

Building a character for facilitating speech production through dramatic activities

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要旨

第二言語（日本語）習得の教室活動には、いろいろな種類の「ロールプレイ」があるが、あらかじめ場面・状況・人間関係が設定された発話環境で行われるものが多い。「ロールプレイ」は学習者が文字通り役割を演じて対話を発展させる言語活動であり、学習した文型の実践的運用を対話の流れの中でできるかどうかをみるための口頭練習である。しかし、既習文型の定着ばかりが重要視され、意思の疎通を図るための発話含意が軽視される場合が多い。そのため、意味のある対話を創り上げることが難しくなってしまう。そこで、本稿では演劇で用いられる演技手法を「ロールプレイ」に取り入れ、コミュニケーションを図る話者の心的過程を考察し、発話を促すためのモデル会話練習の試案を示すものである。演技手法にはスタニスラフスキーの『メソッド』を用い、発話に関わる心的構成概念にはヴィゴツキーの『発達最近接領域 (ZPD)』を用いている。

【キーワード】 role play, Stanislavski, the Method, Vygotsky, the zone of proximal development (ZPD)

1. Introduction: Dramatic activities for language learning

One topic of discussion among language teachers of second language acquisition (SLA) classes is how dramatic activities can be utilized for facilitating speech competence for their students (Maley and Duff, 2000; Smith, 1984; Winston, 2012). One activity in communicative language teaching involves adopting one of the dramatic elements of acting, *role play*, into the SLA classroom. Bringing *role play* into

language learning provides students with opportunities to play roles in imaginary situations, pretending to be someone else. *Role play* in a SLA class would start with an imaginary situation, for example, “at a restaurant”, a student says to another, “I will pretend to be a customer and you will pretend to be a waiter who serves my table.” After establishing the imaginary setting, students begin their classroom conversation. According to their mutual understanding of the situation, the students will engage in constructing a conversation at the imaginary restaurant.

Role play is often practiced in SLA class after an explanation of specific grammatical forms of the target language ⁽¹⁾ (Kawaguchi & Yokomizo, 2005). The grammatical forms should be presented and explained first so that students are prepared to participate in *role play*. As one example, a Japanese grammatical form, “-*tai desu* (want to do)”, should be presented and explained first in Japanese as second language (JSL) class before the students start playing their roles in exchanging utterances in an imaginary situation. It is natural, therefore, to assume that the students will construct sentences like “*O-sushi o chūmon shitai desu* (I’d like to order sushi)” since they are encouraged to utilize the newly learned grammatical form of “-*tai desu*”. In addition, a list of vocabulary used in the specific *role play* situation may include the words like *chopsticks*, *tea*, *soy sauce*, etc., which are all associated with the business of ordering food at a restaurant.

Regarding the effectiveness in facilitating speech competence in such conventional *role play*, Maley and Duff (2000) claim that:

If one’s purpose is to teach vocabulary and structure, such an approach is probably no worse than any other. But surely, then, the text-structured dialogue presentation is unnecessary? A list of words and a few correct sentences would be enough – which is exactly what most tourist phrase-books set out to provide. These books serve a specific (often useful) function: they give the rudiments of the language necessary for operating in certain surroundings. (pp. 9-10)

Role play will be useful for language learners to reinforce their understanding of grammatical forms for constructing correct sentences, but they lack the internal

meaning of what they really want to say in the conversation. In other words, *role play* has not been practiced in language classrooms for developing language learners' potential to be able to present what they want to say in the conversation but rather for confirming their understanding of mechanical transformation converting the grammatical forms into the sentences.

It is important to establish a new approach to *role play* that encourages language learners to engage in the negotiation of meaning, focusing on how their speech intent (messages that they want to convey) is to be presented in the interaction. The purpose of this paper is to incorporate dramatic activities for facilitating speech competency into the models of *role play*. This paper particularly discusses the effectiveness of dramatic element of building characters participating in *role play* of a JSL class, demonstrating the process of speech development occurred in oral interviews. To illustrate the process of speech development, it becomes necessary to discuss the inter-related theoretical constructs on which the underlying concepts of the proposed conversation models are grounded. Those constructs are: (1) Stanislavski's "Method" acting for building characters playing roles in *role play* and (2) Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) for illustrating the process of mental functioning for speech production during the social interaction in *role play*.

