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An Introduction to the Communicative Technique of Role-Playing Games in Teaching Foreign Languages

Abstract

TRPG is an innovative communicative technique in teaching FL, applied for the first time by the author to teaching English at an academic level. The conventions of the technique with its simplified rules have been borrowed from popular parlour games and adapted by the author to the conditions of glottodidactics. The elements of game and play incorporated in the technique allow it to be rated among techniques of ludic (play) strategy. The idea of the technique is much comparable to techniques of Role Play and Simulations, recognised and well described in literature, hence it can be classified within the group of communicative techniques. Yet, the presence of some distinctive features of RPGs, referring to technical matters not common to the former ones, make TRPG original, more attractive for the students and more efficient in their mastering of skills of personal communicative competence. The basic differences between Role Play and The Technique of Role-Playing Games are to be found in: 1) the number of participants involved in the activities, which is greater in the latter; 2) timing, which is significantly longer in TRPG and thus has a crucial influence on reduction of the level of student's stress and anxiety; 3) elementary conventions of classic RPGs eg.: the characteristic, distinctive and unique function of a leading person traditionally called a Game Master (who plays the role of narrator and coordinator of all actions) as opposed to the rest of participants (called Players) and 4) the use of a frame scenario designed by the Game Master as a skeleton of the plot. The scenario, however, is only a non-linear schematic outline of the events to take place, hence it does not limit the student's (player's) spontaneous invention, allowing him to create the plot together with the Game Master on the basis of mutual cooperation. This fact differentiates TRPG from other techniques (eg. Play Acting) using a scenario in a more literal meaning, as an established set of roles to be memorized and performed by the students and perform which makes them a form of a theatrical play. Thus, one of the most crucial aims of TRPG is constructing an imaginary micro-reality for the plot

to take place in and not merely playing or acting roles in a short communicative situation limited by time, space and purpose. This makes TRPG a highly developed form of Role Play into a non-linear chain of communicative situations built spontaneously and naturally through a cooperation among the Game Master and the Players. Moreover, the outcomes of empirical research carried out by the author¹ confirm the technique's autonomising values revealed in shaping the student's mechanisms of self-control and self-correction, strengthening his self-actualization and building and developing didactic cooperation. The didactic cooperation, according to the assumptions of autonomisation, is built on reconstruction and reformulation of the relations between the teacher and the students and altering their roles towards partnership, the foundation of which constitutes the idea of shared responsibility for the effects of the learning/teaching process. On this basis the so-called didactic contract is incorporated in the idea of didactic cooperation and has a gradual, progressive character. Presentation of this paper will be illustrated with a short demonstration video recording from TRPG session filmed during practical English class.

1. Introduction

The reason for taking up the following subject of this paper is the growing need and tendency in the teaching of foreign languages to diverge from traditional or conventional methods and techniques for the benefit of fringe ones, considering and paying more attention to cognitive and affective factors in the glottodidactic process, autonomisation and subjectivisation of the student, partnership didactic relation, as well as increasing interest in this field and also our own beliefs supported with didactic experience. Moreover, along with the rising popularity and development of the communicative approach for decades, there has been a constant need for creating and developing communicative techniques which would more and more effectively activate the student and make him act spontaneously and with a greater degree of authenticity. The idea of taking up the subject comes also from the perpetual aspiration of educators to discover or design a method or technique effective and attractive for the student, and at the same time raising the student's activity and the level of motivation perceived by many scholars to be the most important affective factor influencing the obtained results of the didactic process.

¹ In the article have been used conclusions from own empirical research conducted for the needs of a PhD dissertation, written in Institute of Applied Linguistics (formerly known as Chair of Glottodidactics and Translation Studies) at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań Poland, titled: *Gry fabularne na lektoracie a autonomizacja studenta (Role-Playing Games in academic foreign language classroom and the student's autonomisation)*. Dissertation available in Poznań University Library and in the Library of the Institute of Applied Linguistics.

