

# BEYOND PAPER-AND-PENCIL TESTS: GOOD ASSESSMENT PRACTICES FOR EFL CLASSES

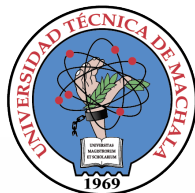
SANDY T. SOTO / EDER INTRIAGO PALACIOS / JOHNNY VILLAFUERTE HOLGUÍN





# Beyond Paper-and-Pencil Tests: Good Assessment Practices for EFL Classes

Sandy T. Soto  
Eder Intriago Palacios  
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# Dedication

To all the people who made the publication of this book possible.

To those EFL teachers who, day by day, give the best of their own for helping their students construct their knowledge and learn English in meaningful and effective ways.



# Introduction

Individuals' learning of a second or foreign language has been traditionally measured with paper-and-pencil tests. Unfortunately, such assessment practice prevents learners from demonstrating the skills gained throughout the teaching-learning processes and thus, their actual ability to use the target language effectively. It also limits learners from receiving positive feedback; which opens doors for them to improve their language skills.

The language teaching field demands that English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers have a vast knowledge of the fundamental concepts and theories that surround the assessment of EFL learning. It also requires that professionals who teach a foreign language keep up to date with assessment tendencies that go beyond paper-and-pencil tests as is the case of authentic assessments.

Assessment practices that go beyond traditional paper-and-pencil tests provide students with opportunities to be assessed in mental stress-free environments. Teachers who promote this alternative form of assessment prompt learners to perform real-world tasks so that they can demonstrate their capability to apply essential knowledge and skills in creative and meaningful ways. In other words, teachers gain insights about how much students have grasped by

their actual ability to perform in a specific situation instead of the number right or wrong answers they have made on a test.

This book is composed of seven chapters intended to inform pre-service and in-service EFL teachers about good assessment practices that go beyond the bounds of tests that require learners to read questions and respond in writing. The first chapter of this book provides EFL educators with a menu of authentic assessments that can be implemented in their classrooms. It also builds a synopsis of assessment practices in Ecuadorian EFL classes and the educational policies that have been implemented to improve them.

The second chapter of this book digs into the use of role-plays as an alternative to assess students' oral production. The chapter is built upon the results of two studies on the topic and some research conducted by its author, addressing the causes that affect learners' willingness to speak English. The third chapter focuses on the assessment of one of the receptive skills in language learning, reading. This chapter offers a compilation of resources for effectively assessing reading comprehension in EFL programs; detailing how these resources intertwine with the reality of EFL settings.

The fourth chapter discusses a set of strategies that have been evaluated by the authors of this section through action research. Based on their experience, the authors explain how such strategies can be used as tools to gain insights, develop reflective practice, and improve students' outcomes as well as the teaching environment.

In the fifth chapter, the readers will learn about the importance of determining and how to diminish students' test anxiety. This chapter also addresses practical authentic assessment tools and scenarios that give language learners anxiety-free opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge.

The sixth and seventh chapters have been devoted to the use of technology for assessing language learners authentically. Chapter six analyzes the change from traditional pen

and paper tests to those that have incorporated technology. The authors review the evolution of Information and Communication Technologies based evaluation and assessment applications for English as foreign language learning and teaching, as well as their advantages and disadvantages, current developments, and future trends for technology-based assessment practices.

Finally, grounded in an action research intervention, chapter seven examines how the use of Literature Circles, Google Apps, and corrective feedback can help students improve learners' English language level. Each chapter in this book offers EFL teachers with valuable information on good assessment practices. It is expected that the educators who read this work consider the suggestions provided here and implement them in their practice. We are sure that by doing so, these educators will give their students the possibility of being assessed authentically; it is to say, by what they can do instead of by how many items they get right on a test.

# 02 Chapter Role-plays as an assessment tool in English as a foreign language (EFL) class

María Rojas Encalada

## Abstract

Roleplaying is a technique that allows teachers to assess students' speaking skills development. This is accomplished when the causes that prevent learners from taking part in Role-Plays (RP) are reduced through actions that will lead them to learn more vocabulary, have more grammar control, and become more fluent, less shy, more encouraged, and more capable of pronouncing words correctly. The author of the present chapter connects the participants' perceptions about the use of RP to develop speaking skills from a study conducted by Rojas (2017) with a study conducted by Nation and Newton (2009) regarding the causes that affect learners' willingness to speak in the target language. The author also does some research to apply some procedures to overcome this issue. For this purpose, students need to be observed regularly through the use of rubrics to identify possible causes that prevent them from developing their conversational abilities.

