the course started, a course plan was devised, taking into consideration the contents to be discussed as well as the approach to be adopted. It was then the choice of using role-play was made to support the speech acts that made up the content to be studied. Following Freire's ideas, learning should make sense on the real world and have actual usage and implications (FREIRE, 1987). This was the reason speech acts were elected as the backbone of the course rather than rote grammar points. The course would culminate in seminars on World Englishes presented by the students and followed by discussions about native-likeness, intelligibility, comprehensibility and language imperialism (CRYSTAL, 2003).

The course consisted of nineteen lesson plans, having nine of them applied role-play as a means of reinforcing what was being studied. Topics for discussion varied from broad social relations to the most personal self-analysis, using authentic sources as input, such as academic researches, poetry, TV series, movies, lectures, drama and music, making it necessary the usage of technology, namely a notebook, smartphones, slides, speakers, a projector and internet access.

After each role-play experience, the students answered an online survey consisting of nine questions about their perceptions on what, why and how activities were carried out, as well as how difficult and useful they were and their own performance during each task. It was essential that learners were able to analyze situations and build on them creating their own to be performed and, later on, to assess their own performance as well as their teacher's.

Alongside this material, a reflexive journal was kept by the researcher taking notes of the experience with the role-play tasks and how the learners reacted to and acted upon what they were asked to perform. Once the course was over, all the surveys and the reflexive journal

were compiled into nine tables for further analysis of the numbers and their meaning regarding the tasks performed in order to confirm or disprove the hypotheses raised.

4 RESULTS

Analyzing the surveys delivered by the learners, from the 102 responses, only four were unable to successfully identify the instructions given for each task. This did, however, bear no connection to a higher difficulty level from said learners. It is important to state that not being able to recall the instructions afterwards did not impede their fruitful performance at the moment of the task.

The average of difficulty, considering the tasks altogether, was 2.66 out of 5. Learners considered tasks as being more difficult mostly due to shyness and nervousness (speaking in public and interaction with strangers), language limitation (lack of vocabulary and problems with verb tenses) and little time for preparation (no improvisation skills and dependence on teamwork). Some learners mentioned stepping outside their comfort zones as a hindrance, finding it hard to share secrets or give advices. The role-playing was mentioned as a hardship only twice, once regarding the improvisation skills and one other time due to a “highly dramatized” task.

Considering the recognition of the pedagogical goal of each task, 19 out of the 102 responses were delivered with inaccurate answers, which were not successful at pinpointing the goal as previously established by the researcher. These numbers did not carry relevant relation to lower levels of usefulness either. Moreover, a high number of these deviant answers focused on skills other than linguistic aspects, such as leadership, organization, advice giving, confidence building and personal growth.

The level of usefulness, all the tasks performed taken into consideration, was on average 4.17 out of 5. Even the lowest marks on usefulness accompanied specific aspects, both linguistic or not, that were learned from the task, for instance various ways of saying goodbye or making an invitation, the importance of intonation for communication, group work and organization skills.

5 DISCUSSION

The hypotheses raised for this research were: a) learners who were unable to identify the instructions of the task are more prone to mark it as being more difficult; and b)

learners who were unable to identify the pedagogical goal of the task are more prone to mark it as being less useful. After the analysis of the results aforementioned, neither hypothesis could be confirmed based on the data collected, since there was no substantial connection between the numbers representative of the items under scope.

Instructions and pedagogical goals are pillars upon which rest well-thought and developed tasks. In order to obtain satisfactory results, teachers of foreign languages must pay close attention to the foundation of their tasks when planning and be aware of it during its deployment (HARMER, 2007; HORWITZ, 2008).

Examining the performances of the learners throughout the course, most were considered more than satisfactory according to the rationale of each task and their expected outcomes. Such results confirm the notion that sound and clear instructions are intrinsic to successful tasks, as are specific pedagogical goals. However, under the frame of reference of the learner, they can lead to the understanding that the relevance of explicit instructions plays a more significant role than that of the pedagogical goal itself.

The fact that the accuracy on identifying and recalling the instructions and the pedagogical goal were over 96% and 81% respectively, combined with the satisfactory performances along the course, represent some level of success approaching oral production development with role-playing activities. Even the lesser percentage of pedagogical goal identification is not necessarily a negative aspect, since, more often than not, answers were considered inaccurate in this respect for having focused on soft skills, which were a great part of the curriculum of the course. The learners being able to practice the linguistic skills while feeling they were focusing on other facets of their own development is one of the highlights of this experience.