2. Autonomisation in foreign language didactics

Mastering language skills at an advanced level creates greater possibilities for applying fringe methods and techniques in learning/teaching foreign languages. An increased level of consciousness by learners, especially adult ones, combined with the taking over of a partial responsibility for the effects of the didactic process and this in conjunction with their emotional maturity and stronger motivation, creates favourable conditions and constitutes ground prone to propagating the idea of autonomisation and shaping the autonomous attitude of the learner. Didactics' increasing need for new, efficient methods and techniques to strengthen motivation and build didactic cooperation, leading to improved efficiency of the didactic process gives rise to more and more inventive solutions. Most of them indicate the significant role of noticing and underlining the subjectivity of the learner. And this, in turn, is almost inextricably connected with, and constitutes an element of, equal status and a condition of autonomisation. *Thus the ambition of didactics oriented at promoting learner's autonomy is working out an alternative position in comparison to so called traditional didactics (i.e. based on inductive and authoritarian ways of teaching)* (Wilczyńska 1999: 28). In the face of a multiplicity of definitions, perspectives and approaches towards the notion of autonomy or semi-autonomy, we decided to apply a concept proposed by Wilczyńska (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland). In her work the author identifies the student's advanced level with the achievement of a high level of autonomy in communication as well as in further education, and she perceives building personal communicative competence (PCC) through insuring internal authenticity in learning and communication the most efficient way to autonomy (Wilczyńska 1999: 133). In the autonomising approach a special emphasis is put on the subjectivisation of the learner, thereby underlining the individual, personal dimension of learning, in case of glottodidactics - linguistic perfecting, as well as all processes and mechanisms accompanying it. Therefore, the 'personal' and 'self'-elements are frequently used in numerous terms - names of concepts within the framework of autonomy. Beginning with the basic elements of the didactic process, traditional 'teacher' and 'student' are replaced by 'Teaching Person' – TP and 'Learning Person' – LP. Both are involved in the process of didactic cooperation (Pl.: *współpraca dydaktyczna*; Aleksandrak/Gajewska-Głodek/Nowicka/Surdyk 2002), one of the foundations of autonomisation, together with the subjectivisation of the learning person (Wilczyńska *Podmiotowość*, Gajewska-Głodek 2002). The basic assumption of work in the conditions of semi-autonomy (Pl.: *półautonomia*; Wilczyńska 1999, 2002a) is the LP accepting part of the responsibility for the progress made

in shaping personal communicative/linguistic competence – PCC/PLgC (Pl.: *osobista kompetencja komunikacyjna/językowa – OKK/OKJ*), whilst simultaneously developing personal learning competence – PLC (Pl.: *osobista kompetencja uczeniowa – OKU*; Wilczyńska *Osobista kompetencja*). From selected key phenomena of the autonomisation of foreign language didactics it is necessary to introduce the most significant terms:

”AUTONOMY – a type of a subjective attitude expressed mainly through self-reliance in taking, performing and evaluating tasks. It is especially significant in carrying out activities of a high level of complexity and creativity to which belong *par excellence* communicative and learning ones (imitative or stereotypical application of linguistic knowledge is not sufficient here). On this account it is perceived by us as not only a highly desirable attitude but even indispensable one at an advanced level, and very favourable also at earlier stages of FL learning.(...)

SUBJECTIVITY (Pl.: *podmiotowość*) – The attitude of a person to him/herself and to the surroundings expressed in their active shaping, in accordance with aims and norms determined by the person. Also style of regulation of relations of the man with the surrounding based on activity initiated and developed by the unit according to his/her personal standards and values. (...)

AUTHENTICITY (Pl.: *autentyczność*) – Features the typical behaviours of a unit, which reflects his/her current attitudes, needs and aspirations. The higher the level of authenticity, the more effective the perfecting of oneself. (...)

LINGUISTIC / COMMUNICATIVE SENSITIVITY (Pl.: *wrażliwość językowa / komunikacyjna*) – A general intention, though not necessarily conscious, aimed at observing and controlling communicative correctness and effectiveness across a wide range of language uses. It is especially significant with reference to dynamic and complex objects, so demanding special divisibility of attention, without disrupting fluency and pace of the continuous communicative activities (productive and/or receptive). Hence, it can be also defined as a particularly active element of personal communicative competence, aimed at the monitoring of current activities and development of competence. (...)

PERSONAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE (PCC) (Pl.: *osobista kompetencja komunikacyjna – OKK*) – Knowledge and communicative skills (including linguistic ones) which enables a learning person to function in foreign language situations in an authentic way i.e. in accordance with his/her (non-communicational) aspirations, personality and life style (including communicative style). (...)