2. Why drama for language learning?

2.1 Similarity between actors and language learners

In SLA classes, the basic concept of *role play* is that language learners pretend to be someone else playing a role in an imaginary situation and engage in constructing sentences for their conversation. In drama, on the other hand, actors prepare to become characters who take roles in plays. Focusing on the similarity between the actors and language learners, Smith (1984) points out that:

Most fundamentally, actors and language learners share common *goals*, the most important being effective "performance," that is, communicating the intended appropriate message. In order to communicate, actors, like language learners, have to be able to do three things:

1. They have to be able to decide what they want to communicate, i.e., what is appropriate for the given situation?
2. They must then decide how to communicate that message.
3. Finally they must have the flexibility to implement their decisions, or in other words, they must be able to *perform with competence*. This is perhaps the most difficult task of all. (p. 2, Italics original)

It is important to note that both actors and language learners should have messages that they want to convey in communication. In the course of conversation, they should try to present what they want to convey and decide how to convey it with the appropriate linguistic competence.

Smith (1984) continues to say that:

Actors and language learners also share common *obstacles* in learning to convey meaning. They must learn to deal with new language and new roles, to understand their own inhibitions and confounding habits, and to develop the ability to control their own instruments, that is, their bodies, their voices, and their minds.

It stands to reason that actors and language learners can make use of the same *strategies* in overcoming the *obstacles* that stand in the way of effective communication. (p. 2, Italics original)

It is important to recognize that actors and language learners share the same strategies to accomplish their goals, which are to convey their messages in verbal communication.

2.2 Total situation

To illustrate the characteristics of the shared strategies that actors and language learners possess, Maley & Duff (2000) discuss the surroundings in which speech production occurs during the course of conversation. They named them “total situation.” The “total situation” is not a sheer physical setting, but it consists of three dramatic elements listed as follows:

(1) Setting

“This is the physical environment.” (p. 10). It is necessary to clarify the physical

characteristics of the surroundings in which speakers engage in verbal exchanges. The physical characteristics of the situation naturally have an effect on what the speakers want to say, producing the surrounding needs and leads with which they take to advance their speech production.

(2) Role and status

It is mandatory to define the characters that actors and the language learners pretend to be. It is important to decide who they are attempting to impersonate taking parts in their verbal communication and to recognize to whom they are talking. Related to the task of defining characters, it is useful to note that Stanislavski, a director of Moscow Art Theater, stressed the importance of building real characteristics into imaginary character in plays (1936, 1949). His acting theory called “the Method” gives the important insights into the procedure of building a character who takes a role both in dramatic plays and in a *role play* in language class.

The process of building a character requires not only the information of personal backgrounds and dispositions but also the information regarding what they want to obtain through the conversation (objective of the conversation). A Stanislavski’s term, “objective”, refers to what a character wants to acquire through each deliberation in the conversation (a temporary goal), while “super objective” tells what a character wants to achieve throughout the whole conversation (the underlying goal) (1961, p. 77). It is important to define the “objective” in the flow of the conversation because the “objective” often reveals the characters’ thoughts and desires that elicit their verbal exchanges. The underlying objective of the conversation is hidden between the lines as a “subtext”. Stanislavski insisted that actors should recreate the “subtext” of each line in the process of a building a character. (Miller, 2011)

For language learning in JSL class, it becomes necessary to set up a “total situation” because the language learners must present what they want to say (“objective”) in the conversation, otherwise their verbal exchanges will be meaningless since they are not concerned with their internal meanings. Without reflecting on their internal meanings, their conversation is filled with the vacant words. (Smith, 1984) In

short, the utmost goal of carrying out *role play* in SLA class is to encourage the language learners to participate in their negotiation of meanings trying to obtain their “objectives” through their verbal communication, not to practice the sheer transformation of grammatical forms into sentences.