Paulo Freire (1996) would advocate for an interdisciplinary freeing education, transformative of the learner regarding not only their worldview, but also their view of themselves. It was an accomplishment of a goal to receive proof that the learners were interested in and reflecting upon the topics discussed in class beyond the linguistic features. The intellectual stimuli processed in order to fuel and ignite our debates and ultimately our role-plays was deemed relevant and constructive.

Theater games intend to demechanize body and mind, taking the players into a stage of lower rational barriers. Only when one does not overthink their performance will they thrive. Augusto Boal (1991) refers to Theater of the Oppressed as solid learning, developing the ability to perceive oneself and the world around us. To witness the evolution of the learners both using

the language and performing the role-play activities was achieving the objectives set for the course during its designing.

Among other practices, the usage of role-play has been in action for decades in order to contextualize language instruction (SHRUM and GLISAN, 2010). In language teaching context, role-play can be defined as theatrical activities that take place within the classroom and in which students assume different roles, acting according to the context of the proposed situation (RICHARDS et al, 1993). Thornbury (2005) defends role-play as the students adopting another persona, placing themselves in a different situation and acting as such. Klippel (1991) and Sasse (2001) defend role-play maximizes students' talking time, improving their communicative competence and creativity, enhancing their oral skills and overall oral performance.

The choice of using role-play as a means to practice what was being discussed was rarely considered an obstacle per se for the learning process, in the way that it was only mentioned in the surveys in two different occasions. Broader drawbacks that might have been heightened by this choice are those of shyness, nervousness and fear of speaking in public. This was one other highlight nonetheless, owing to the fact that some learners improved greatly on these features comparing their last performances to their first ones. This deed that can also be confirmed by the surveys, which present such drawbacks as being problems only for the first tasks, not appearing in later results.

Featured as a quantitative research, herein lies a qualitative experimentation, from which it was possible to catch sight of how role-play and theater in general can develop learners' oral competences, among other skills, and work with a myriad of issues relevant in and outside the classroom. Theater has the endowment of forcing one to challenge their own truths and try seeing the world from different perspectives. Encouraging the learners to access realities other than their own and discuss them, using higher order thinking to analyze, evaluate and create language made them more aware of their roles in life (BOAL, 1996).

6 FINAL REMARKS

The present research intended to explore the possibilities of using theater in the environment of communicative language teaching and its pedagogical implications. The focus was on the oral development of English learners by means of role-playing activities using Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal as referential bastions of the need for the emancipation of the learners

as well as for their capabilities of negotiating meaning in a foreign language through theater games.

Nine role-play tasks within a 48-hour-long course offered by Languages without Borders at UFC during the first semester of 2019 were the core for the research, about which 102 surveys were responded analyzing what, why and how these tasks were performed. Besides analyzing their own performances and the design and conduction of the tasks, learners were supposed to have recollected the instructions given for said tasks as well as have identified their pedagogical goals.

The data collected led to the assumption that giving unclouded task instructions is of greater relevance in comparison to stating its pedagogical goal for the completion of the task by the learner. It was also possible to extract from the data indications of improvement not only of linguistic, but also an array of other varied skills used as fodder for the debates and scenarios which contextualized the role-play activities.

Personal entries from the learners emphasized their attainment of communication as being more than words. Their responses indicated a growing awareness of usage of intonation and body language, analysis of the influence of contrasting cultural contexts, the usage of the language to reinforce discourse and defend ideas, in harmony with Freire (1992). Furthermore, learners portrayed an appreciation of the multitude of linguistic variations and the cultural importance accents can embrace, as defended by David Crystal (2003).

Notwithstanding neither hypothesis having been confirmed, this research achieved more prominent results by strengthening the case for the usage of theater in communicative language teaching environments and the relevance of contextualized learning based on constructed knowledge, negotiated meaning and cultural references.

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APPENDIX A – ONLINE SURVEY

Full name *

Your answer

Course *

 B1 Mondays / Wednesdays B2 Saturdays

Describe the task performed: what was done? *

Your answer

Identify the goals of the task: why was it done? *

Your answer

Analyze yourself: how did it make you feel? *

Your answer

How difficult was it? *

Very low

Low

Average

High

Very high

Difficulty level

Why was it this difficult? *

Your answer

How useful was it? *

	Very low	Low	Average	High	Very high
Usefulness level	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What did you learn from the task? *

Your answer

How would you improve the task? *

Your answer

Write below if you have any additional comments, impressions on the overall performance or feedback.

