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Role-Play-Based Assessment as an Alternative Assessment to Evaluate English for Occupational Purposes Students' Language Use: A Pragmatic Approach

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Abstract

The interactive nature of language teaching trends to authentic and communicative ways of practicing and assessing students' language skills, particularly, in English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) class. Alternative assessment (AA) like role-play based assessment (RPBA) is a dynamic trend toward either authentic or communicative way of teaching and learning skills. RPBA activates the students' long-term memory and multi-memory units. Today, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has become the essential components of English courses to prepare students for applying language in educational and occupational settings. This is a case study which aims at proposing RPBA as AA to assess EOP students' language use knowledge. To this end, 12 MA Marketing students were selected to participate in this research. The collected data were based on an attitude questionnaire and the students' role-playing assessment scores during the research treatment period. The results obtained from the students' scores proved that role-playing had significant effects on the EOP students' language use knowledge. Also, the results of the questionnaire revealed that EOP students had similar views toward the characteristics of RPBA to evaluate the students' language use. Therefore, in EOP course, RPBA as AA could be considered as a pragmatic approach toward dynamic language learning and teaching which is based on the students' language needs and goals. It allows the teachers to evaluate their students' pragmatic knowledge.

Keywords: *Alternative Assessment, Pragmatic Competence, Role-Playing-Based Assessment, Traditional Assessment*

Introduction

Nowadays, the use of English as an international language is a separable part of any job including international commerce, marketing, medical, engineering, and tourism. So, university students of these fields not only need to learn general English but also they need to learn English for their future careers socially and technically. In order to motivate those students to enhance their English proficiency level of communication, it is important to design interesting courses like EOP courses—EOP is one of the ESP branches. Students do not like to just sit in the class and listen to teachers' lectures. They want to be able to talk with their teachers and others in their transactional and interactional functions. Although, EOP course is designed to teach students to communicate in a broad variety of professionally relevant situations or pragmatic knowledge, but, Iranian EOP students often find themselves unable to use English effectively. One possible assumption is that; there is a mismatch between the EOP students' needs of language and what the syllabus offers in EOP courses. In this regard, the role of assessments is important in EOP education, and EOP teachers and students need to apply language skills. Generally, type of assessment (whether AA or traditional assessment) affects curriculum system, teachers' method and students' improvement. It also contributes them to create various plausible instruction pathways at each level of education. But, there is a lack of a certain way to assess pragmatic features of language in EOP courses. Also, there is no particular kind of English language teaching materials or methodology to foster the EOP students' pragmatic and socio-pragmatic knowledge and prepare them for their future occupational goals and needs. They should learn English pragmatically in order to overcome the difficulties of applying English in their transactional and interactional job activities.

Although, the assessments evaluate the efficiency of teachers' method of teaching and learners' knowledge of language, RPBA as an AA evaluates either the efficacy of EOP students' knowledge of language usage (linguistic system) or language use (communicative system) in a simulated situation of their future occupational contexts. In contrast, RPBA assesses the students' knowledge of communication through a direct evaluation of the students' performance using social contexts similar to those of the real life. While, traditional assessments (TAs) measure the students' performance indirectly (just the students' linguistic knowledge). TAs are conventional tests scheduling on certain dates. Specifically speaking, the purposes of the RPBA testing method as AA, in EOP courses, are considerably wider than TA for the reason that it offers a wide range of possibilities. It is based on cognitive abilities and affective learning. In RPBA, EOP students may have most opportunities to demonstrate their certain abilities (pragmatic and pragma-linguistic). From the point of pragmatic approach, conventional tests like TAs are neither authentic nor communicative. However, the traditional form of paper and pencil assessment is the integral part of teaching in each curriculum system, applying AA like RPBA does not mean to eliminate TA paper and pencil type. Accordingly, considering the emphasis and importance placed on language use and pragmatic competence, the researchers of the present study felt an urgent need to investigate the effect of utilizing RPBA on Iranian EOP Marketing students through finding answers for the two research questions: Does role-played-based

assessment as an alternative assessment evaluate EOP students' communicative abilities? Do Iranian Marketing students possess the necessary English language skills to meet the requirements of their future jobs?

