

ENGAGING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL USING ROLE PLAY IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This paper aimed to investigate to what extent the role play technique, especially semi-scripted could improve students' speaking skill in English. This research was a descriptive qualitative in nature where was conducted at SMP Rahmat in Surabaya, East Java. Thirty students participated in this study and they have practiced a semi-scripted role play as one kind of role play techniques. There was pre-test and post-test applied, before and after the role play activities. The tests were done to measure students' speaking skill. The results of this study showed that semi-scripted role play technique could significantly improve and affect properly the speaking ability of the students. Furthermore, by employing the semi-scripted role play, the students could freely express their feelings and make them able to explore their creativity in more ways to enable them facing the real life.

Keywords: Role Play, Dialogue, Speaking Skill, English Teaching

INTRODUCTION

In the era of industrial reformation 4.0, ability to speak English is highly demanded. But in fact, most of Indonesian people still have difficulties to speak with this language. The main reason why Indonesian people have this problem is they didn't used to speak English in their education level, from kindergarten, elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, even they already continue to college university. Many schools still don't consider English language as a priority subject in their school. In school environment itself, there are still many students that feel terrible of speaking English, whereas English is mostly found in Indonesian people's daily routine. Speaking skill usually required when you want to be hired by a company or you want to go abroad to study, to have vacation, or even to get a new job. Chaney (1998) states that speaking is the process of sharing the idea. In a kind of contexts, it can use verbal and non-verbal

pattern. To fulfill this need, we should train continuously and master the prior knowledge also the basic skill, i.e. speaking skill to facilitate our communication with indigenous people there, especially when we still in education level.

According to Harmer (2007), there are several techniques that can develop speaking skill. In academic field, the students in school can be trained by several kinds of speaking activities such as acting from script, communication games, discussion, prepared talk, questionnaires, simulation, and role play. Tompkins (1998) defines role play as “one of the classroom teaching techniques that encourage students to participate actively in the process of learning English. Therefore, foreign language students practice the target language in a context similar to real life situations where stress and shyness are removed.” In this regards students can build on their opinions and thoughts, and establish language on their level, acting out in some situations based on their understanding because of role play. Harmer (2007) explains that the benefits of role play are we can get many social contexts and many interactional roles. In addition, role play activity is a way of students to role behavior in significant context and situation.

Role play has been an issue that attracting many scholars to study, such as Eppendi (2016); Zare-Behtash et al (2107); Puspitorini (2018); Krisdiana et al (2018); Karyati (2019); Wulandari et al (2019). Zare-Behtash et al (2107) conducted a research to explore how the role play task could improve learners speaking ability in university setting in Iran. They divided two groups of students with the control experiments. Their study found that the treatment given in their control experiments demonstrated a positive effect on students’ speaking ability. It is to say that role play significantly increased learners English speaking proficiency.

A study that focuses on the use of role play in SMP level was done by Puspitorini (2018). She conducted her research with a site at the SMPN 9 Bekasi. There were 62 students participated in the study. The focus of her research is to examine the influence of using role play as a technique in teaching English speaking. Her study revealed that there is a significant effect of using role play in teaching English speaking skill to the students. Her study in line with Eppendi’ finding (2016). Eppendi (2016) states that role play naturally could motivate and attract students’ attention to study English speaking. By applying role play, students more engage in the learning process and finally enjoy to be active orally to practice speaking English in the classroom.

Another study was conducted by Krisdiana et al (2018). With special attention to investigate the integration of role play, they study the connection of word card when it incorporated with role play in teaching English speaking. They focus their attention to speaking for communication purpose. By employing pretest and posttest to 23 students to compare what scores have been made by

students. In their results, they concluded that role play which is integrated by using word cards is proven can improve students' speaking skill especially in the area of English for communication purposes. Their study also confirmed what have been done by Karyati (2019) who investigates the use of role play using role cards in learning Kaiwa to improve their speaking ability. Wulandari et al (2019) They found that implementing role play could increase students' English speaking ability.

From the previous studies that have been conducted, there is a scant of study that investigates the integration of role play and the use of script role play in English learning especially to junior high school students in upper grade (8th and 9th graders). For this reason, we have implemented the semi-scripted role play eventhough their average level is still pre-intermediate to examine and to see the effect of their speaking ability improvement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking is a part of daily life. This idea also emphasized by Bailey (2005) that, "speaking is such fundamental human behaviour. It means speaking is very essential in our lives." It helps us to communicate among people in social life. There are seven activities required by the learners to improve speaking skills in the process of learning English as foreign language, those are: 1) responding to visual clues, 2) role play, 3) conversation, 4) word games, 5) story building, 6) asking for and giving information, 7) problem solving

Role play is one of the techniques that are generally connected to communicative language teaching. According to Doff (1992), role play is a way of bringing situations from real life into the classroom. Costa et al (2017); Neupane (2019) also conducted that role play is the medium (media) which the students get the ideas about different situation through various activities taken from the scenario of real life.