Your answer

Eu aceito que minhas informações sejam utilizadas em pesquisas e publicações acadêmicas, resguardado o anonimato. *

Aceito.

APPENDIX B – REFLEXIVE JOURNAL

1 MYSTERIOUS MEETING

It was my first class with the first group. Only one student out of fifteen had responded the emails and it rained heavily, I was afraid I would have no students to work with. When I arrived, seven students were there and one arrived later. Roughly, half the class was there. It is normal for first days of class, but it is sure a challenge for a 48-hour-long course, which I have never taught before.

When I explained the methodology of evaluation, that would involve a lot of role-playing, students had different reactions. Firstly, some related it to RPG games and others to acting. I confirmed both theories and explained further: we will simulate various situations and you will be evaluated both in performing and analyzing aspects of these tasks (what, why and how it was done, as well as impressions on the overall performance).

When I announced the first role-play activity and asked for volunteers, there was a moment of hesitation, but one of them raised his hand. The task would be *Mysterious Meeting*, which consists of introducing oneself in a specific situation. Situations were:

1. An employee interrupting a CEO meeting
2. A new boss talking to lousy workers
3. A room full of children
4. A nursing home
5. A party with friends

Students needed to introduce themselves according to the context. They should give any information they believed to be relevant for the occasion. They were reminded to analyze vocabulary, intonation, body language and formality. They were asked to consider different ways of greeting, introducing themselves and talking about likes and dislikes.

The ones who performed put an effort to it (some even came out of the classroom so they could knock!). They tried to adapt vocabulary and body language, as well as formality and politeness. It was impromptu, they had no time to prepare and we discussed no aspects regarding the performance other than they would have to *pretend*, so the goal was much more to break the ice and set the tone for the course than to truly assess their performance.

One student asked if it was mandatory to perform the task, to what I responded that nobody would be forced to do anything, but they would be evaluated on participation and performance, as previously stated while discussing our ground rules. Even so, three students

decided not to take part of the activity by performing. They were, however, reminded that they were still expected to evaluate the task honestly – especially regarding to why they did not participate.

I had planned this moment for a class of 15 students, so it finished rather faster than expected. Since I did not feel like discussing the performances (it is something that could have been done, but both for not wanting to expose students at first glance and for the minor awkwardness caused by the refusal of some students, I decided to leave it at that), I had to come up with another activity to make up for this time, which was *Getting to know each other* – the problem is: it did not consist on role playing activity and it kills *Have you met...?* that I would do the following class, since they focus on the same speech acts. Maybe I can bring this one back later on.

The class would finish with *Ta ta!*, the students saying goodbye in the same situation of their introduction. However, once again, I thought it would be better not to push it. Two students had to leave earlier due to other classes and we were almost out of time anyway. This is another role-play that I can save for some other moment.

For the second group, I had 12 students by the end of the class, though only 10 were there when we discussed the methodology and the role-playing approach of our course. The reception of the students to this seemed to be good. Some of them actually reacted positively by smiling and muttering in excitement.

Having had the experience of the previous class, I decided to change some aspects of the tasks this time. First of all, in order to reduce levels of anxiety, I reduced the improvisation aspect of the *Mysterious Meeting*. The students were divided in groups and given the situations beforehand, so they could discuss the differences and similarities between them regarding the same features they would have to perform (vocabulary, structure, intonation, body language, etc). They had around 20 minutes to discuss among themselves, only then I asked for the performance of the role-play.

All of the students participated – they even made the task a group one, instead of individual, by acting as the other people in each situation (the CEO, the employees, the children, the elderly, the friends). Some were more comfortable than others, but that is expected.

After the experience with the students who did not want to participate in the previous class, and a talk with my advisor, I decided to include a theoretical basis for this approach as well. So, I had them discuss some abilities they have and how they acquired them. “What are you good at?” I asked, to which they responded with “organizing things, playing music, raising awareness of other women, doing magic tricks”. I was very glad with the

multitude of answers and how we could narrow down the single most important way of learning to practice.

I showed them some ways of learning and asked them to rank according to information retention. After discussing for a while, I showed them the research on the Pyramid of Retention and signaled that doing the real thing or simulating the situation were high on the top, with 90% of retention – and pointed out that that was exactly what was intended for us with the role-playing activities.