Literature Review

Scholars like Zambrano and Valverde (2013) defined the term “Role-play” (RP) as a recreational activity to entertain, amuse, and get access to knowledge in a significant way to create meaningful learning. In the case of academic subject, RP allows students' to develop their competences for solving problems, argumentation, ideas organization, group understanding, interpreting, and inferring (Villafuerte, Rojas, Hormaza & Soledispa, 2018). They continued RP is also a functional and socio-cultural teaching technique that can take place in different situational contexts with the active participation of students. Furthermore, it is based on the pedagogical psychodrama (Perez, 2015) which requires teachers' scaffolding, because RP as a creative and dynamic way of learning could detonate emotional reactions among participants. RP also provides either students or teachers, the possibility of applying different styles of feedbacks (Rojas, 2017). In this regard, Jackson and Back (2011) believed that higher educational programs like ESP, from one side, require innovative strategies to strength not only the students' English language learning process but also their communicative ability. “Role-play offers social opportunities to learn a language” (Rojas, 2017, p. 22). Also, East (2017) viewed that RP exposes the students to a complex balance which includes their personality, learning styles, and motivation for learning. The students' performance assessment in RP activities must be a way of highlighting what a learner can do with the L2 instead of being a summary of their abilities only (Gorp & Deygers, 2014). Therefore, in RP strategy as AA, the teachers can assess their students' performance in a simulated communicative context, and the students are required to produce L2 creatively instead of recalling or reproducing what was taught previously (Coombe, Purmensky & Davidson, 2012).

Generally, the key feature of AA is the active participation of the learners for evaluating their performance, competence and language development effectively. In this regard, individuals within the educational community (i.e., policymakers, educators, students, parents, administrators) have different ideas regarding the implementation of assessment strategies (Dietel, Herman & Knuth, 1991). While some believe TAs are more effective, others think that AAs like portfolios, projects, peer-conferences, performance-based, and so on, are superior. In the case of EOP, learners learn English according to their professional needs. In fact, EOP course reacts to the internationalization processes affecting the job market and the field of education. The realm of English pragmatic knowledge as the main element governs some university fields such as marketing, particularly international marketing. So, understanding the culture of target language plays a great role during the business meetings, negotiations, oral and written business correspondence in any step of the EOP students' future job activities. Therefore, a pragmatic approach like RPBA contributes this vital element to be taught to those students and it can be considered a cultural awareness attempt toward L2 social context. Liu & Ding (2009) explained

role-playing as an effective technique for teaching a foreign language. They identify four vital factors for a successful role-playing: a) the chosen topic should be real and relevant; b) the teachers need to 'feed-in' the appropriate language; c) they should correct errors in a proper way; and d) teachers' roles are as facilitators, spectators or participants. But, the success of RPBA as AA in EOP course depends on what EOP students' need to know how to use language in their professional situations. It is worth mentioning that students' self-evaluation is an important advantage of RPBA in EOP class in which the students could be able to evaluate their performance and competence by the role-playing tasks. Afdillah (2015) indicates some steps for good use of role-playing:

First, arrange or prepare scenarios to be performed by the students, choose some students to learn about the scenario several days before, classify students into groups of five, explain competence to be achieved, request a group to play the prepared scenario, while students in other groups observe, end performance, each student is given work sheet for discussion of the performance, every group gives a conclusion about scenario performed, the teacher gives a general conclusion, evaluation, and closing (p. 25).

Consequently, evaluating EOP students' competence and performance through RPBA as AA is a way toward not only communicative competence but also pragmatic competence. Communicative competence involves not only knowing the language as a code of verbal /non-verbal interaction and its syntactic, phonetic, phonological rules and its lexis, but also the knowledge of what is proper and not so in any given context (Koran, 2015). Pragmatic competence denotes the ability to comprehend, construct, and convey meanings that are both accurate and appropriate for the social and cultural circumstances in which communication occurs. RPBA intends to develop EOP students' communicative language skills pragmatically, because, they are often encountered with a serious challenge to understand and apply English in their future careers like travel tourism students and the students of hospitality, marketing, and so on. To fulfill this problem and to be satisfied with the foreigners, organizations have to employ a translator to overcome the language interaction problems with their foreign guest. This article attempted to create a framework for the assessment of EOP students' knowledge of social-interactive and transactional components of language via RPBA as AA.

RPBA and EFL Students' Pragmatic Competence

Traditional views on second language teaching and learning focus on teaching linguistic knowledge and grammatical rules. In this teaching and learning model, language learners mainly repeat and recite to acquire linguistic knowledge and forms (Lee, 2015). While, L2 teaching and learning English in Iranian EFL context for occupational purposes severely require five vital competences: socio-linguistic, discourse, strategic and specifically pragmatic and communicative competences. Consequently, TA appears inadequate to assess students' pragmatic and communicative knowledge. For the reason that, TAs have a strong emphasis the form of language rather than meaning but EOP students critically need to the practical use of language in real situational contexts. RPBA as AA works like pragmatic approach and its main aim lies to

prepare language learners to use their new language communicatively through “a focus on mobilizing their linguistic knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form” (Nunan, 2004, p. 3). According to Brown and Yule (1989, p. 24), “this is clearly an approach which takes the communicative function of language as its primary area of investigation and consequently seeks to describe linguistic form, not as a static object, but as a dynamic means of expressing intended meaning.”