(3) Mood, attitude and feeling

In addition to setting up an “objective”, it is necessary to consider how to present the “objective” in the conversation. In his “Method” acting theory, Stanislavski stressed the importance of affective and volitional tendencies to formulate “subtext” (Miller, 2011). Smith (1984) points out that “Method acting involves establishing the true emotions and motivations of a character, then producing those emotions truthfully, that is, really creating those emotions inside – feeling them as you are acting them” (p.13). “Total situation” includes the emotional and motivational characteristics of the character.

In addition, the dramatic element of acting creates a playful spirit of drama in language class. The language learners find their alternative identities imagining themselves differently. Winston (2012) points out that the dramatic element of acting possesses the liberating function of a mask and of enabling them to feel safe enough to take risks with languages. The playful spirit of becoming someone else surely lures them into becoming more motivated and engaged in the verbal activities in *role play*.

3. Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (SCT) of mind

The conceptual constructs for a new approach to *role play* utilizing dramatic activities are grounded in Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (SCT) of mind. Vygotsky (1978) postulated that human mental functioning emerges in social interaction with others. Based on this socio-genetic notion of mental functioning, human action and thinking are mediated by socioculturally constructed tools (technical tools) and signs (psychological tools). Such mediational tools do not shape human action and thinking directly but change the process of higher mental functioning. Trying to articulate the relationship between mental functioning and sociocultural context, Vygotsky

emphasized language (a sign system) as the primary tool for mediating human action and thinking.

Taking into account the socio-genetic mental functioning, Vygotsky (1978) claims that:

Every function in the learner's cultural development appears twice, on two levels. Some first, on the social, and later, on the psychological levels. First, between people as an inter-psychological category, and then inside as intra-psychological category. (p. 86)

Citing this connection, the researchers tried to demonstrate how individuals acquire a second language (L2) in the Vygotskian scheme of transformation from inter-psychological (between individuals) to intra-psychological (inside individuals) planes (Kozulin 2003; Lantolf and Thorne 2006; Yoon and Kim, 2012). Johnson (2004) claims that "the interpersonal plane is transformed into the intrapersonal plane by the gradual, dynamic process of internalization of the patterns of social activities to which the individual has been exposed in the course of his or her entire life" (p. 111).

According to the transformation, L2 acquisition occurs in the internalization process in which interpersonal function occurs first and intrapersonal function follows. Focusing on the characteristics of the socio-genetic mental functioning for L2 speech competence, it is important to note that *role play* can provide the language learners with opportunities when they are able to exchange their verbal thoughts, which emerge during the social interactions. In short, language learning occurs in the internalization process shifting from interpersonal plane to intrapersonal plane.

3.1 Concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The Vygotskian concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) has been employed to study the process of internalization (Chaiklin 2003; Poehner 2008). Although Vygotsky did not specifically discuss SLA in his learning theory, in the field of SLA, ZPD has been referenced as a theoretical construct for L2 studies over the past 25 years (Donato, 2000; Lantolf and Poehner, 2014). Kinginger (2002) points out that "the ZPD construct is a shorthand device capturing the emergence of cognitive

development within social interaction, when participants are provided assistance from more-competent others (teachers or peers) as they engage in learning activity” (p. 240). The emergence of cognitive development involves a transformation shift from inter- to intrapersonal planes within social interaction in the ZPD (Swain et al., 2011). The expert and novice jointly engage in the social interaction. In an attempt to illustrate the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under expert’s guidance, Vygotsky (1978) states that:

...the zone of proximal development ...is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined by problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (p. 86)

The distance should be interpreted “as a metaphorical location or a site in which learners co-construct knowledge in collaboration with an interlocutor” (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 118).

It is important to create ZPD for emergence of cognitive development for speech competency. Vygotsky suggested the presence of the underlying competence which emerges in collaboration between the expert (language teacher) and novice (language learner) (Miller, 2011). Vygotsky believed that an individual comes to attain the potential to internalize meaning from social interactions.

4. Study: a total situation in role play

As a part of their final exam, students in my JSL class were required to participate in oral interviews to be evaluated for their speaking proficiency. The interactions of two students in the interviews were recorded and transcribed for an analysis demonstrating the process of their constructing utterances exchanged in the conversation. The setting of the conversation is a consultation session in which each student tried to obtain the information regarding the most suitable host family with whom she or he will live. The teacher takes a role of a coordinator of the session.