It was very pleasing to see so many of them really excited since when I began talking about our prospective usage of role-playing during our course, and specially so after we had our first task. While we discussed the theoretical basis for this approach, many of them nodded and smiled. I took it as a good omen.

I used once again *Getting to know each other*, knowing that *Have you met...?* would maybe have to be reallocated to another class rather than the next one so they would not perform such similar tasks in a short span of time.

Analyzing critically, the first day and the first tasks were much more a way to show them the methodology and the approach than actually learning the linguistic aspects of the speech acts performed. Discussions were between the students with little to no interference from myself, and there was no specific feedback other than supporting and congratulating them after each performance. Once they feel confident enough, though, their performances will be analyzed and feedback on the various aspects of the tasks will be provided.

Regarding the analyses the students are supposed to send me, I have also changed the way to implement it: the first class, I asked for it written via e-mail, but as soon as I received the first reply, I realized that was not the ideal way of doing it. Students did not cover all that I had expected them to and they did it in rather different structures, which would hinder my own analysis of the data input. Taking all of this into consideration, I devised a Google Form for each role-play task and sent via e-mail so they would fill out. This helps me by showing them everything I expect from them, and also by already organizing the data so as to ease my work afterwards.

Table 1 – Data collected from *Mysterious Meeting*

Respondent	Instruction	P. Goal	Difficulty	Usefulness
1	YES	YES	3	4
2	YES	YES	3	5

3	YES	YES	3	4
4	YES	YES	3	4
5	YES	NO	5	4
6	YES	YES	3	5
7	YES	NO	3	4
8	YES	YES	4	5
9	YES	NO	3	5
10	YES	YES	2	4
11	YES	NO	4	5
12	YES	YES	3	4
13	YES	YES	3	5
AVERAGE			3,230769231	4,461538462

Source: data collected.

Analyzing the answers from the respondents, having all of them understood the instructions for the task the average difficulty was 3.2. Respondent 10 marked below the average and commented he thought he would not do well, due to his shyness; however, he considered it very amusing. Respondents 5, 8 and 11 marked the task as difficult or very difficult, and justified their scores based on their own limitations towards the language, shyness and lack of time for preparation. The average of usefulness was 4.5 and there was no relevant difference between the ones who were able to identify the pedagogical goal of the task and the ones who failed at doing so. Deviant answers tended to stimulating interaction and integration of the students, and fostering oral production, which are not completely off topic in and of themselves.

2 TA TA!

We had a class about gender in the first group. At the very end, we did *Ta ta!*. Students were reminded of their experience in the first class and reactions were various, but all of them seemed shy about it. However, this time they had time to discuss how they would perform it beforehand. All of them participated, even if with an initial frown. They were very direct and straight to the point, two sentences at the most. I believe it was a nice way of bringing this topic back, though, so they are aware this is still part of our course and has not been forgotten.

With the second group, we did it still in the first day after having finished all we had to do, emphasizing the homework (sending expectations regarding the course and analyzing the role-playing tasks). They seemed amused as I explained the task: they would have to say goodbye as if they were in the same situation of our first role-play.

1. An employee interrupting a CEO meeting
2. A new boss talking to lousy workers
3. A room full of children
4. A nursing home
5. A party with friends

It was very rejoicing to see them play their parts and improvise this time. Most of them did it comically, using jokes and references to what had happened before, which I believe is a strong evidence of them feeling comfortable and willing to participate.

Table 2 – Data collected from *Ta ta!*

Respondent	Instruction	P. Goal	Difficulty	Usefulness
1	YES	YES	2	3
2	NO	YES	2	3
3	YES	YES	2	5
4	YES	YES	2	4
5	YES	YES	4	5
6	YES	YES	1	4
7	YES	YES	2	5
8	YES	YES	3	5
9	YES	YES	2	3
10	YES	YES	2	2
11	YES	YES	3	4
12	YES	YES	2	4
13	YES	YES	1	4
14	YES	YES	3	4
AVERAGE			2,214285714	3,928571429

Source: data collected.

The only respondent who did not comprehend the instructions, according to the survey, probably mistook this task for the previous one. Their mark for the difficulty level was

around the average of 2.2. From the others, numbers 6 and 13 marked the task as very easy, partly for being short and low demanding of vocabulary. Respondents 5, 8, 11 and 14 marked the task as regular or difficult, due to problems with speaking in public, interacting with strangers, stepping outside the comfort zone and lack of vocabulary. All respondents identified the pedagogical goal properly. Usefulness average was 3.9. Respondent 10 marked its usefulness as low despite having confirmed the task made sense and taught multiple ways of saying goodbye.