BILINGUAL IDENTITY – (Pl.: *tożsamość bilingwalna*) – Complex of features determining a given FL user on the personal and social plane, which s/he acknowledges to be typical of him/herself. Bilingual Identity must be considered indispensable to the learner. On this subjective attitude to FL the learner will build his/her personal communicative and learning competence (PCC/PLC).” (Wilczyńska 2002a: 317 – 335)

All the above phenomena are strongly interrelated and constitute key constructs of the idea of autonomisation. However, for the purpose of this paper and introduction of the Technique of Role-Playing Games only selected key phenomena, most important for the research, will be highlighted in more detail.

2.1. Didactic cooperation

Theoretically, but also in practice, there are three possible types of didactic relations recognised, at least in FL education (Aleksandrak et al. 2002: 86). These are:

- a) **relation dominated by the teacher**, in which the TP (and indirectly the institution s/he represents) is the dominating authority trying to control fully the course of the didactic process deciding about the subject, goal and forms of learning and

assessment. The LPs, in turn, have scarcely any or, indeed, no influence on them. It is a relation typical of institutionalised education and still quite a popular one in school at all its stages, based on inductive methods and frontal teaching;

- b) relation in which there is a **reverse setting** – the LP is in the centre, and the TP is trying to adjust to his/her needs. It is a rare situation in didactics, but possibly occurs in individual teaching e.g. in case of an LP representing a subjective attitude and a high level of autonomy, so representing high self-awareness and maturity of personal actions, having at the same time a good insight into FL teaching issues. It could be, for instance, a person knowing already some FL and being able to self-master autonomously, „using” the teacher as a source of knowledge and a partner in communicative interactions in another FL;
- c) relation based on **partnership**, enabling didactic cooperation and negotiation of content, forms and goals of teaching, realised on the basis of “renewable”, evolutionary didactic contract.

Relation type (a) will be called a **one subject relation**, whilst relation type (c) – **two subject relation** or – considering also relations among the students in the group – **multi-subject** (relation type b will be of one- or two-subject character depending on the TP’s attitude). Certainly, in autonomising teaching to establish the relation of the last type (c) is striven for. The idea of didactic cooperation and the didactic contract incorporated in it is based on mutual cooperation between the TP and the LP. Apart from the subjectivisation of the LP and his/her responsibility for shaping PCC, it propounds a multilevel negotiation of meanings, including negotiation of “aims, forms and contents of the didactic activities” (Aleksandrak et al. 2002) at many levels and stages of the process of self-didactics, beginning with the subject of learning, selection of sources, through the methods and forms of working during classes, forms of homework, forms of progress control (Glinka/Prokop/Puppel 2002), and finishing with criteria and methods of evaluation and self-assessment. Yet, these negotiations take place within the limits of the frame syllabus of a given subject. Thus, the LPs and the TP cooperate in a multi-subject didactic relation on the basis of didactic contract (established in an oral or written form) which has an organisational dimension and is based on negotiations. The contract, in a miniature version, should be refreshable during every meeting to specify its aim, content and method. Thanks to its cyclical character the didactic contract takes a progressive, ‘stepping’ (Pl.: *krocząca*) form (Aleksandrak et. al. 2002: 103). In case of the TRPG, besides all areas mentioned above being the subject of negotiations between the LPs and the TP, the creation of the plot of the

‘adventure’ by the participants is itself an outcome of specific negotiations that occur among them in an atmosphere of cooperation or competition during the game.

2.2. The mechanisms of self-control and self-correction

The procedure of working with the TRPG assumes autonomisation of the LP, which, among other things, encourages in the student the interrelated mechanisms of self-control and self-correction (Glinka/Surdyk 2002, Surdyk 2004), whilst in the process of mastering the skills of PCC. The definitions of both terms are assumed in the forms as follows:

”SELF-CONTROL (Pl.: *autokontrola*) – A mechanism of human internal linguistic-mental activity, regulating his/her linguistic actions in terms of compliance of these actions with the linguistic-communicative norms of a given society ~ it supervises the course of linguistic actions, anticipates and/or diagnoses current difficulties and activates appropriate precautions. Hence ~ is significant for assuring correctness and efficiency of utterances and is a crucial aspect of linguistic sensitivity.(...)