Likewise, RPBA encourages students, particularly EOP students, to interact with each other inside of the classroom through role-playing activities in terms of pragmatic features in a stimulating communicative situation of the target language. RPBA emphasizes the EOP students’ successful communication rather than to speak natively. As a result, EOP students may participate in an authentic language use, and the priority is given to meaning over form. Hence, RPBA in EOP class acts as an awareness on what students need to know, what they lack and what they want for using L2 in their future social and occupational lives. With respect to, pragmatic competence is an integral part of EOP courses, lack of it causes EOP students to feel dissatisfaction, while mastering of it encourages them to participate in interactional and transactional functions. Generally, pragmatic competence is: a) the ability to use language appropriately in social situations for different purposes, b) changing language according to needs of situational contexts and c) the ability to follow conversation and discourse rules (Koran, 2015). Generally speaking, the language use problems of the most Iranian students are:

- Unable to utilize language in different situational text and context including greetings, informing, demanding, promising, requesting.
- Unable to obey appropriate conversation and discourse rules including turn taking, topic maintenance, clarifying as needed,
- Unable to apply and interpret nonverbal features of language—(pitch, intonation, stress) which contribute to grasp meaning.

Foremost, pragmatic competence is comprised of illocutionary and sociological competences. Koran (2015, p. 46) explained:

Illocutionary competence enables the speaker to convey messages (both spoken and written) serving a variety of functions and a hearer to interpret the utterances/sentences correctly as required of him or her. However, one needs the knowledge of appropriateness based on the speech community he or she finds him/herself in as well, in order to perform an act to intend a certain communicative function. The knowledge of this appropriateness is called sociolinguistic competence and it is the other component of pragmatic competence.

RPBA and the Link between Language and Context

Brown and Yule (1989) constantly referred to the environment, circumstances or context in which language is used. The context is some sort of environment; it's what's going on around, where language is somehow involved (Halliday, 2009). In this respect, Malinowski's (1935), for the first time introduced the notions of *context of situation* and *context of culture*. Based on Malinowski's notions, Firth (1957) discussed the relationship between language and context arguing that “in order to understand the meaning of what a person says or writes we need to know something about the situational and cultural context in which it is located. That is, if you don't know what the people involved in a text are doing and do not understand their culture 'then you can't make sense of their text” (Martin, 2001, p. 151). Besides, Halliday (1985, p. 46) also divided context into context of culture (cultural context) and context of situation (situational context). Situational context explains why certain things have been said or written on particular occasion and what else not. While, cultural context looks at how the culture can affect a person's behavior and his/her opportunities, and where and when each text is set. Figure 1 illustrates the feature of two contexts inspired by Halliday's (2009) framework.

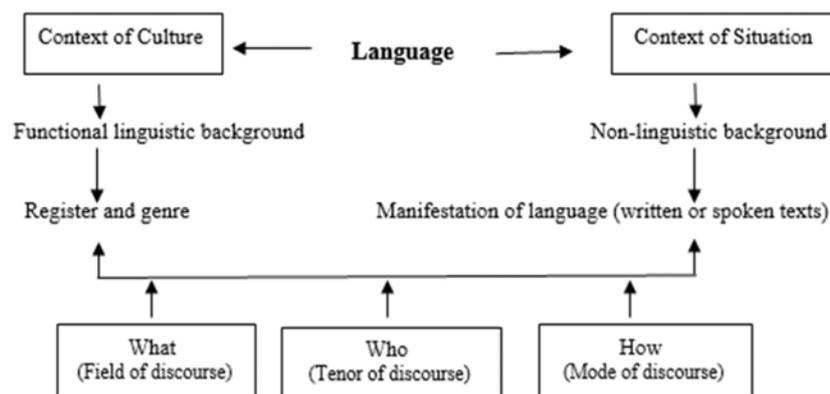


Figure 1. Language and contexts (adopted from Halliday, 2009)

Briefly, “context” refers to the set of circumstances or facts that surround a particular event or situation. Halliday (2009) believed that the context for the meaning of language is the *context of culture*. The context for the written or spoken texts is the *context of situation*, it is a socio-cultural environment in which the written or spoken languages unfolds within a text—it looks at the reason why something is occurred. Halliday further stated that the context of culture refers to the ideological background of the society, and that is a manifestation of cultural beliefs which relates utterances to the pragmatic features or social language interactions—it looks at the society. Both context of culture and context of situation are dominated by *field* (what is it the participants are engaged in?), *tenor* (who is taking part to the discourse?), and *mode* (how is the text organized?).