3 HAVE YOU MET...?

Following a class on sentence stress, the first group did *Have you met...?*, where students had to introduce one of their classmates to the rest of the class. Focus was to work with sentence stress, so the students were asked to emphasize certain aspects, be surprised, pleased, displeased, give wrong information, correct each other... they were encouraged to be creative regarding their performances. They were divided in trios and given 25 minutes to discuss a possible script, but were told that the script would not be used at the moment of the performance – improvisation was valid and encouraged!

They would have to consider different ways of asking information they deemed relevant when meeting someone for the first time (name, age, birthday, origin, major, occupation, hobbies, favorite something, pet peeves, place of residence, something unusual, etc.). Afterwards, they would need to introduce this person to someone else, considering ways to talk about a person other than yourself and asking for complementary information when they did not remember something. Putting in practice especially the stressing of words, students were asked to make mistakes on purpose so the person being introduced would have pay attention in order to interrupt when necessary and correct stressing the right information.

Students were very excited during the discussion, some of them rehearsed so they would not forget their lines, but once again I emphasized they were encouraged to improvise. Both presentations were quite nice, they seem to be much more comfortable with the task now and even added some props to their scenes. They performed really well with the stressing of words to emphasize and correct information, as well as to show surprise or interest.

At the end, I reminded them of the forms I have been sending so they evaluate the activity and emphasized why we do these role-plays and their importance to their oral performance development.

Group B had a class working with one of Hamlet's soliloquies and discussed it briefly. Students seemed tired from the start and throughout the class. Two of them left at 11 AM, moments before we did *Have you met...?* I divided them in two groups of four, in which two of them would be introduced to the others by their peers. Discussion was very nice and the first performance was great, but the second was not so good – students apparently did not go into the script a lot and showed the classic features of nervousness for improvising or being on stage. It was curious to see these aspects in a language class rather than in a theater, as I am used to. I must keep in mind that by bringing theatricality to the game, I have challenges and opportunities characteristic from theater in my pedagogical environment. I reminded them about the evaluations via Google Forms and finished by talking a little about the situation of the program regarding the recent budget cuts.

Table 3 – Data collected from *Have you met...?*

RESPONDENT	INSTRUCTION	P. GOAL	DIFFICULTY	USEFULNESS
1	YES	YES	4	5
2	YES	YES	3	5
3	YES	YES	1	4
4	YES	YES	3	4
5	YES	YES	3	5
6	YES	YES	5	3
7	NO	NO	2	4
8	YES	YES	3	4
9	YES	NO	3	5
10	YES	NO	3	5
11	YES	NO	3	4
12	YES	NO	1	4
AVERAGE			2,833333333	4,333333333

Source: data collected.

Although the class was mostly about pronunciation features, the task was not. Respondent 7 identified part of the class subject instead of the instructions to the task itself. Their difficulty mark was below the average of 2.8, along with respondents 3 and 12, who classified the task as being easy and informal. Respondents 1 and 6 marked the task as difficult and very difficult, respectively, and commented once more on nervousness and lack of

improvisation skills. Regarding the pedagogical goal, four respondents were not able to identify the specific goal, answering general objectives, for instance: to improve speaking abilities and to practice how to behave in such a situation. Respondent 9 answered the goal was to practice prepositions and conjunctions in a conversation. Usefulness average was 4.3, the farthest mark from the average was that of respondent 6, who classified it as average. Alongside this mark, the respondent answered their learning was regarding group working and organization skills, focusing on the same topics on their suggestion for improving the task (adding more time to create the dialogues and rehearse before presenting).

4 TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK

We started by watching an excerpt of Pulp Fiction and then discussed the linguistic features they could identify based on what we have discussed so far. Students were divided in pairs or trios and had to come up with different ways of performing some speech acts (State your opinion, Agree with someone, Disagree with someone, Ask for some information, Present an argument, Give examples, Interrupt someone, Hold the floor). They had around 15' to do so before we compared results from the different groups and discussed situations in which they would be used. The groups were then asked to write a dialog using at least one of the variations of each speech act and, afterwards, perform it in front of the class.