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Keywords: Role-play, assessment, Grammar control, fluency, shyness, encouragement, pronunciation, perceptions

## Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe how to make RP a better tool to assess speaking skills development in EFL classes. To that end, the author made a connection between learners' perceptions about the use of RP from a study conducted by Rojas (2017) with the causes that prevent students from speaking mentioned in a study conducted by Nation and Newton (2009). These causes include "inadequate vocabulary, inadequate control of grammar, lack of fluency, shyness, and lack of encouragement" (p. 112).

Moreover, some research on mispronunciation was performed which is also another reason, according to participants' opinions in Rojas' study, for not liking to take part in RP. There are also some considerations regarding the strengths and weaknesses of RP and the procedures to innovate this technique such as the use of video role-plays.

According to the learners' perceptions, there are aspects to be improved in EFL classes for a more appropriate assessment of conversational abilities. It is recommended to identify the aspects that affect students to participate in conversational activities and to take a course of actions that will enable them to be more willing to get involved in RP.

To make RP a stronger assessment tool, this section of the book presents a series of procedures, mentioned in previous studies, to overcome the causes that interfere with the learners' willingness to speak. Consequently, learners will feel more prepared, confident, and motivated when participating in this communicative activity. To that end, students need to be examined continuously through the use of rubrics to detect possible issues that prevent them from developing their conversational abilities. This analysis will also allow instructors to take the necessary actions to make RP a better assessment tool.

## Literature Review

First of all, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of how RP is defined by different authors, their procedures, benefits, and limitation. In this regard, according to Alabsi (2016), RP is a recognized strategy that leads learners to become acquainted with unknown communities. Role-playing allows students to practice conversations using the target language in different situations. Another study conducted by Yen, Hou, and Chang (2015) considers that RP is a significant technique since it centers on developing speaking skills in communicative classes through taking part in roles of specific situations.

Additionally, Altun (2015) maintains that it is beneficial to apply RP in EFL classes since they lead learners to develop communicative skills and improve their conversational abilities. Furthermore, this technique enables students to link vocabulary, practical knowledge and topics being learned in class (Alabsi, 2016).

In this respect, when students are learning to express themselves in situations related to a professional industry, they are presented with vocabulary, expressions, and phrases link to this sector. According to Alabsi (2016), when students RP the terms learned in class, they improve their understanding of the vocabulary and the way they are used in a meaningful context.

Correspondingly, drama-based RP facilitates learners to devise and develop their roles autonomously (Siririman-gkorn and Suwanthep, 2013). Students are required to be involved in the preparation of RP and perform it in a real context. In other words, if the RP is about a marriage proposal, the participants will not only prepare the dialogues but also arrange the situation such as having them organize the place where the marriage proposal will take place as if it were a park or a house.

Practice speaking skills through RP are also beneficial for beginners if the activity is according to their level. It is essential that students get involved in conversational events from the beginning of their target language learning process, so they will be enabled to develop the necessary abilities throughout all the stages of their language development. In this regard, a study conducted by Limberg (2015) maintains that weak learners can prepare easy to perform RPs such as an apology. First, they do it in their native language and then in their target language by having the aid of a model. In this way, learners slowly improve their understanding of culturally correct behaviors towards the harms of social norms and, at the same time, practice the use of words and expressions for apologies in the foreign language while roleplaying.

It is recommended to have students interact naturally in factual circumstances with the intention of having them get used to conversations they might experience in the future. In this context, Sinwongsuwat (2012) conducted a study in which it is analyzed the benefits of non-scripted RPs as an activity that focuses on natural conversation. The study discusses that if the technique is applied with an appropriate rubric, this task will allow us to assess better the students' ability to speak in real communicative situations and with practice develop better English conversation proficiency. Additionally, evaluating learners' oral language development through rubrics is necessary to identify any repeated errors they might make to take the measures required to correct these mistakes.

A different study related to the assessment of speaking skills development was conducted by Michaud and Hooper (2016) at a Japanese private university where a project about EFL drama in language acquisition script writing took place. This project focuses on finding out if role-playing the scripts improved awareness of the setting, speakers' roles and purpose, and an increase of language ability. The results of this research pointed out that script writing activities are necessary to guide students to develop an understanding of a real-life situation. Concerning this, these authors main-

tain the usefulness of scripted RPs since they include elements that appear in the contextual drama. Additionally, they allow learners to use their own words and actions when they co-create their dialogues.