Regarding language and context, RPBA as an effective strategy focuses on the need of context of culture and context of situation because contexts are crucial factors in language use. RPBA as

AA encourages EOP teachers and students to teach and learn target language in a communicative way through linking cultural and situational contexts with the social processes of which this situation is actually constituted. The value of “communicative” approaches is that they are based on a context of situation, not just on a setting; hence they do embody a real conception of text–language that is executive in relation to the social activity and the interpersonal relationships (Breen & Candlin, 1980). Applying this principle to the outer situation, one can simulate the workplace or shopping center not just as physical surroundings but as the location where particular processes of production and exchange take place and particular kinds of interpersonal relationship are enacted (Halliday, 2009).

The Significance of RPBA in EOP Course

According to Lee (2015), the term “role-playing” is not easy to define. There are many terms used in the literature, such as “simulations,” “role-play,” “simulation-game,” “role-playing simulation” and “drama” (Tompkins, 1998). Looking at RPBA as AA in EOP course, Law and Eckes (1995) noted AAs in EOP courses assess higher-order communicative skills. EOP students have the opportunity to demonstrate what they learned based on their wants, goals and needs. This type of assessment tools focus on the growth and the performances of the EOP students. That is, if a student fails to perform a given role-play task at a particular time, s/he still has the opportunity to demonstrate his/her ability at a different time and different situation context. Since RPBA as AA is developed in context and over time, the teacher has a chance to measure the strengths and weaknesses of the EOP students in a variety of areas and situations (Law & Eckes, 1995). Then, it is understandable that EOP students will prepare themselves for obtaining good results rather than good marks in only certain directions of L2 learning in terms of their occupational needs and purposes. The existence of some EOP learning styles should most logically set off the existence of more different assessment methods and testing formats that might accurately describe the EOP students’ progress.

Foremost, role-playing may be considered as an effective strategy in teaching English to EOP students, as role-playing can increase students' enthusiasm, self-confidence, and empathy, and encourage critical thinking. AA is a teaching strategy that models vocabulary learning in a cost-effective, controlled, and a fun way for both students and teachers (Huang & Shan, 2008; Altun, 2015). Acting out an authentic situation encourages the students to use the natural expressions and intonations of native speakers as well as gestures. Teaching of social skills increases motivation, develops creativity, promotes interaction, encourages peer learning and helps learners communicate more freely. According to Sasaki (1998), role-playings are regarded as simulating more authentic situations. Incorporating role-play into the classroom adds variety, a change of pace and opportunities for a lot of language production and also a lot of fun (Alabsi, 2016).

Accordingly, there are several broad reasons for using RPBA as AA in EOP course. It is a dynamic and major strategy in the communicative approach and has many advantages, as it can encourage forms of social interaction that provide an important stimulus to use the language in

real life and challenge learners' existing beliefs. Also, it is suggested by many researchers that effective learning takes place when teachers challenge students with problems and facilitate the process of finding the solution (Vincent & Shepherd, 1998). Most importantly, RPBA engages EOP students in activities that bring realism to their L2 learning and help them apply target language in authentic situations successfully. Technical vocabulary terms may be learned in such a way that EOP students will be able to communicate effectively and appropriately. EOP students would be capable to recall, retrieve and apply easily technical terms related to their jobs, recognize how to use and when to use routine or special utterances skillfully in different situational contexts.

Method and Participants

This study was a case study and the design of it was based on a quantitative data-gathering. This article attempted to represent the paramount role of RPBA as a mediation in EOP course toward English teaching and learning pragmatically. To this end, 12 male and female MA Marketing students out of 38 at Rasht Islamic Azad University, Iran, were non-randomly selected via purposive sampling procedure. Then, they were randomly divided into four groups of three. The participants were placed in the third semester of their marketing course of study at 2017-2018 academic year. They were native speakers of Persian language, and their age range was between 21 and 34. Also, there were four RPBA assessments for four groups respectively to evaluate their language use knowledge during the period of this research (eight sessions within eight weeks, 90 minutes for each). The four assessments were run (every other week) which consisted of the four groups role-playing activities in the class. The scenarios of the role-playing were designed by the students based on the content of their English course-book. The time allotment for each group role-playing was 15 minutes.