Students were really engaged in both the group discussion to come up with the possibilities of linguistic performance and the actual performance of the scene. When asked, I said they could read from their papers this time, but they preferred not to and either memorized it or improvised. The dialogs were not too simple and displayed interesting variations, including in attitude between the speakers. Results were very satisfying especially with two of the students who, in our first meeting, did not want to participate in the role-play (the student who was the first to ask if it was mandatory left today's class shortly before the role-play activity. Though it was not previously announced, he might have anticipated it). I gave them feedback right after the performance regarding some vocabulary and structural mistakes.

After that, we had some informal debates about two different topics – that was what we had time for (the presence of “likes” on social media, and mandatory attendance at universities). Students now had to use spontaneously the phrases discussed to convey their ideas and organize their speech when interacting with people with both agreeing and disagreeing positions. Students seemed very engaged in the activity once more, I had to stop them because our time was done.

Our experience with the second group was very similar to the one I had previously had. Students were really engaged in all tasks: discussing in small groups to come up with possibilities of performing the same speech act, sharing them with the rest of the class, writing a short dialog using what they had found, and performing their scripts. Two of the three groups preferred to do it reading, but there was still room for improvising on it. One of the groups improvised the whole conversation, since they did not have time to finish. Feedback was granted after the presentations, though it was more generalized and superficial.

The last stage of the class was an informal debate about various topics where the students would use the phrases and speech acts spontaneously. It was very enriching and most students were very much into it – the ones who did not participate as much, I tried engaging them with some directed eliciting from time to time, but they would not elaborate further. I had to cut the debate short, since we were already past our schedule (topics discussed were: “likes” on social media, optional attendance at universities, legal abortion, taxation on huge fortunes, and whether coaching should be a crime. Other topics did not generate a clash of opinions: prohibition of animal testing and legalization of marijuana).

Table 4 – Data collected from *Tell me what you think*

Respondent	Instruction	P. Goal	Difficulty	Usefulness
1	YES	YES	3	5
2	YES	YES	3	5
3	YES	YES	3	4
4	YES	NO	4	3
5	YES	YES	4	5
6	YES	YES	4	5
7	YES	NO	3	4
8	YES	YES	4	4
9	YES	YES	2	5
10	YES	YES	3	5
11	YES	YES	3	5
12	YES	YES	3	4
AVERAGE			3,25	4,5

Source: data collected.

All of the respondents identified the instructions correctly, having marked the difficulty average of 3.25. Respondent 9 classified the task as easy because the topics discussed were customary and the phrases and expressions were discussed previously. Respondents 4, 5, 6 and 8 marked the task as difficult for the high demand on vocabulary, the similarity between some situations, the dependence on teamwork, and the improvisation aspect. Only two respondents did not identify the pedagogical goal of the task: respondent 4 wrote the instructions for the task instead of the goal, whereas respondent 7 identified “improving writing skills” as the goal. The usefulness average was 4.5 and only respondent 4 rated the task as being as average regarding this topic. Respondent 4 also stated they learned the importance of intonation and suggested more time for the preparation of the task, besides “some subject for the interpretation”.

5 THE APPLE OF MY EYE... THE SKELETON IN MY CLOSET

The class started with some reflection about having a role model and whether the students considered themselves to be role models or not. After this, students took a test on some practices regarding imposter syndrome – about which a TED video was shown afterwards. We discussed the video together with some conversation topics. The students were asked to come up with phrases to perform the speech acts of complimenting, thanking and responding to it. Finally, the role play *The apple of my eye... the skeleton in my closet* was performed: following speed dating structure, students sat in two rows, facing each other, and shared something they were proud about themselves, as well as something they were not very fond of. They were supposed to praise each other and respond to this praise, as they were expected to criticize if it was something negative, and react accordingly. Initially, students moaned after seeing the badge of role-play, but were engaged nonetheless.

The second group followed the same topics of the other class and results were very similar, except for the dominant speaker’s participation once more. This time, I was a little more controlling of time of speech and topic, and asked a few times to keep to the topic under discussion and to move on, so others could participate and we could manage to cover all that was planned. After the class was over, one of the dominant speakers came and talked to me, apologizing for speaking so much, to which I replied it was ok, it served as fuel for debate.

Table 5 – Data collected from *The apple of my eye... the skeleton in my closet*

Respondent	Instruction	P. Goal	Difficulty	Usefulness
1	YES	YES	1	5
2	YES	YES	2	3
3	YES	NO	4	5
4	YES	YES	2	3
5	YES	YES	2	5
6	NO	NO	3	3
7	YES	YES	2	3
8	YES	YES	4	4
9	YES	YES	3	3
AVERAGE			2,555555556	3,777777778

Source: data collected.