Using role play in teaching speaking skill has advantages (Kusnierek, 2015). In role play, the learners express feeling and attitudes; (2) role play is an encouraging activity; (3) provide the learners with the opportunity to feel the situation rather than merely intellectualize about it; (4) the learners feel motivated; (5) learners are being prepared for actual situations to be faced; (6) can be used to develop social skill; and (7) role play is kind of communication system based on action rather than words in use. Daniastuti (2018) in her study investigates the effectiveness of simulation and role play in teaching English speaking for high and low motivated students. She reveals that simulation and role play contribute to the improvement of their positive speaking scores. Furthermore, high motivated students show a significant result by the use of simulation and role play

techniques. However, simulation is more appropriate to be used to improve speaking skill than role play.

Furthermore, Harper-Whalen & Morris (2005) state that there are three types of role play. First, fully scripted role play is role play in which each word is given, and each student should understand or memorize his/her role. Such type includes explaining the model conversation in the prescribed text book and the main aim of the conversation after all is to make each item of the language meaningful and easy to remember. Byrne (1986) indicates that role play in this type can be appropriate for low level students who do not know the situation in the semi-scripted role play. Second is semi-scripted role play. This kind of role play includes a model conversation with some missing words and students should know how to fill in the blanks in suitable words of these contexts. So, students can change the main conversation to some certain way and establish their own conversation. Such type of role play might be called as semi-controlled or as the teacher or prescribed textbook includes language input, but students should be familiar with main procedures and seeks to go higher level of tasks as semi-scripted role play is less structured and less controlled than fully scripted role play.

The last type of role play is non-scripted role play, already known that it is kind of role play without any texts or scripts before doing some role play, but it may be given with keywords of dialogues, keywords, and information, or contexts and aims in less controlled and structured tasks (Dickson, 1989). This type of role play students can establish mini conversation based on keywords mentioned above, materials, or contexts are simply as filling in gaps. This role play also provides a great chance to employ the information of techniques in a certain situations. This kind of role play can be practical for middle to advanced level students. No need to give this kind of role play to beginner students because it will make them feel difficult to do it. Conversely, they should first trained by fully scripted role play to make them feel accustomed to the situation in front of the class and feel confident to jump to the next step, until they can fully showed the non-scripted role play to you, as the teacher. Students sometime encounter problems in learning English speaking, such as anxiety to speak. In their study, Toyib & Safi'i (2018) revealed that to overcome with this problem, teacher should be wise to use a suitable method to make students comfortable to use English in their speaking. One techniques to be employed is role play. They argue that by using this method, students are fully involved in the class activity and it gives students opportunities to speak with their classmate freely.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study was conducted in one class of 8th grade in SMP Rahmat Surabaya when they have English lesson. There were about thirty students with different prior knowledges and backgrounds between each other. Based on their average level, they still in pre-intermediate level. The researchers try to train their HOTS (high order thinking skill) through semi scripted role play. For this research, the researchers used pre test before conducted some role play, and post test for follow up their competence in speaking skill.

This research used two instruments for collecting the data: observation rubric checklist and speaking test scoring guidance. For the speaking test scoring guidance will be discussed in next section (pre-test and post-test materials). The pre-test and post-test include as follows.

1. Pre-test. In this kind of test, the researchers just want to test students' prior knowledge in speaking skill with simple activity. The researchers asked the students individually to come forward and explain about a picture that will be chosen by the researchers randomly. The main questions that will probably asked for them are about: "*What are the people doing in the picture?*" "*Can you mention any objects that you see in the picture?*" also other kinds of questions that related with the pictures, maximally 5 questions for each student.
2. Post-test. For the post-test, of course the researchers implement the role play into the students first (they work in pairs and do the semi scripted role play twice because they have to switch their roles), then evaluate them in the rubrics as same as before (pre-test activity). In role play speaking skill test, the researchers add "team work" section for the importance of role play itself.

Furthermore, we divided the observation procedures of the research into four parts: planning, acting, evaluating, and reflecting.

1. Planning. First, the researchers prepared the observation checklists for both pre-test and post-test, also the materials for pre-test (some pictures of events) and post-test (any equipment that support the students' role play activities).
2. Acting. In this activity, the researchers implemented the things that already prepared in planning stage. After doing the pre-test and evaluating the students, the researchers give some short times for the students to think about what they want to talk based on the dialogues that already distributed by the researchers. The dialogues are in pair form.
3. Evaluating. This is the main and really important activity between all of the four stages. The researchers will observe and evaluate their speaking skill's basics: grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, team work (for post test), and self esteem or self confidence.

4. Reflecting. After acting out the role play, the researchers evaluating the students' work, which should be removed, which should be stagnant, and which activity and rubrics that need any improvements, also the researchers will count the mean of the results. The researchers need self reflection as well. In the end, the researchers give some recommendations based on those points of evaluation.