SELF-CORRECTION (Pl.: *autokorekta*) – An external manifestation of functioning of the mechanism of self-control in a form of one’s independent adjusting („correcting”) of the element recognised as incompliant with the norms of language use.” (Wilczyńska 2002a: 318)

According to the assumptions of the project it was important in the course of the research to verify the validity of the hypothesis asserting that self-control, shaped in the process of learning in autonomising conditions, influences the development of self-correction and self-evaluation, which stimulates effectiveness of learning itself. All these processes are inseparably connected with building Personal Communicative Competence, which is presented in the diagram below.

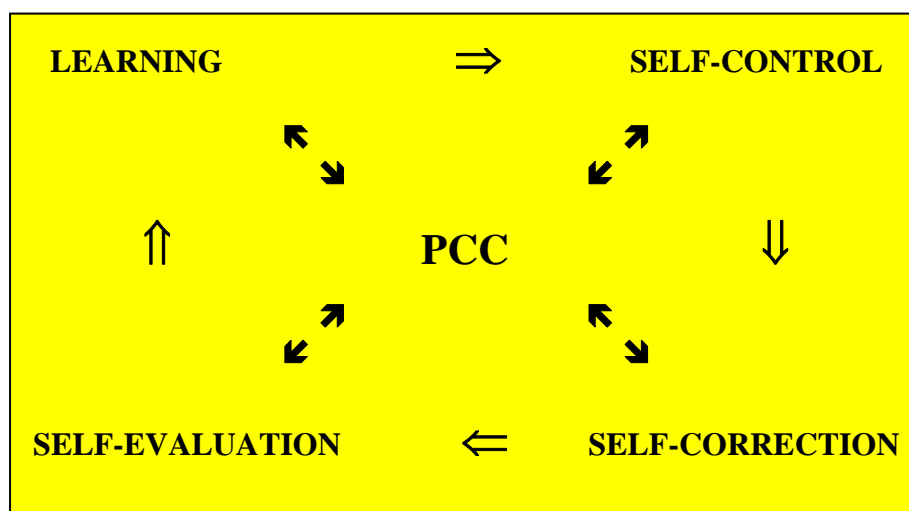


Diagram 1. Relations among mechanisms assisting autonomisation in the process of learning

Through recording the sessions of TRPG and their rehearsals in the conditions of a language laboratory the LP carry out self-correction. This is followed by the correction and discussion

of mistakes by the TP in class and the preparation of corrective materials for individual work in order to eliminate them. The development of the mechanisms of self-control and self-correction at the same time help raise the level of self-assessment and linguistic/communicative sensitivity.

3. Ludic strategy and communicative techniques

In this section we will try to examine TRPG as a technique close to, similar and familiar with techniques originating from ludic strategy and possessing features of selected of them. It will allow us to place TRPG in the typologies of didactic games and determine its connections with other representatives of this kind. A short juxtaposition of the main ludic techniques based on Siek–Piskozub (2001: 34) will serve this purpose.

Among the most important ludic techniques there can be found pure forms and in-between forms containing all or some features characteristic of at least two pure forms. They are:

- pure play,
- pure game,
- pure simulation,
- an as yet unnamed in-between form of game and play,
- simulation games,
- an as yet unnamed in-between form of play and simulation (interaction of participants in an imaginary situation, not necessarily being a reflection of real life e.g. staging of fairy tales, role-playing in a completely imaginary situation).

Pure kind of play is characterised by dissimilarity to common, serious life (in other words fictionality and performing of a given activity for the pleasure of the playing people), and also limitations in time and space. Pure play is typical of children, it can also be practiced by adults at moments free from work and education. Play activities specified by the rules in which competition and/or cooperation constitute a condition of achieving a goal, from a significant, didactic point of view, can find application in school processes of teaching, not only children, but learners of any age.

Pure kind of game is characterised by two elements: rules and competition of players. Unlike in pure games in didactic games the element of competing carries only a motivating

function. It is essential in them to strive for winning, trying different strategies of game and not choosing of the most appropriate one from the beginning. Game, like play, is not characteristic of children exclusively, and in the didactic perspective can be successfully applied to all age groups of learners.

Pure kind of simulation is characterised by dynamics and the fact that the situation presented must be semi-realistic or must imitate reality. It has its application in science (analysis of a process), technology (analysis of working of machines), and also in professional training. In the former case its participants, thanks to manipulating of the simulation model, learn the rules and relations within the situation being modelled. Against some specialists, claiming simulation to be a serious activity as opposed to play, Siek–Piskozub, noticing its application to didactics, rates it among ludic strategy, emphasising its features of play according to an extensive definition by a Dutch culture-studies specialist Huizinga. Learners freely take certain roles in simulations they play in conditions limited by time and space according to accepted rules. It is assisted by tension concerning its outcome and satisfaction from a solved problem, and consciousness of dissimilarity to „common life” manifested, among other things, by the fact of not suffering the consequences of incorrect manipulation of the model.