The respondent 6 answered topics discussed in class, namely secrets and imposter syndrome, as being instructions for the task, which they marked as regular, around the average of 2.5 the task received. Respondent 1 marked it as very easy, since the topics had been discussed beforehand, whereas respondents 3 and 8 marked the task as difficult solely for its nature of having to talk about secrets and to offer advices. Respondents 3 and 6 did not identify the pedagogical goal, choosing soft skills as advice giving and confidence building as the goals of the task. The usefulness average was 3.7. Respondents 1, 3 and 5 considered it very useful.

6 I'M IN TROUBLE!

We changed the order that was being followed in the recent classes and started by coming up with phrases and how to perform in some specific situations: your house is on fire, you are carrying too many bags, you want someone to close the door, you need advice for some relationship problem. Students discussed how they were theoretically different (politeness, formality, structure, intonation) and tried performing these requests in various ways. Some other phrases were presented to the students and discussed proper situations in which they could be used (asking for help and favors, and making suggestions).

Topic later changed to Albert Einstein (a relation with the Imposter Syndrome video of the previous class). Students were asked all they knew about him and we started a discussion regarding time traveling. Conversation was amazing, students were very interested and puzzled

with the possibilities. After this moment, we saw a video from Netflix’s Love Death Robots, about the alternate endings of Hitler.

For the role play *I’m in trouble!*, students were asked to think about three situations from their lives they would change if they could go back in time. Afterwards, they were supposed to ask for help as if they had just arrived from the future in order to change what they wanted to change. The other students were supposed to react the way they thought would be the most suitable – and eventually come up with suggestions. All students would discuss how this would change other aspects of the person’s life and other consequences.

All students shared one thing they would change, suggestions mostly ignored the time traveling aspect and focused on how this person could change their present as it is. They participated a lot and discussion went on until I interrupted so we could leave. Students are aware they will have a final seminar to serve as closure for the course.

Students from the second group did not quite get the idea of *I’m in trouble!*, they ended up discussing the situations more theoretically than actually role playing. Discussion was, then, more distanced and less engaging to students in general.

We discussed the seminars they will have to present as a closure to our course. All but two or three students, who were absent, already chose their topics.

Table 6 – Data collected from *I’m in trouble!*

Respondent	Instruction	P. Goal	Difficulty	Usefulness
1	YES	YES	3	5
2	YES	NO	3	5
3	YES	YES	3	3
4	YES	YES	4	3
5	YES	NO	2	4
6	YES	YES	3	5
7	YES	NO	3	4
8	YES	YES	3	4
AVERAGE			3	4,125

Source: data collected.

All of the respondents identified the instructions properly and the difficulty average of the task was 3. Respondents 4 and 5 both appreciated the task, though respondent 4 marked it as difficult due to problems regarding the verbs in the past, while their colleague marked easy

for the very nature of the task of discussing hardships with unbiased peers. The pedagogical goal was not identified by the respondents 2, 5 and 7. Respondent 2 described their impressions of the task instead of the pedagogical goal, while respondent 5 focused on the personal growth aspect of the task, and respondent 7 mistook it for the discussion before the task. Usefulness was marked 4.1 in average. There was little deviation in this aspect.

7 DOS AND DON'TS

The class started with a discussion related to power and leadership. Students reflected upon and discussed their impressions and opinions of what is power in our society and the features, as well as examples, of good and bad leaders. We watched an excerpt of *The Great Dictator*, to which the students had to related the topics under discussion, and identify four different ways of giving orders from the video:

1. Imperative
2. Negative Imperative
3. Must
4. Let's

After doing so, students were elicited and we discussed phrases used to give orders and instructions, as well as to sequence steps and ask for clarifications and repetition of information. Afterwards, we did *Dos and Don'ts*, which consists on the student thinking about something they know how to do well related to their research or area of expertise. They were given 15 minutes to write a step-by-step using positive and negative imperatives, as well as sequencers, while the others should react and ask for clarifications or repetition.

Students talked about their research, usual practices related to their course, cooking or even routine. Even though I made it clear and they understood they were supposed to focus on some academic matter, I did not ask them to alter their exercise. All of them used the expected phrases and reacted properly to their colleagues' production.