Even though RPs are beneficial to develop speaking skills, they also show some disadvantages. In this regard, the study conducted by Rojas (2017) indicates that according to the participants in the research, besides the positive aspects of RP, they also show some adverse outcomes related to mispronunciation, lack of peer's support, the absence of vocabulary and language understanding, uninteresting RP, and feeling shame. These drawbacks perceived by students are connected with the causes mentioned by Nation and Newton (2009) that impair them to participate in communicative activities successfully. Therefore, these participants recommended making RPs resemble real-life situations, help from the teacher, pronunciation training, and vocabulary practice.

## **Role plays adaptations for improving foreign language practice**

### **Inadequate Vocabulary**

Learning the meaning of words in a foreign language entails a long process before students are ready enough to apply words suitably in conversations. The breadth of vocabulary use and knowledge is applying terms appropriately in daily oral communication. Whereas, the depth of vocabulary learning refers to the different techniques or processes that a learner needs to go through to reach a broad vocabulary control. In this regard, the vocabulary use and knowledge in the context of RP task performance are essential to assess the extent of the student's breadth and depth of knowledge and take actions to improve their vocabulary learning.

About this, Nation (2001) mentions that with the intention of training students on vocabulary, it is necessary to consider the "number of words in the language, the number of words



known by native speakers and the number of words necessary to practice the language” (p. 6).

In this respect, Seal (1991) maintains that there are two types of teaching strategies for vocabulary training in an original context. Unplanned teaching strategy refers to the spontaneous help of the teacher when necessary. This control needs to be done during the preparation and at the end of the activity.

The second strategy proposed by Seal refers to three steps in which the teacher expresses the meaning, checks the definition, and consolidates the purpose in the learner’s memory. These steps are performed in class at the introduction of a topic associating them with situations students experience in real life.

On the other hand, planned vocabulary strategy, according to Seal, deals with specific and prepared vocabulary teaching. Through this strategy, instructors reflect on the terms that are necessary for students to learn to accomplish a particular task in class.

It is important not to have students participate in RPs immediately after presenting and practicing the new words. On the contrary, it is recommended to reinforce these terms using different resources such as audiovisuals to have them feel confident when role-playing. The audiovisual approach made the difference in the age of technology for language teaching by presenting the advantages of visuals and producing language from them (Barani, Mazandarani, & Rezaie, 2010). Consequently, audiovisuals expand the learner’s practice of the language since they will be able to observe how native speakers use the new terms in a specific situation.

### **Inadequate Control of Grammar**

Communicative Approach classes promote grammar teaching to facilitate students to produce regular oral communication. In this respect, Hinkel and Fotos (2001) consider that there is a new view of grammar instruction which is a combination of formal training and communicative lan-

guage use. Purely communicative program of study is deemed to be insufficient because of lack of grammar instruction which according to Skehan findings (as cited in Hinkel & Fotos, 2001) tends to produce fossilization and classroom pidgins.

### **Lack of Fluency**

If pronunciation, vocabulary, language understanding, and grammar are developed, students will become more fluent when speaking in the target language. Accordingly, learning a foreign language entails using it naturally and fluently which is essential to develop the ability to communicate (Yang, 2014). However, to be able to talk casually and without difficulties, instructors need to make sure that the class environment has the appropriate conditions for this to happen.

In this respect, fluency, according to Nation and Newton (2009), would develop as long as the activity is meaningful; the learners are active members of the learning process and build fluency from their previous experience, and encouragement for learners to perform beyond their level.

For this purpose, RPs are beneficial to develop speaking fluency as long as they are related to topics students are interested in, or if they are connected to activities learners will do in their future lives. Furthermore, if participants are expected to RP efficiently, they are required to have previous knowledge of a specific topic, vocabulary and grammar structures. Learners, as a consequence, will feel encouraged and more confident when role-playing.

Together with these three conditions to develop speaking skills, instructors should also observe how students communicate orally to be able to provide them feedback about their errors. Considering this, a recent study at a state university in Turkey investigated about EFL teachers' perceptions on corrective feedback (CF) during conversation classes and their strategies for error correction. The results of this study demonstrated that EFL teachers are likely to make corrections on grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation to deve-

lop students' accuracy during speaking. Furthermore, EFL teachers perceive that the correction of mistakes may contribute to preventing the formation of habit since students will self-correct among themselves, they will use the target language pragmatically and appropriately and improve learners' accuracy and fluency. Through CF, teachers focus on pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary mistakes that interfere with meaning while speaking (Değirmenci & Aydin, 2017). By providing students with CF, they will be aware of what is right and wrong and will not make the same mistakes in subsequent conversational tasks.