An in-between form of game and play has not been named so far. Similarly, as play it is an activity different from serious life, limited in time and space by given rules. The element of competition among the players, however, is unnecessary. They can cooperate with one another striving to realise a goal, therefore they can so to speak play/act against the game system.

Simulation games, are an in-between form of simulation and game. It bears characteristic features of games in the form of competition and rules and simulations – they represent a realistic situation in the course of its action, so possess the feature of dynamics.

An in-between form of play and simulation, as yet unnamed, is an interaction of participants in an imaginary situation, not necessarily being a reflection of real life (staging of fairy tales, role-playing in a fully imaginary situation and happenings).

Simulations of game or play character can be used in general education including language teaching. Simulated activities in an imaginary situation allow the participants to enter complex interactions, compelling them to be creative also, when it comes to the language used in them.

In view of the above we daresay that the TRPG combines elements of play, game and simulation. Like play, it can be pleasurable because of performing and participating in it only. However, it is governed by certain rules, though quite flexible, which explains its name but unlike pure games it does not always have to lead to winning especially if applied in education. The very fact of having realised a scenario and having successfully reached its end, without braking the plot, can be perceived as a victory. Therefore the question of competing is not so strongly stressed, which makes the TRPG more accessible and safer from a psychological point of view, for students who are discouraged from active participation by the necessity to compete. Needless to say presence of elements of simulation and role-playing in the TRPG is evident. It is, though, by its complexity and almost limitless possibilities, much more interesting and exciting than simple simulations and role-plays. From a technical point of view, yet, TRPG differs from these by presence of the leading person – so-called game master - who co-creates the plot together with participants – players. To depict the above assumption concerning the place of the TRPG among ludic techniques we will use a modified diagram by Siek–Piskozub, presenting the mutual relations of their main types. Basically the only modification is the placing of TRPG in the central area of the diagram which has not been occupied by any other in-between technique so far. This way we would like to underline the existing and noticeable similarities of features of the TRPG and the remaining pure and in-between ludic techniques and its flexibility in application. However, the diagram should not be perceived literally as the graphic setting does not reflect the relations precisely but only symbolically. Similarly, as it cannot be said that any of the in-between forms contain exactly equal measures of the pure types, placing the TRPG in the geometrical centre of the diagram does not mean that it possesses an equal amount of features of all the other techniques. The exact proportions of the shared features cannot and will never be measured precisely. Besides, in our opinion there is no such need, as all of the techniques had existed perfectly in didactics before they were defined, though some of the definitions, until today, may not be satisfactory for many specialists, yet they still exist and work efficiently. Moreover, their strength lies in their flexibility and fluctuating proportions and the main focus of the shared features of the pure techniques.