In order for the students to complete their interviews, they are supposed to study the overall description of how the interviews to be conducted. A sheet of the interview

directions (Appendix A) was handed to the students beforehand prior to the interviews. The direction clarifies the tasks for the interview as follows:

Tasks:

Start by entering the office, exchanging greetings and introduce yourself.

You should use polite forms of Japanese:

- ① Describe your unpleasant experience(s) at your dormitory, which leads to your reasons why you want to live with a host family.
- ② Describe the most suitable host family for you to live with, being ready to respond to the coordinator's suggestions of host families.
- ③ During the process of deciding on your host family, think of some questions to ask the coordinator.

Throughout the whole interview, in this proposed new approach to *role play*, there were no grammatical forms to be utilized for the construction of sentences. Instead, the directions say that students are supposed to talk about their unpleasant experiences that prompted them to decide to live with a host family.

To establish a “total situation” for the specific *role play*, for example, a sheet of “Building a character for oral test” (Appendix B) was handed over to the students of JSL class. The task of building a character in the “total situation” elicits their speech competence to engage in the negotiation of meanings in the *role play*.

In the following excerpt, a female student Maria (pseudonym) from America engaged in the interaction of exchanging Japanese utterances with her coordinator. Her “objective” is to find the most suitable host family for her. The interview with the coordinator unfolded like this:

(1) Coordinator/teacher (C) : *Eetto, kyō wa, hosuto famirī?*

(Today, [you are looking for] a host family?)

(2) Maria (M) : *Mm...hai, ...ano...seminā hausu ichi ni sunde orimasu ga, hosuto famirī to sunde...sumitaidesu.*

(Well...yes, I live in Seminar House 1, but I'd like to live with a host family.)

(3) C : *Dōshite.* (Why?)

(4) M : *Eetto..., maishū tabemono o katta noni, zenzen tabemono ga arimasen.*
Yoku watashi no tabemono o nusumare mashita.

(Well..., every week I buy food, but there is no food. Often, my food
was stolen.)

(5) C : *Nusumare mashita?* (Stolen?)

(6) M : *Ee... ahh...hai, Okāsan ni iini iku toki, shikata ga nai to iware mashita.*
(Well...yes. When I went to talk to the lady superintendent, I **was told**
that it cannot be helped.)

(7) C : *Ah..., seminā hausu...taihen desu ne.*

(Oh..., Seminar House, it must have been hectic, isn't it?)

Without a guidance of structural framework for creating sentences, Maria created the passive sentences telling that her food was stolen (4) and she was told that it couldn't be helped (6). Maria's decision of making passive sentences clearly tells the characteristics of her mental functioning to deal with the desire of speaking about her unpleasant experience. It is assumed that her speech intent (telling her experience) was conceived first and her decision of using passive sentences came afterward. It is important to point out that unlike in the conventional *role play*, speaker's speech intent should be conceived first and then materialized in the appropriate grammatical forms.

In the next excerpt, another student, Elizabeth (pseudonym) exchanged utterances during the interaction with the coordinator. The interview unfolded like this:

(8) C : *Kyō wa hosuto famirī desu ne?*

(Today, [you want to talk about] a host family?)

(9) Elizabeth (E) : *Hai.* (Yes)

(10) C : *Dōshite? Dōshite hosuto famirī?* (Why? Why, host family?)

(11) E : *Hai..., nee..., Amerika de ryō de iroiro na warui keiken ga arimashita.*

(Yes, in America, at a dormitory, I had different kinds of bad
experiences.)

(12) C : *Ee...?* (Oh...?)

(13) E : *Tatoeba, dōryō...dōryō ga ijiwaru deshita. Tatoeba, itsumo waruguchi*
o itte imashita. Aru hi, watashi wa fuku o yogoshite shimaimashita.

Kigaeta noni, ichinichijū ijimerare mashita.

(For example, my roommate was an ill-natured person. For example, (she) was saying bad things. One day, I **regrettably made** my clothes dirty.

Although I changed my clothes, I **was bullied** all day.)

. . .

(14) C : *Taihen deshita ne. Dakara, hosuto famirī nan desu ne?*

(It must have been hectic. That's why host family?)