### **Fear to Speak in the Target Language**

While learners are developing their conversational abilities, it is common for them to make mistakes since they still do not have a good command of the spoken language. Therefore, instructors need to understand the current language level of each student and encourage them to develop the language by transmitting them positive feelings. In this respect, according to Krashen (1981), the affective filter hypothesis identifies how anxiety influences language learning.

Furthermore, students' anxiety is also produced because they do not have full control of the target language. However, the more proficient they are, the less fearful they feel. A study conducted by Lee (2015), examines the relationships between teachers' oral CF and changes in international students' language anxiety levels. The results showed that the majority of the teachers' oral CF had positive influences on the learners' affective variables, mainly decreasing their anxiety about speaking English. Consequently, it is resolved that CF helps students to be more proficient in the target language and at the same time more confident when participating in communicative activities such as RP.

### **Lack of Encouragement**

When students are motivated to develop their conversational abilities, they are more willing to participate in different speaking tasks. In this stage, instructors should include tech-

nological means such as video RPs to have them interact among themselves in a meaningful and enjoyable context. In this respect, Hwang, Huang, Shadiev, Wu, and Chen, (2014) maintain that instructors should use technology to motivate students to develop speaking skills. These authors suggested activities based on mobile learning to improve English speaking skills which will enable learners to be more interested in participating in communicative tasks.

An advantage of filming a RP is that students have the chance to rehearse several times until they produce intelligible dialogues. Furthermore, they can arrange the place or wear specific clothing to pretend they are firefighters, nurses, doctors, etc. Learners can also go to a bank, a hospital, a hotel or any other place that relates to the topic of the activity. A study related to video RPs conducted by Garcia-Sanchez (2016) centers on active learning strategies in EFL classes at a university classroom to encourage communicative, collaborative, and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) skills in situational video RPs link to their professional fields. The results of the study demonstrated that students' communications, professional situations, and needs have developed outside the scenario of a class. Consequently, learners can make speaking skills improvements since they have the chance to participate in meaningful conversational activities.

It is necessary that the instructor designs activities that encourage students to develop speaking skills in situations that are meaningful and interested. Otherwise, if the tasks are irrelevant to students, the learning goal will be trying to achieve. With the aim of making RPs more enjoyable, students need to be motivated to interact and hold conversations in situations similar to the ones they will encounter in the future.

Another study that focuses on the importance of motivation to learn English as a Foreign Language was conducted in the Amazon region of Ecuador by Ochoa, Cabrera, Quiñónez, Castillo, and González (2016). This study aimed to determine the relationship between communicative activities and their

influence on learners' motivation. The outcomes from the data collection methods demonstrated that learners and instructors perceived that communicative activities are exciting. Furthermore, participants mentioned feeling encouraged when participating in forthcoming events because they allow to develop fluency, pronunciation, and to use the target language in a real-life context.

### Mispronunciation

It is necessary to pronounce the words appropriately, so the listener will be able to comprehend the message efficiently. In this regard, instructors should do all the necessary recasts (the teacher's correction of mispronounced words by showing to students the right usage) when learners mispronounce words for them to become aware of the proper pronunciation. The result of a study conducted by Sato (2016) showed that phonological recast proved to be useful to reduce learners' mistakes. Additionally, Milla and Mayo (2014) maintain that recast is necessary since the aim of the class through role-playing is to enable learners to notice the correct pronunciation of words. A recast as exemplified by these authors would be like the following:

Learner: the awards presentation ceremony  
which is celebrated xxx many artists perform xxx  
popular televised /\*televi:zd/ xxx.

Teacher: televised /'tel.i.vaɪz / [RC] no televised  
/\*televi:zd/ [EC] televised...(p.13)

Furthermore, listening exercises are highly recommended to become familiar with how native speakers of the target language pronounce words. In this respect, Baker (2014) maintains that pronunciation techniques that relate to the understanding of audio, lead learners to focus on input and output which resemble what is required in everyday real-life situations.

If students learn enough vocabulary, have better control of grammar usage, and pronounce words clearly, their level of fear while roleplaying will decrease. As a result, they

become more enthusiastic about the activity since they feel confident in a friendlier environment where they can function appropriately.

Teachers are crucial elements to help students develop an appropriate pronunciation of words through talking to them in the target language and correcting mistakes whenever learners mispronounce words. Thence, teacher's guidance is required to develop correct pronunciation through recast.