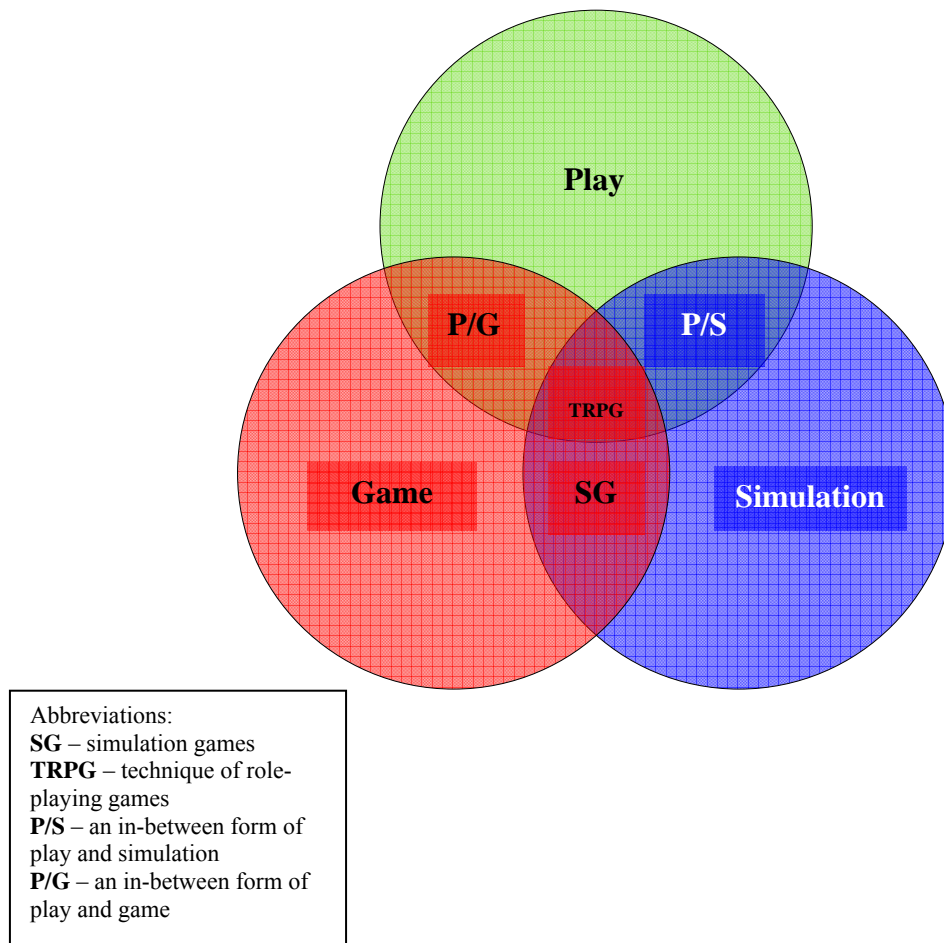


Diagram 2. Mutual relations of main ludic techniques

Littlewood (1994: 49n), among the social interaction activities, mentions simulation and role-playing. He lists a few techniques reflecting social interactions to different extent such as:

- role-playing controlled through cued dialogues,
- role-playing controlled through cues and information,
- role-playing controlled through situation and goals,
- role-playing in the form of debate or discussion,
- large-scale simulation activities,
- improvisation.

They are situated in the other part of the continuum, the ends of which are marked by pre-communicative activities and communicative activities. The continuum is characterised by a transition from maximum control by the teacher to full creativity of the learner. Littlewood classifies as pre-communicative activities techniques such as:

- performing memorised dialogues,
- contextualised drill.

Littlewood presents the techniques in a graphic form of a continuum beginning with pre-communicative activities and ending with fully communicative ones. The transition from pre- to a fully communicative stage is precipitated by cued dialogues also called skeleton dialogues (Livingstone 1983) The continuum modified by adding the Technique of Role-Playing Games is presented below.

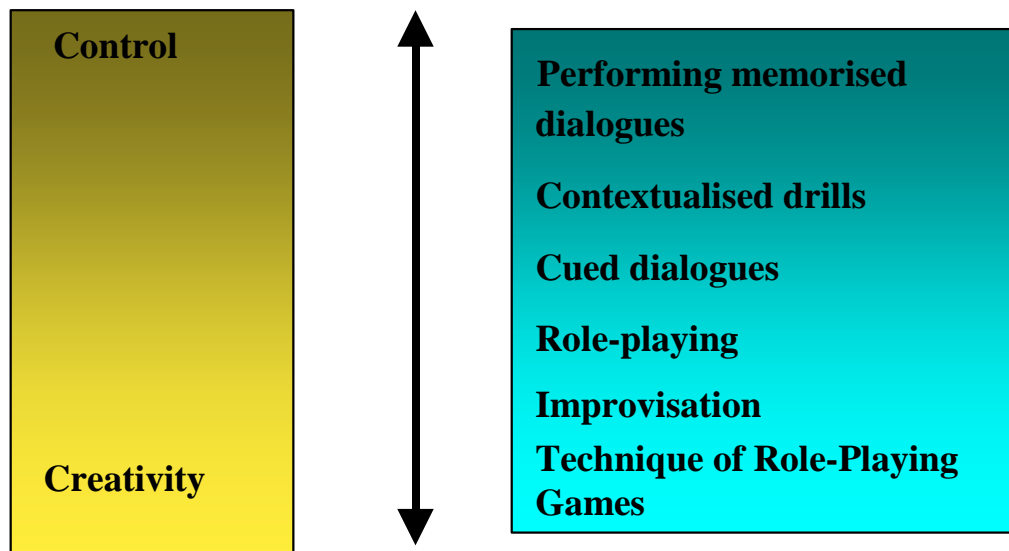


Diagram 3. Teacher control – learner creativity continuum of communicative activities (based on Littlewood 1994: 50)

Because of certain distinctive features of the TRPG, discussed in more detail in the next section, it was placed in the continuum after improvisation as a technique allowing the students for an even wider range of creativity deprived of any external intervention of the TP while playing.