(15) E : *Hai, hosuto famirī o sagasu koto ni shimashita.*

(Yes, I **have decided to** look for a host family.)

Like in Maria's interview, Elizabeth used the passive sentences to present her unpleasant experiences, telling that she was bullied by her roommate (13). It seems plausible to claim that both Maria and Elizabeth decided to create the passive sentences for telling the unpleasant experiences because the passive sentences by nature carry the meaning of occurrence of unfortunate things. The passive sentence tells that the students suffered from the unfortunate experience. Instead of rote transaction from grammatical forms into the construction of sentences, speaker's speech intent should be activated first in order to facilitate their speech competence.

Following the description of the character in "Building a character in role play", each of them played a shy and quiet character in the *role play*. The use of passive sentence became appropriate for them to present their unfortunate experience.

In addition, in the process of describing peripheral information regarding her purpose of telling her unpleasant experience, Elizabeth created sentences including the specific grammatical forms that were covered in class. She produced sentences with the structure of "*-te shimaimashita* (have done regrettably)" (13), a conjunction, "*-noni* (although)" (13) and an expression of "*-koto ni shimashita* (have decided to do something)" (15). It is significant to point out that she obviously attempted to convey the meanings of what she wanted to say in relation to her unpleasant experience during the course of interaction. For that purpose, she utilized those grammatical features to materialize what she wanted to say. Elizabeth maintained her portrayal of the character who wanted to move out of the dorm and find her host family. Her effort of

maintaining the character elicited her speech competence for her verbal exchanges in the *role play*.

In the next excerpt, Elizabeth demonstrated her internal functioning by responding to the pictures shown to her during the interview. While looking at the pictures of the host families, she improvised in response in the midst of the conversation:

(16) C : *So desu ka? Donna hosuto famirī ga ii desu ka?*

(Is that so? Which host family is good for you?)

(17) E : *Hmm...so..., watashi wa yasashikute omoshioi hito ga suki desu. Nihon ni iru aidani, yoku ryokō shitai node, hmm..., ryokō mo...ryokō ga sukina hito mo suki desu.*

(Hm...so, I like kind and interesting people. While being in Japan, I want to go on trips, so that I like the people who like traveling.)

(18) C : *Ah... (Ah...)*

[showing one of the pictures of host families to her]

(19) E : *Eetto..., soshite, sabishiku naritai desu kara, ...[looking at the picture] Ah, kodomo...wakai kodomo wa anmari sukija arimasen. Demo, dekireba, chotto toshiyori no kodomo ga suki desu.*

(Well..., since I want to be alone...[looking at the picture] Ah...children...I don't like young children. However, if possible, I prefer an old child.)

[Coordinator shows another picture of host family with a high school student]

(20) E : *Aaa, ii desu ne...kōkōsei mitai.*

(Ah...it's good. (she) **looks like** a high school student)

(21) C : *Kōkōsei...,etto, Yamamoto san...hai.*

(High school student...let me see...Ms. Yamamoto...yes)

(22) E : *Hm... (Hm...)*

(23) C : *Hai, Hiroko san...kōkōsei desu. Kōkō sannensei desu.*

(Yes, Hiroko...a high school student. A senior high school student.)

(24) E : *Sannensei...sore wa ii desu ne. Eetto, itsumo Nihongo de hanashite*

hoshii desu keredomo, etto, otagaini ii kaiwa ga arimasu.

(A senior high school student...that's good. Well..., although I want her to speak Japanese all the time, we will have a good conversation each other.)

Elizabeth improvised her conversation talking about a child in the picture. She instantly presented her feeling of disliking young children. It is obvious that she relived her former experience of dealing with young children and expressed her feeling in Japanese. Her goal of finding the most suitable host family elicited her speech competence and her message was conveyed effectively in its “subtext”.

Elizabeth's improvisational verbal responses continued when the coordinator showed another picture of a family with children. This time the child was not a young child so that she responded in favor of living with the family. She seemed to make sure that the picture showed a rather older child, using a Japanese sentence “*kōkōsei mitai* (looks like a high school student)”. This form was introduced in class, too. Her speech competence evolved around the “objective” that takes an important part of “total situation” created for the *role play*.