### Use of rubrics

Finally, with the aim of ensuring that students are acquiring the necessary vocabulary, control of grammar, fluency, confidence, motivation, and intelligible pronunciation, it is essential to evaluate the development of conversational skills during a course period through rubrics. By doing this, teachers can assess the progress of students' conversational abilities through real-life role-playing situations in EFL classes. For this purpose, the following table of rubrics was created with the intention of facilitating instructors to identify and reinforce any weak aspects of a student's oral production in the target language:

Table 1 Role-Plays Evaluation Rubrics

Description	5	10	15	20
vocabulary	Insufficient vocabulary knowledge.	Some vocabulary knowledge.	Enough vocabulary knowledge.	Plenty vocabulary knowledge.
Control of grammar	Poor use of the grammar structure.	Some errors are shown in the use of grammatical structures.	Few errors are shown in the use of grammatical structures.	Proper management of grammatical structures.
Fluency	Most of the times the student hesitates when trying to speak the target language.	Some hesitation is evidenced while the student speaks the target language.	Few times the student hesitates while speaking.	The student speaks the target language fluently.

Confidence	The student demonstrates fear to speak.	Several times the student demonstrates fear to speak.	Although at times, the student demonstrates some fear to speak, he/she can communicate reasonably well.	The student is entirely self-confident of what he/she is saying.
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Motivation	The student is not motivated by the activity since he does not show any creativity, innovation, and dynamic body language while participating.	There is some evidence that the student is motivated. Once in a while, the student is creative, innovative and uses some dominant body language.	The student tries to be motivated regardless of the difficult task. He uses some creativity, innovation, and dominant body language while participating in the conversational activity.	The student is enthusiastic about the activity. He/she is sufficiently creative, innovative, and uses dynamic body language.
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Pronunciation	Unclear pronunciation of words.	Some words are intelligibly pronounced.	Most of the words are intelligibly pronounced.	Words are intelligibly pronounced.
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Score: \_\_/20

Note. Adapted from “Speaking Diagnostic Test – EX 1005 (Role-Play Interaction),” by C. Girón- García & C. Llopis-Moreno, 2015. *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching & Learning Language & Literature*, 8, p. 74.

By using rubrics, teachers will be able to identify precisely what causes make students not being willing to speak, what aspects are necessary to improve to enable learners to participate in conversations, and the procedures required to be followed to overcome the elements that limit the development of students’ speaking skills. In this respect, Espinosa (2015) maintains that the use of rubrics enables instructors to score learners’ performance fairly and precisely.

## Methodology

### Participants

This chapter considers the perceptions of 17 university students (11 learners from the 5th semester and six learners from the 7th semester), majoring in Hotel and Tourism Management, from a previous study conducted by Rojas (2017) regarding the use of RPs to develop speaking skills.

### Context

The study took place at a public university in two ESP courses. The researcher observed that students struggled with oral communication and lack fluency. Past ESP courses had focused on teaching these courses using traditional methods and seldom using communicative activities. Therefore, having students participate in RPs provide them with the opportunity to develop speaking skills and prepare them for their future professional careers (Rojas, 2017).

### Instruments and data collection analysis

The researcher applied focus group discussions and individual interviews with semi-structured questions to the participants at the beginning, middle, and end of the study. However, for the present chapter, the author only considered the third intervention. The questions included in the two instruments aimed to analyze the participants' perceptions of the use of RPs to develop speaking skills.

### Ethical Considerations

After receiving authorization to conduct the study, Rojas (2017) asked participants to sign a Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study. The participants' identity was protected by the use of codes. In this regard, for the present chapter, FF155LEV and INTM17LEV are codes for two different participants, in which each letter is represented as it follows:



F: Focus Group

INT: individual interview

F: female

M: male

#: identity

5LEV: 5th level

7LEV: 7th level

## Results

This section takes into consideration the results obtained from the third and final intervention of the study conducted by Rojas (2017). The results are shown in tables that display students' perceptions on the use of RPs which arose from the questions included in the focus group discussions and individual interviews. The tables also include the comments of the author's present chapter (see Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7).

### Outcomes from the Focus Group Discussions (Rojas, 2017)

Table 2 Learner's opinions on the use of role-plays

Category	Code	Learners' comments	Author's comment
Displeasure about Role-Plays	Mispronunciation inhibits dialogue in role-plays	FF155LEV...sometimes I cannot pronounce the words correctly...	In this respect, instructors should consider having students practice and improve pronunciation through recasting and audiovisuals.
		FF155LEV Words are pronounced differently from how they are written.	
		FF165LEV.If we are not sure how to pronounce a word, we should not speak because we might be giving wrong information to the foreigner.	