4. The Technique of Role-Playing Games

A practical example of application of the assumptions of autonomisation in foreign language didactics can be an innovative, communicative Technique of Role-Playing Games (Surdyk 2002, 2003, 2004). The idea of the TRPG has been borrowed by the author from popular parlour games – *Role-playing games (RPG)* called in Poland ‘fable games’ (Pl.: *gry*

*fabularne*² or ‘games of imagination’ (Pl.: *gry wyobraźni*) and adapted to the conditions and needs of academic didactics. The elements of game, play and simulations incorporated in it allow it to be rated among ludic techniques (Surdyk 2003). In FL didactics it is closest to the technique of role-play (Ger.: *Rollenspiele*; eg.: Goethals 1977, Ladousse 1987, Livingstone 1983, Hadfield 1987, Littlewood 1994, Siek-Piskozub 1995, 2001) which is known and described in the literature of the subject. So in short the TRPG can be considered a variety of role-play developed to a narrative form. Although, it has to be mentioned that there are some significant elements differentiating the TRPG from role-play, which have been described in detail in other works (Surdyk 2002, 2003):

- **timing of the tasks** during a TRPG session is much longer than in popular communicative situations rated as role-play and limited only by the assumptions of the scenario and/or time frames of the class;
- **number of participants** is increased in case of TRPG, while in role-play usually only two people are involved, very often including the teaching person;
- **form of the tasks** in TRPG is of a higher complexity than in role-plays. In the plot of the game long sequences of communicative situations naturally appearing one after another can be distinguished, unlike role-play which focuses usually only on one. This gives the game a more dynamic adventurous character. Even in more static scenarios, the form of discussion, argumentative discussion or negotiation in TRPG allows topics of greater complexity to be taken up;
- **time and place of action** are frequently not static and time of the action does not always run in congruity with real time;
- **content of the tasks** in TRPG allows the LP to display a greater degree of creativity – the scenario of a Role-Playing Game is set in any reality, does not exclusively concern situations taken from the real world as in role-play and does not have a linear structure (which allows for numerous solutions). Owing to this fact it does not limit the actions of participants, their invention, imagination, spontaneity or creativity. This results in a variety of developments and endings by different groups of players from the same original scenario. This is a crucial difference, in comparison with other, more theatrical techniques that use scenarios in a literal sense as Play acting - for instance;

² Szeja (2004) proposes the term Narrative Role-playing Games (Pl.: *narracyjne gry fabularne - NGF*) to draw a distinction between the classic RPGs (so called table RPGs) from other varieties of this genre, like Computer Role-Playing Games (cRPG).

- **preparation and realisation** of the scenario in the TRPG session are left entirely in the hands of the LP, though consultations with the TP before the session are possible;
- **types of interactions** – in the TRPG interactions take place among all the LP participating in the session, including the leading person – ‘game master’ (GM) and participants – ‘players’ (P) and among the players themselves through the characters they play. The TP does not take part in interactions; LPs speak on their own initiative when they want to influence the course of action, express their opinions, or take a stand about the subject of the session or its current fragment. This contributes to a reduction of stress level and has a positive influence on the authenticity of the speech;
- **style and register of interactions conditioned by the type of discourse** are, so to speak, imposed by the scenario and situations anticipated in it. The context of interactions and type of roles in the scenario demand from the players the application of different styles of speech from a casual conversation to academic discourse.

A unique function of the TRPG, not present in other techniques known so far, is the role of the leading person (GM), who is not only the creator of the outline scenario, a narrator, an arbiter and the coordinator of all action but is also responsible for the roles of a number of Non-player characters – (NPC), who are met by the characters of the players (P). Therefore, his function is extremely significant, much more complicated than those of the players and burdened with a greater responsibility throughout the session.