Table 7 – Data collected from *Dos and Don'ts*

Respondent	Instruction	P. Goal	Difficulty	Usefulness
1	YES	YES	3	5
2	YES	NO	3	4
3	YES	YES	2	4

4	YES	YES	3	3
5	YES	YES	2	5
6	YES	YES	2	3
7	YES	YES	4	5
8	YES	NO	4	5
9	YES	YES	3	5
10	YES	YES	3	4
11	YES	YES	3	4
12	YES	YES	3	5
AVERAGE			2,916666667	4,333333333

Source: data collected.

All respondents answered the instructions satisfactorily, marking the average of 2.9 for the task difficulty. Respondents 3, 5 and 6 deemed it easy for teaching and discussing something of which they are fond. Respondents 7 and 8 considered it difficult after facing problems with synthesizing and being as clear and instructive as they would have liked to be. Respondent 2 mistakenly identified acting with leadership as the pedagogical goal, while respondent 8 chose improvement of sentence organization. The usefulness average was 4.3.

8 SHALL WE?

We discussed Maya Angelou and the topic of voice and freedom. Then, different ways of talking about wishes and desires were presented and discussed, as well as how to invite and accept or decline invitations. Discussions were very interesting, all students were engaged in explaining their point of view towards what was real freedom and what voice meant from a social or political perception. Students also had to make examples using the structures presented.

To put all in practice, students were to perform *Shall we?*, for which they had to think of and express a wish they had to do something. After stating their wishes, they needed to invite their colleagues, who would respond either accepting or declining with a motivation for doing so.

Most students were more superficial, making invitations for trivial things. Some, however, dug deep in their wishes to invite their colleagues for unusual activities. Responses

tended to be negative with funny motivations. Students were not necessarily honest in their reactions, but were certainly having fun.

Table 8 – Data collected from *Shall we?*

Respondent	Instruction	P. Goal	Difficulty	Usefulness
1	YES	YES	1	5
2	YES	NO	3	5
3	YES	YES	2	4
4	YES	YES	2	2
5	YES	YES	2	2
6	YES	YES	2	4
7	YES	YES	3	5
8	YES	YES	2	4
9	YES	YES	2	4
10	YES	YES	3	5
AVERAGE			2,2	4

Source: data collected.

Difficulty average was 2.2 considering the marks of all the respondents, who identified the instructions correctly. Respondent 1 marked it as very easy, although highlighting the tendency to use the same structures as always, even though new phrases and expressions are presented. Respondents 2, 7 and 10 marked it as regular, with an overall positive evaluation, aside from personal limitations regarding the language. Only respondent 2 was not able to identify the pedagogical goal, answering why they considered it a good task instead. Usefulness average was 4. Respondents 4 and 5 marked its usefulness as low. Respondents 2 and 5 considered it very simple and vocabulary-driven, besides being a too short.

9 OR ELSE... EXCUSE ME?

We discussed about respect and what the students understood of it. Then, they were divided in groups to come up with various ways of threatening someone, as well as of how to apologize. It was interesting to notice they came up with many more examples of threats than apologies in general.

After discussing the irony and subtleties of the messages that may come in between the lines, students performed *Or else... excuse me?*, in which one of them would threaten someone else in class. This person would, then, defend themselves and the first student would apologize.

It is always good seeing students have fun during a task; however, sometimes I fear it starts losing its pedagogical purpose. Students put in practice what was discussed, but mostly the same structures and phrases.

Table 9 – Data collected from *Or else... excuse me?*

Respondent	Instruction	P. Goal	Difficulty	Usefulness
1	YES	YES	4	4
2	YES	YES	2	3
3	YES	YES	4	5
4	YES	YES	3	3
5	YES	YES	3	4
6	YES	YES	2	3
7	NO	YES	3	5
8	YES	YES	3	4
9	YES	YES	2	4
10	YES	YES	2	5
11	YES	YES	3	5
12	YES	YES	3	5
AVERAGE			2,833333333	4,166666667

Source: data collected.

The average of difficulty to this task was 2.8. Respondent 7 mistook one of the aspects of the task (i.e.: different ways of treating people) for its instructions. Respondents 2, 6, 9 and 10 considered the task easy for its simple structure and good topics. Respondents 1 and 3 marked it as difficult because of its lack of specificity on the matters of the conversations and a higher need for dramatization. All respondents identified the pedagogical goal correctly. Usefulness average was 4.1 and there was little discrepancy.