Materials and Procedures

In this research, RPBA as AA aimed at assessing, measuring, and eliciting EOP students' language use (communicative and pragmatic competences) through role-playing activities, these activities engaged the students in the real use of target language. In this strategy, EOP students themselves wrote the scenarios of their role-plays based on the content of their English textbook and performed in the front of their classmates in the classroom. Teacher played as a highly active participant for them to facilitate, conduct, organize and consult, she also observed, judged and assessed EOP students' role-playings as directly as possible.

The materials used for conducting this research were instructional materials along with an attitude questionnaire on the RPBA characteristics to evaluate EOP students' language use knowledge. At first, EOP students were divided into four small groups of three and the pragmatic approach was applied to teach and conduct the flow of the students' role-playing activities. The main focus was RPBA to evaluate EOP students' language use knowledge. The instructional material used in this study was based on MA Marketing students' English textbook titled *Specialized English For Business Marketing Management* compiled and translated by Dr.

Venouss and Mitra Safaeian published by Knowledge Insight in 2011. The topics of four lessons of the aforementioned textbook were selected by their EOP teacher. Then, each group prepared a scenario (Appendix B, a sample scenario) in the form of a conversation regarding transactional, interactional and interpersonal functions for their role-playing designs based on the contents of each lesson (totally four scenarios were prepared by four groups). It should be mentioned that the instructional material was taught by the second researcher of this study (an EOP teacher holding Ph.D. in Applied Linguistic with more than 12 years of experience in English teaching at the same university). The functions used in the scenarios were taught and organized by the students' EOP teacher consisting of the speech acts: ask for, accept and reject things, admit and deny, and give opinions including technical vocabulary terms used in each lesson.

Meanwhile, the EOP teacher as a facilitator or conductor gave the explanations and instructions to students for achieving four dimensions of communicative competence (1) grammatical (knowledge of grammar), (2) discourse (knowledge of inter-sentential relationships), (3) sociolinguistic (knowledge of the sociocultural rules of language) and (4) strategic competence (knowledge of how to compensate for breakdowns in communication). It is worth mentioning that during one group's role-playing act, other students took notes and after each role-playing, there was a negotiation of meaning between the EOP teacher and the students as well as a discussion. The RPBA criteria for evaluating the EOP students' language use was based on the following measurements (see Table 1).

Table 1
RPBA Criteria to Evaluate EOP Students' Language Use

Criteria	Point
To apply marketing technical terms and specialized vocabulary	5
To convey the intended meaning	5
To comprehend illocutionary force / meaning	5
To apply different speech acts (direct / indirect)	5
To use communicative features (initiate, maintain and terminate a conversation)	5
To follow cultural and situational contexts	5

In addition, from the beginning of the study, the class training followed the pragmatic approach and the emphasis was language use. To achieve the purpose of present research, all participants completed an attitude questionnaire at the end of study which was developed based on Atai's and Shoja's (2011) ESP questionnaire (Appendix A). The questionnaire was composed of 15 items and asked the characteristics of RPBA to evaluate EOP students as an AA and its effectiveness on their communicative abilities. The RPBA attitude questionnaire for EOP students was piloted with eight EOP students and the results were used to estimate the reliability of the questionnaire through Cronbach's alpha measure of reliability. The reliability estimated through Cronbach's alpha was ($r = .83$) using SPSS software. This index was higher than the least minimum required (.70) and according to standards suggested by Barker, Elliott and Pistrang (1994), it was considered an acceptable reliability index.

Results

The EOP teacher of this study specified RPBA criteria for evaluating EOP students' language use (role-playing). Generally speaking, due to the nature of RPBA, the scoring method is somehow subjective (cut-offs have not been defined). Sometimes it might be affected by the examiner's experience. Such a case leads to less reliability of RPBA. In order to decrease this problem, the EOP teacher applied a strategy to convert subjective scores into objective ones (i.e., a normalized scoring method as a row score, a scale of zero to 30 in terms of the RPBA criteria). Percentiles of the collected data obtained from 12 students' score (in four groups) were computed, compared, interpreted, and represented by Table 2.