Finally, in order to bring closer the idea of traditional Role-Playing Games to understand better the convention of the TRPG we will present hereby our proposed definition³. It contains the most characteristic and significant elements for ‘classic’ RPGs, as there have been many varieties and derivatives so far, and its length and complexity is intended and justified by the receiver since it is addressed to people who may be completely unfamiliar with the subject. Therefore terms requiring separate definitions and specifications have been provided with references.

Role - Playing Games – a kind of parlour games (1) with elements of play (2), based on narration (3), more than once demanding from the participants acting skills, played during meetings called sessions (4). There are at least two people taking part in them, one of them is most often called the game master (5), who plays the role of a leading person, narrator and arbiter, while the others called players (6), play roles of characters called heroes (7), actively co-creating with the leading person the plot of the adventure (8), which is the content of the

³ The definition was first presented by the author during an international academic conference ‘Culture-generative function of games The game as a medium, text and ritual’ organised by Games Research Association of Poland (Pl.: Polskie Towarzystwo Badania Gier) Poznań, Poland November 19 - 20, 2005

game. The leading person is most often the author of the frame plan of the plot called scenario (9). The participants use their imagination and move in a symbolic, fictitious world presented in a manual or series of them (10) of a given system (11) together with supplements (12), respecting the rules they contain called mechanics of game (13), often with use of auxiliary accessories (14) and considering random factor in the form of dice (15). During the course of development of the plot the heroes can cooperate or compete, encounter other characters and creatures, played by the game master, called Non Player Characters = NPC (16) or enemies (17). Winning in the game most often consists in successfully completing the quest (18), reaching by the character or a team of characters (19) its goal and is rewarded by the game master with an allotting to the participants so called experience points (20) enabling development of their characters (21). There are a number of kinds of RPGs (22) distinguished on the grounds of game mechanics, as well as the world presented (23).

Terms requiring separate definitions:

- (1) a parlour game, (as opposed to a stock market game, game of chance, gambling game and others);
- (2) play;
- (3) narration and its convention/conventions in RPGs, narrative role-playing game, an interactive story;
- (4) session;
- (5) game master - functions, rights and duties, other names of the leading person, examples of RPGs without the game master (see also pt. 22);
- (6) player - functions, rights and duties;
- (7) character, hero;
- (8) adventure - meaning referring to Role-Playing Games;
- (9) scenario - features, contents, types (linear/nonlinear/others) etc., examples of RPGs without the use of a scenario (see also pt. 22);
- (10) manual – form, contents, function, systems without a manual (see also pt. 11)
- (11) system and its elements, (see also pt. 22);
- (12) supplements – form, contents, function;
- (13) game mechanics – creating a character, mechanics of meetings and fighting, executing of different tests, specifics of mechanics in different kinds of RPGs and related forms (see also pt. 22);
- (14) possible accessories in RPGs –exhibits, choreography, make-up, models, figurines etc.;
- (15) dice – kinds regarding number of sides (d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, d20, d30 etc.), aim and way of using, dice-less systems - see pt. 22;
- (16) Non-player character – characteristics, functions;
- (17) enemy in RPGs – categories (opponent, monster, etc.), aim of use in an adventure, a bestiary (see also pt. 12);
- (18) adventure, campaign etc.;
- (19) Team– as a group of characters;
- (20) points of experience, other names for PE, RPG without PE - see also pt. 21, 22;
- (21) development of characters, character sheet, parameters, level of experience etc.;
- (22) varieties of role-playing games and derivative forms – classic, live action role-play - *LARP*, *New Style*, *Drama*; computer role-playing games - *cRPG* (types: First Person Perspective - *FPP*, Third Person Perspective - *TPP*, others), Multi-User Dungeon - *MUD*, Competitive Online Role Playing Game – *CORPG*, Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game - *MMORPG*; card games, paragraph games, strategic/battle games, correspondence RPG etc.;
- (23) types of realities in RPGs – *science fiction*, *fantasy*, *heroic fantasy*, *cyberpunk*, contemporary and others.

Complete study of ‘side’ definitions, especially regarding various existing varieties of systems, abounding with exceptions to the rules of classic RPGs requires the collaborative work of a research team. Perhaps, besides other educational projects, this will be one of the enterprises of Games Research Association of Poland⁴ (Pl.: *Polskie Towarzystwo Badania Gier*) – an interdisciplinary academic association formed in 2005.

⁴ More information about this interdisciplinary academic association on www.ptbg.org.pl

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