5. Discussion and implication for teaching

As directors in drama do, it is important to emphasize that language teachers should create a “total situation” for language learning in *role play*, directing the learners toward the attainment of their goal. Their goal is to convey their messages in appropriate manners in conversation. In order to convey the messages appropriately, the learners engage in building characters who takes roles in the communication. The study in this paper indicates that the ZPD in the social interaction provided a metaphorical location where the language learners and the teacher co-constructed their messages in the course of conversation.

Related to the delivery of the messages, Ellis (2012) emphasizes that “The ‘language acquisition device’ is not situated inside the learners’ head but is located in the social interaction in which the learner participates.” (p. 238). The social interaction in ZPD elicited the learners’ speech competence in *role play*. Ellis continues to say:

Acquisition is seen as occurring in rather than as a result of interaction.

Language learning is dialogically based. (p. 104)

A cognitive shift from inter- to intra-psychological plane occurs in the internalization process of the ZPD.

Yoon and Kim (2012) point out teacher's role in ZPD in three ways:

1. The ZPD focuses on SLLs' (second language learners') current state and level that teachers need to be aware of to promote their learning and development.
2. The ZPD consists of flexibility and possibility. The zone is created and moving, rather than fixed and stable.
3. The ZPD implies that individual students' difference exists, which requires the teacher's differentiated and tailored guidance. (p. xvii)

Understanding the learners' current state in ZPD, the teacher should engage in the co-constructing process of verbal communication with them.

Chaiklin (2003) claims that "Assistance is meaningful only in relation to maturing functions needed for transition to the next stage" (p. 57). The incorporation of dramatic activities in *role play* assists the teachers to create a setting conducive to language learning, directing the learners toward the attainment of their goal.

Note

- (1) Yamauchi (2002) developed a textbook for *role play*, focusing on the problem-solving tasks in certain situations in which the language learners to engage in verbal activities. This textbook starts with the settings for solving problems and the learners will think about the appropriate forms for constructing sentences to complete the conversation.

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Appendix A

SPJ3

きまつしけん 2014 あきがっき
期末試験 2014 秋学期

Oral Exam

Date : 12月11日 (木) or 12月12日 (金)

Place : Office 3309

Role-play

You : ホストファミリーを探している留学生
Host family coordinator : ホストファミリーを紹介する

You are looking for a host family with whom you will live in Hirakata during the next semester. You dislike the idea of living in the dormitory where you once had some unpleasant experience. So, you decided to live with a host family during your extended stay in Japan. In order to find the most suitable host family for you, you must provide the host family coordinator with reasons why you want to move out the dormitory and to live with a host family. You must also describe the best host family for you to live with.

Tasks:

Start by entering the office, exchanging greetings and introduce yourself. You should use polite forms of Japanese:

- ① Describe your unpleasant experience at your dormitory, which leads to your reasons why you want to live with a host family.
- ② Describe the most suitable host family for you to live with, being ready to respond to the coordinator's suggestions of host families.
- ③ During the process of deciding on your host family, think of some questions to ask the coordinator.

Show your gratitude and leave the office politely.

Appendix B

SPJ3 Building a character for Oral Test

I am ...



- Super Objective:

I'd like to live with a Japanese host family

- Objective for today's meeting with a host family coordinator

I'd like to find the most suitable host family for me to live with

* Age: 21

* Year: 3rd year at U. of ...

* Major: Japanese & International Relations

* Former Residence in Hirakata: a Seminar House 5

* Personality: shy, quiet, introverted

* Family: Father and mother, no siblings

* Things that I like to do:

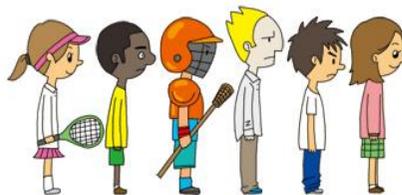
(1) reading books (history, art, culture books, photography)

(2) painting (oil painting)

(3) traveling

(4) listening to old jazz

(5) taking photos



* Things that I don't like to do:

(1) cleaning house

(2) cooking

(3) laundry

* People with who I'd like to be:

(1) quiet, considerate, thoughtful people

(2) people who do not smoke

(3) people who are not arrogant or judgmental