Table 2
The Percentile Ranks of EOP Students' Role-playing Scores

Score	frequency n = 12	Relative frequency	percentage	Cumulative Frequency	Relative C Frequency	Percentile Rank
30	1	.08	8	12	1	100
28	1	.08	8	11	.91	91
27	1	.08	8	10	.83	83
24	3	.25	25	9	.75	75
22	2	.16	16	6	.50	50
21	1	.08	8	4	.33	33
20	3	.25	25	3	.25	25

*A normalized scoring method as a row score, a scale of zero to 30 in terms of the RPBA criteria

Table 2 shows the values of percentile rank of the EOP students' language use abilities (role-playing) on a scale of 100. That is, the percentile rank of 100 which means that four students out of 12 got a percentile rank below 50 and eight students out of 12 got a percentile rank above 50 with (a range of 50-100). Therefore, the results of numerical computations revealed that the values of percentile ranks were high. It represented that applying RPBA for evaluating students' language use was effective.

Also, the scale used in this study for the questionnaire was coded based on the five-point Likert-scale by assigning a number for each response on a rating scale of one to five (the score of five for strongly agree and the score of one for strongly disagree). Such scale was used (see Table 3) in the questionnaire to specify the level of the agreement or disagreement based on Suryasa, Adhitya Prayoga and Werdistira (2017) criteria:

Table 3
The Mean Range for RPBA Agreement Level

Mean Range	Interpretation
3.68 – 5.00	High degree of agreement on applying RPBA
2.34 – 3.67	Moderate degree of agreement on applying RPBA
1.00 – 2.33	Low degree of agreement on applying RPBA

In order to provide an answer to the research question, descriptive statistics including mean scores and standard deviation (SD) were computed for every individual items of the questionnaire. The results are available in the following Table 4:

Table 4

Item Statistics for the Results of the Students' Attitude Questionnaires on the RPBA Characteristics. *I think RPBA evaluates EOP students' language use based on their.....*

Items	Mean values	SD	Rating of agreement on RPBA
1) Level of English proficiency that allow them to evaluate their knowledge and performance	3.12	1.11	Moderate
2) Sociolinguistic knowledge	3.35	.91	Moderate
3) Knowledge of vocabulary, pronunciation, word order and grammar	2.67	1.09	Moderate
4) Autonomous language use in their communication of transactional and interactional contexts of their working place	4.05	.92	High
5) Specialized subjects that are parts of EOP students' future professional jobs	4.10	.95	High
6) Four language skills (writing, speaking, reading and listening) for improving in their jobs	4.25	.64	High
7) Language usage (linguistic knowledge)	1.92	1.35	Low
8) Language use (communicative knowledge)	3.95	.99	High
9) Ability to use technical terms and vocabulary of a real situational context	3.50	1.01	Moderate
10) Knowledge of grammar	2.70	1.16	Moderate
11) Knowledge of general vocabulary	2.69	1.20	Moderate
12) Knowledge of technical vocabulary	3.98	0.98	high
13) Reading and comprehending subject specific texts	3.25	1.08	Moderate
14) Language fluency	3.07	1.01	Moderate
15) Language accuracy	2.85	1.22	Moderate

With regard to the ratings provided by EOP students for this study's questionnaire, item 6 received the highest mean score ($M = 4.25$) as well as item 5 with high mean score ($M = 4.10$). By contrast, items 3 ($M = 2.67$) and 7 ($M = 1.92$) had the lowest mean scores as well as a frequency of 9 for moderate, a frequency of 5 for high, and a frequency of 1 for low degree of agreement on applying RPBA. The results revealed no considerable disagreement among marketing students' views on the characteristics of RPBA to evaluate EOP students' language use. Accordingly, the results obtained from the attitude questionnaire revealed that RPBA as an AA is regarded to evaluate EOP students' communicative abilities or language use. Therefore, the null hypothesis of this study was rejected. Figure 2 illustrates the frequency of the students' agreement level on applying RPBA in EOP course.