Note. Participants' answers. Adapted from A1 EFL Students' Insights about the Use of Role-Plays Two English for Specific Purpose (ESP) Course to Develop Speaking Skills in the Hotel and Tourism Management Career of a Public University in Ecuador. By M. A. Rojas Encalada. 2017 (Master's Thesis). p. 102. Retrieved from <http://www.dspace.espol.edu.ec/xmlui/handle/123456789/38520>

Table 3 Learner's opinions on the use of role-plays

Category	Codes	Learners' comments	Author's comments
Drawbacks of using role-plays	Lack of vocabulary limits speaking in role-plays	FF85LEV. Most of us don't manage the target language well enough, and therefore we use the translator to look for the meaning of words.	Instructors should present the new terms to students, practice them through a different type of exercises such as matching, filling in the blanks and listening to dialogues or videos, so they learn how these words are used in a real context.
	Dull	FF175LEV... it becomes mind-numbing to talk about something mechanically.	Instructors should encourage students to speak spontaneously about topics they have learned previously and are unusual for them.
	Feeling shameful effects participating in role-plays.	FM25LEV. ...we see many people and tend to forget the dialogues of the role-plays ...	Classes should transmit positive feelings, so students are encouraged to role-play in front of an audience.

Note. Participants' answers. Adapted from A1 EFL Students' Insights about the Use of Role- Plays in Two English for Specific Purpose (ESP) Course to Develop Speaking Skills in the Hotel and Tourism Management Career of a Public University in Ecuador. By M. A. Rojas Encalada. 2017 (Master's Thesis). P.109. Retrieved from <http://www.dspace.espol.edu.ec/xmlui/handle/123456789/38520>

Table 4 Learner's opinions on the use of role-plays

Category	Codes	Learners' comments	Author's comments
Advice for the use of Role-Plays	Vocabulary training to enable speaking in role-plays	FF65LEV ...Teachers should help us practice vocabulary. FF135LEV. I consider that it is the responsibility of every student to learn the vocabulary... I think that there are topics that we as students should learn on our own ... Interviewer: What activities do you advise to improve speaking and make them more accessible? FF155LEV. ...Write the meaning and pronunciation of the words in English.	It is advisable to have students work on their own to acquire some background of the new terms before preparing their role-plays.
	Pronunciation training to enable speaking in role-plays	Interviewer: What activities do you advise to improve speaking and make them more accessible? FF55LEV. That you as a teacher help us to pronounce the words that we don't know how to.	Recasting or corrective feedback is necessary when learners mispronounce words.
	Make role-plays enjoyable	Interviewer: What tasks can your teacher do, so that role-plays become more comfortable to prepare? FF135LEV. ...when we are discussing a topic during class, the same day we should perform a role-play or a conversation related to that matter. FF175LEV. ... Dynamic role-plays make students feel enthusiastic.	Instructors should encourage learners to interact spontaneously.

Note. Participants' answers. Adapted from A1 EFL Students' Insights about the Use of Role- Plays in Two English for Specific Purpose (ESP) Course to Develop Speaking Skills in the Hotel and Tourism Management Career of a Public University in Ecuador. By M. A. Rojas Encalada. 2017 (Master's Thesis). p. 111. Retrieved from <http://www.dspace.espol.edu.ec/xmlui/handle/123456789/38520>

Table 5 Learner's opinions on the use of role-plays

Category	Codes	Learners' comments	Author's comments
Displeasure about using Role-Plays	Mispronunciation reduces the ability to speak	INTM17LEV. ...I don't enjoy participating in role-plays because it is difficult to pronounce the words.	Recasting or corrective feedback is necessary when learners mispronounce words.
	Lack of peer's support	INTF77LEV. ...Sometimes we don't have our classmates' help.	Instructors should encourage collaborative work among students.

Note. Participants' answers. Adapted from A1 EFL Students' Insights about the Use of Role- Plays in Two English for Specific Purpose (ESP) Course to Develop Speaking Skills in the Hotel and Tourism Management Career of a Public University in Ecuador. By M. A. Rojas Encalada. 2017 (Master's Thesis). p. 123. Retrieved from <http://www.dspace.espol.edu.ec/xmlui/handle/123456789/38520>

Table 6 Learner's opinions on the use of role-plays

Category	Codes	Learners' comments	Author's comments
Drawbacks of using Role-Plays	The absence of language understanding inhibits participating in role-plays	INTM37LEV. The participants of the role-play do not understand the target language, and therefore there is not an appropriate interaction. INTF97LEV. We don't understand English well enough, so we don't perform role-plays appropriately.	Instructors should have learners reinforce some knowledge of grammar and vocabulary before having them participate in role-plays.
	Mispronunciation affects speaking in role-plays	Interviewer: What is the most challenging thing for you? INTM17LEV. Pronunciation...	Recasting or corrective feedback is necessary when learners mispronounce words.

Note. Participants' answers. Adapted from A1 EFL Students' Insights about the Use of Role- Plays in Two English for Specific Purpose (ESP) Course to Develop Speaking Skills in the Hotel and Tourism Management Career of a Public University in Ecuador. By M. A. Rojas Encalada. 2017 (Master's Thesis). p. 130. Retrieved from <http://www.dspace.espol.edu.ec/xmlui/handle/123456789/38520>

Table 7 Learner's opinions on the use of role-plays

Category	Codes	Learners' comments	Author's comments
Advice for the use of Role-Plays	Make Role-Plays look like a real-life situation	INTM17LEV. It would be beneficial to adequate a stage related to the task to improve role-plays. INTM27LEV. I think students should be more creative. Not only to depend on a script but also prepare a stage according to what is being talked or written. In other words, adequate a little more the context, so it becomes more real. Interviewer: Why are role-plays an excellent option to learn? INTF77LEV. Because there are different contexts to perform role-plays.	Arrange the context where role-plays will be performed, so learners feel as if they are in a restaurant, hotel, airport, etc.
	Teacher's help	INTM37LEV. The teacher should have a constant control. INTF97LEV. I believe the teacher should center on each group to guide them in the performance of an excellent role-play.	Instructors should be a constant guide for learners.
	Pronunciation rehearsal to enable speaking in role-plays	INTM17LEV. I would advise focusing some more on the pronunciation development, so it would be easier when preparing and presenting a role-play.	Use audiovisuals to have students practice the correct pronunciation by listening to native speakers.
	Vocabulary rehearsal to enable speaking in role-plays	Interviewer: What advice would you give to elude memorizing role-plays, so it becomes something more spontaneous? INTM17LEV. I would advise practicing more vocabulary.	Instructors should present the new terms to students, practice them through different situations, so they learn how these words are used in a real context.

Note. Participants' answers. Adapted from A1 EFL Students' Insights about the Use of Role-Plays in Two English for Specific Purpose (ESP) Course to Develop Speaking Skills in the Hotel and Tourism Management Career of a Public University in Ecuador. By M. A. Rojas Encalada. 2017 (Master's Thesis). p. 132. Retrieved from <http://www.dspace.espol.edu.ec/xmlui/handle/123456789/38520>

## Discussion of Findings

The following lines discuss the outcomes of what was reviewed in the literature, particularly, the link between Rojas (2017) finding on learners' perceptions of RP, the causes for an infrequent involvement on those types of tasks by EFL students mentioned by Nation and Newton (2009) with the present chapter findings.

According to Nation and Newton (2009), it is vital to monitor learners when they are beginning to participate in speaking interactions and identify those who may not be willing to talk. Therefore, these authors consider five possible causes of students' unwillingness to communicate orally to scrutinize them in this chapter and take the necessary actions to reduce their effects. These causes include "inadequate vocabulary, inadequate control of grammar, lack of fluency, shyness, and lack of encouragement" (Nation & Newton, 2009, p. 112). Also, participants in the study conducted by Rojas (2017) mentioned mispronunciation as another cause that affects students' participation in RPs.

Concerning the fact that some students do not enjoy participating in conversations because of inadequate vocabulary, participant FF65LEV mentioned that teachers should assist students to practice vocabulary (Rojas, 2017). In this regard, Seal (1991) maintain that planned vocabulary strategy, which consists of specific and prepared vocabulary teaching, deals on words essential for students to learn to accomplish a particular task in class. About this, participant FF125LEV considers that the instructor should present the vocabulary for next class and have each student make a sentence with the word of her or his choice. Doing this, according to the participant, will enable them to listen and associate the words with the topic of the class and the area of their major (Rojas, 2017). Furthermore, students will not only learn the new words, but they will also have the chance to use them in a context meaningful to them.

On the other hand, if learners do not know the meaning of words, language is not understood, and conversational tasks become uninteresting. For this reason, participants

INTM37LEV and INTF97LEV maintain that interaction during RPs is affected by the lack of language understanding (Rojas, 2017). It is necessary for instructors, when language is not understood, to apply unplanned teaching strategy, which according to Seal (1991) refers to the natural assistance of the teacher when needed during and at the end of the task.