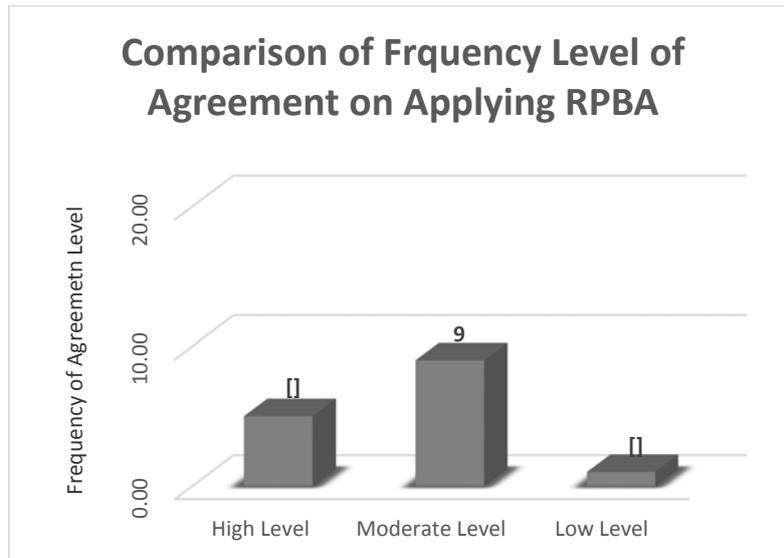


Figure 2. The frequency of the students' agreement level on applying RPBA in EOP course

The Advantages of RPBA and its Link with Memory

Applying RPBA lets the EOP students demonstrate what they can actually do with language in their future professional affairs. Employing RPBA in EOP course illuminates the process of students' cognitive development and allows them to be aware of different language use problems that they may be encountered in transactional and interactional contexts of their future jobs. Indeed, RPBA might be used in the process of EOP students' needs analysis and of identifying the best teaching materials, it could also be a valuable way in the process of monitoring progress of the students and evaluating the extent to which the EOP course objectives have been achieved. RPBA as AA aims at providing EOP students with the essential knowledge of receptive and productive skills toward the appropriate language use. Successful use of RPBA in EOP course depends on analyzing the students' needs and goals which is relevant to what the students already know, what they need to know and finally, what they want to know for their future occupational affairs. According to Mirbazel and Arjmandi (2018), AA motivates language learning and provokes students' critical thinking abilities, applying RPBA as AA includes following psychological and educational advantages in EOP class:

- Activates students' long-term memory and working memory units,
- Maximizes students' pragmatic and communicative competences,
- Increases students' language fluency and accuracy,
- Fosters students' self-evaluation, self-esteem, self-confidence and risk-taking,
- Provides students opportunities to use language effectively and communicatively,
- Creates a positive atmosphere in the classroom,
- Facilitates language teaching and learning processes,
- Promote students' collaborative and cooperative learning,

- Generates autonomous learners,
- Increases students' cultural and situational contexts awareness.

In fact, RPBA integrates four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). As, EOP students themselves prepare their role-play tasks—first, they read the content of considered text (that is the processing skill), then, they write their scenarios based on the text for role-playing (that is the productive skill), and finally, they perform their role-plays (that is the process-product skill)—in which their listening and speaking abilities are involved. This process takes place within the working memory components of the cognitive system. On the other words, RPBA as AA offers a connection between long-term memory and multi-memory units of working memory: eye-to-visual memory, ear-to-auditory memory (as two processing steps), and tongue-to-articulatory memory (as producing step). In this case, after processing steps, producing steps occurs when the language learning materials comprehend and internalize in learners' minds through more frequently practicing and using.

This study noticed that it is the ability of tongue to memorize things in spite of tasting foods such as words, phrases, sentences and articulate automatically that memorized things by frequently using without thinking or searching in the mind. The researchers of the present study believe that long-term memory acts as main memory and is surrounded by multi-memory units in which its responsibility is to save, maintain, and internalize the inputs (receiving things) permanently for using (producing things). Multi-memory units include working memory units consisting of receiving units and producing units. Whatever stored in long-term memory (as a permanent memory center) may have its certain function for using. For example, when a person internalizes a short poem or a long poem in his/her mind, after a period of time, s/he can easily articulate that poem accurately and automatically. Indeed, it is the function of tongue-to-articulatory memory which s/he uses for articulating. Accordingly, after internalizing the inputs, it is the responsibility of each memory to be activated independently, immediately and automatically whenever it is needed to give outputs without searching in mind (or long-term memory) such as tongue-to-articulatory memory to articulate a learned thing after a period of time (see Figure 3). With good judgment, RPBA as AA contributes EOP learners to internalize the functional meaning of the technical terms which are needed to use in their future jobs communicatively.