Even though students did not mention anything about inadequate control of grammar in the third intervention of Rojas' research, a previous study conducted by Hinkel and Fotos (2001) promoted grammar teaching in Communicative Approach classes to enable learners to produce plain speaking. These authors support a new view of grammar teaching that combines formal training and communicative language use. In this regard, Skehan Study (as cited in Hinkel & Fotos, 2001) maintain that solely communicative program of study would be inadequate because of lack of grammar instruction that tends to produce fossilization and classroom pidgins.

Similarly, participants on the third intervention of Rojas' study did not mention lack of fluency as a cause for not taking part in speaking activities. However, Nation and Newton (2009) consider that fluency develops when activities are meaningful; classes are students centered developing fluency from previous knowledge, and when learners are encouraged to be creative and move beyond what is being taught in class.

Learning to speak another language is challenging since learners need to communicate the message in an intelligible and spontaneous way. Consequently, many students do not feel confident enough to take part in communicative activities such as RPs. In this respect, participant FM25LEV maintains that when role-playing in front of an audience, they tend to forget the dialogues (Rojas, 2017). Most of the times, students are anxious to perform in front of people because they have not mastered the target language. On the contrary, when learners become more skillful, they are less afraid to speak. The results of a study conducted by Lee (2015) demonstrated that most of the teachers' oral CF influenced positively on the learners' emotional variables helping them to be more proficient and confident during communicative tasks.

Concerning the lack of encouragement to participate in dialogues during RPs, student FF175LEV mentioned that a disadvantage of role-playing is that it becomes dull. With this respect, two participants FF175LEV and INTM27LEV suggested that instructors should motivate students to prepare more active RPs more creatively and enthusiastically to perform in situations that resemble real-life. About this, participants INTM17LEV, INTM27LEV, and INTF77LEV recommended arranging the place where the RPs will be played during class as a real-life situation, so the participation in them becomes more dynamic (Rojas, 2017). In this respect, the results of a study conducted by Garcia-Sanchez (2016) regarding video RPs to boost communicative, collaborative, and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) skills in situational video RPs related to their professional fields, demonstrated that students' communication skills developed significantly.

Finally, students mentioned mispronunciation as an essential cause that prevents them from participating actively in role-plays. In this regard, participants INTM17LEV, INTM17LEV, and FF155LEV discussed not enjoying the participation in RP because of the pronunciation difficulties. Therefore, participant INTM17LEV advised focussing some more on the pronunciation development, so it would be easier when preparing and presenting a RP. Additionally, participant FF55LEV suggested the instructor to help students to pronounce difficult words. Phonological recast, according to Sato (2016) reduces learners' mistakes. Another study conducted by Milla and Mayo (2014) sees the necessity of recast to allow learners acknowledge the correct pronunciation of words to be understood by the listeners.

## Conclusions

From the discussion above, the author of the present chapter analyzed the improvements that RP need to go through to evaluate speaking skills development in EFL classes more efficiently. For that purpose, the author presented a link between the learners' perceptions about the use of RPs from the study conducted by Rojas (2017) with the causes that interfere on



the students' speaking progress mentioned by Nation and Newton (2009). These causes include "inadequate vocabulary, inadequate control of grammar, lack of fluency, shyness, and lack of encouragement" (p. 112). Because participants in Rojas' study mentioned mispronunciation as an additional reason for not enjoying RP participation, some research on this aspect was also performed.

About learners having an inadequate vocabulary to participate in RP, planned vocabulary strategy that refers to explicit and prepared vocabulary teaching, and unplanned vocabulary strategy that is concerned to spontaneous teacher's help are essential strategies to increase vocabulary development.

Fluency is accomplished when communicative approach classes include grammar instruction to avoid language fossilization, meaningful and student-centered class activities, and when students are encouraged to be creative and perform beyond their capacity. However, shyness is a cause that interferes with learners' fluency, and for that reason, CF is essential to help students become more proficient and confident in communicative tasks. Once learners are fluent and confident in the target language, instructors should encourage them to prepare active RP in situations that resemble real-life, so they are more motivated to participate in tasks that are meaningful to them.

To sum it all up, RPs become a stronger assessment tool when following procedures that help to overcome the causes that interfere with the learners' willingness to speak. In this respect, it is essential to evaluate students regularly through the use of rubrics to identify issues that impede their speaking development and make RP a more efficient assessment tool. Future research needs to be conducted to measure the impact of using rubrics for the development of speaking skills through the accomplishment of communicative tasks.

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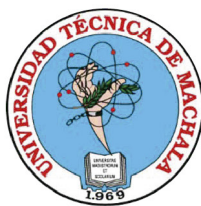
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