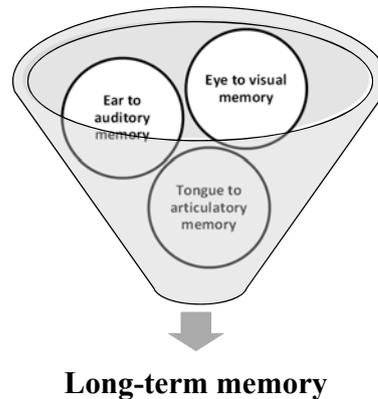


Figure 3. Long-term memory and multi-memory units

Conclusion

RPBA as AA is a pragmatic approach which allows EOP teachers to evaluate their students' functional and social language knowledge. The socio-linguistic aspect of RPBA improves the students' linguistic and pragmatic knowledge. The most important point to RPBA in EOP course is that it is based on the students' needs, goals, wants and interests which may lead to positive washback effects not only for the teachers' method of teaching but also for the students' social and personal lives. It is worth mentioning that employing RPBA does not mean the abandonment of TAs, but, an integration of RPBA and TAs allows EOP teachers to obtain a comprehensive evaluation of their students' competence and performance. Moreover, it is helpful to attend the RPBA activities as communicative-oriented activities in EOP course which enables the students to develop their interactional and transactional language use knowledge in terms of their future job requirements. Therefore, RPBA as AA is a movement toward a dynamic way of assessing the students' language knowledge and skills pragmatically, and providing opportunities to them to use language more effectively.

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Appendix A: Attitude Questionnaire on RPBA Characteristics

I think role-play-based assessment evaluates EOP students' language use based on their...

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No idea	Agree	Strongly agree
(1) Level of English proficiency that allow them to evaluate their knowledge and performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
(2) Sociolinguistic knowledge.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
(3) Knowledge of vocabulary, pronunciation, word order and grammar.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
(4) Autonomous language use in their communication of transactional and interactional contexts of their working place.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
(5) Specialized subjects that are parts of EOP students' future professional jobs.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
(6) Four language skills (writing, speaking, reading and listening) for improving in their jobs.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
(7) Language usage (linguistic knowledge).	<input type="checkbox"/>				
(8) Language use (communicative knowledge).	<input type="checkbox"/>				
(9) Ability to use technical terms and vocabulary of a real situational context.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
(10) Knowledge of grammar.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
(11) Knowledge of general vocabulary.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
(12) Knowledge of technical vocabulary.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
(13) Reading and comprehending subject specific texts.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
(14) Language fluency	<input type="checkbox"/>				

(15) Language accuracy.

Strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), No idea (3), Agree (4), strongly agree (5)

Appendix B: A sample of role-playing scenario based on EOP students' course-book

Group One: An Interview Role-playing (Chapter One: The World of Marketing)

There is an interview here. Two marketing instructors are explaining the components of marketing to the questions which an interviewer asks:

Interviewer: This is an obvious question, but what exactly is Marketing?

Instructor 1: General speaking, marketing refers to the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, individual and organizational objectives. In fact, marketing satisfies needs-marketing which involves at least two parties: a seller and a buyer, each of whom have needs. Products are bought to satisfy consumer's needs.

Interviewer: So, the concept of marketing is identified as a management orientation that focuses on identifying and satisfying consumer needs. What are the bases of identifying need recognition?

Instructor 2: It can be briefly explained by two main bases: want and benefit. By want we refer to the desire to satisfy needs in specific ways that are culturally and socially influence. And by benefit, we refer to the outcome that occurs when a product satisfies a need.

Interviewer: Thus, we can get that satisfying society's needs is other side of each marketing goals. Now, the main question may be what is the concept of societal marketing?

Instructor 2: It can be defined as an orientation that focuses on satisfying consumer needs while also addressing the needs of a larger society.

Interviewer: Please explain more.

Instructor 2: Marketing is an exchange of value the buyer receives an object, service, or idea that satisfies a need, for which the seller receives something he or she feels is of equivalent value. Indeed, exchange is the process by which some transfer of value occurs between a buyer and a seller. In order to explain "a larger society" we can elaborate the word *market* which could be refer to all of the customers and potential customers who share a common need that can be satisfied by a specific product: who have the resources to exchange, who are willing to make the exchange, and who have the authority to make the exchange.

Interviewer: Therefore, we can classify the components of marketing as product, a good, service, idea, place or person offered in the exchange process to satisfy consumer or business customer needs and wants. The main other question is how is marketing done?

Instructor 1: It should be noticed that marketing is a strategic decision process, in which marketing managers determine what marketing strategies will be used to help the

organization meet its long objectives.

Interviewer: So, to this end, it needs to analyze “marketing planning” in order to identify the organization’s situation. Please talk about marketing planning?

Instructor 1: As you said, marketing planning involves analyzing the organization’s current situation. Specifically, this takes into account the threats and opportunities in the technological changes, the economy, etc. Marketing planning conducts a market to find and to reach a target market or market segment which focuses on its marketing plan and toward which it directs its marketing efforts.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

Instructors (1 and 2): You’re welcome.