FINDINGS

This research consisted of three steps: pre-test, role play treatment, and post-test (including the brief interview session). For the pre-test and post-test, the researchers choose theme "describing picture" to test the students' speaking skill. There were four questions for three students in the class:

1. Did you have an opportunity to practice speaking in your English class? If no, why?
2. How often do you practice speaking English class? If seldom, why?
3. Did your English teacher give you motivation to speak English?
4. If there is a chance, do you want to have an English speaking class?

Those three students give the answers in the same meaning. For example, for first question, they answered that they didn't have enough opportunity to practice speaking in English language because the teacher commonly taught reading and writing skills in the class. And of course, they rarely do the speaking practice in English language because of that reason. For the next question, they also answered that their teacher gives them motivation to speak or have conversation in English language, but the students are just shy and afraid to talk in English. The teacher also just give one-side motivation, and didn't control the students whether they have conversation in English or not. And the last question, 2 out of 3 students said that they really want to speak in English language when they have that subject in the class. As mentioned earlier in the method section, the students' speaking skills were evaluated in five terms: grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and self esteem. The scoring system of each term starts from 10 as the lowest and 100 as the highest mark. The following tables below are the result of students' scores of speaking skill in pre-test.

Table 1. Students' Scores of Pre-test (Describing Picture)

No	Grammar	Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Fluency	Self Confidence	Total Score	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	57	76	68	70	73	344	68.8
2	58	82	70	70	72	352	70.4
3	58	80	68	70	70	346	69.2

4	57	77	65	70	75	344	68.8
5	56	60	66	60	65	307	61.4
6	48	66	65	65	70	314	62.8
7	60	62	68	58	55	303	60.6
8	58	60	60	65	70	313	62.6
9	60	73	68	55	56	312	62.4
10	55	60	65	60	60	300	60
11	55	56	60	62	60	293	58.6
12	50	56	60	56	70	292	58.4
13	62	56	66	56	56	296	59.2
14	45	56	66	57	71	295	59
15	56	56	56	60	58	286	57.2
16	65	65	68	45	56	299	59.8
17	50	50	48	45	50	243	48.6
18	50	56	50	48	44	248	49.6
19	52	48	42	45	48	235	47
20	50	52	42	45	45	234	46.8
21	50	48	46	45	48	237	47.4
22	51	50	58	45	50	254	50.8
23	58	60	66	58	45	287	57.4
24	52	50	60	45	48	255	51
25	48	45	50	42	44	229	45.8
26	55	50	50	48	46	249	49.8
27	62	66	66	67	65	326	65.2
28	48	45	48	48	50	239	47.8
Tot al	1.526	1.661	1.665	1.560	1.620	8.032	1,606.4
Av era ge	54.5	59.3	59.4	55.7	57.8	286.85	57.37

Table 2 below demonstrates the result of the classroom observation and the students' scores of speaking skill in role-play activities.

Table 2. Students' Scores of Role-play

No	Grammar	Vocabu lary	Pronunci ation	Fluency	Self- confidence	Team Work	Total Score	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	70	88	78	83	87	88	494	82.33
2	68	88	80	82	88	88	494	82.33
3	72	90	82	82	84	84	494	82.33
4	72	90	78	80	84	84	488	81.33
5	82	60	80	80	78	86	466	77.66
6	68	76	78	77	86	78	463	77.16
7	72	76	80	70	81	71	450	75
8	72	76	75	76	76	85	460	76.66
9	72	82	78	70	62	70	434	72.33
10	80	78	80	58	58	70	424	70.66
11	61	58	62	58	58	62	359	59.33
12	64	76	63	62	75	62	402	67

13	63	58	58	57	58	60	354	59
14	63	62	56	56	61	62	360	60
15	62	62	59	59	62	60	364	60.66
16	65	65	70	58	57	55	370	61.66
17	68	70	76	69	56	58	397	66.16
18	62	61	70	56	58	60	367	61.16
19	60	58	58	56	55	56	343	57.16
20	60	55	56	58	56	56	341	56.83
21	60	61	60	57	59	58	355	59.1
22	61	60	62	60	57	56	356	59.33
23	68	68	69	70	72	72	419	69.83
24	61	66	58	57	56	56	354	59
25	76	66	78	67	68	68	423	70.5
26	67	56	56	66	58	57	360	70.5
27	60	64	72	67	78	78	419	69.83
28	56	68	78	68	72	82	424	70.66
Total	1.865	1.938	1.950	1.859	1.900	1.922	11.434	1,915.5
Average	66.6	69.2	69.6	66.3	67.8	68.6	408.35	68.4

Table 3 below depicts our result checklist of class observations of students in the classroom when they implemented a semi-scripted role play. As can be seen from the table, students in overall cases did not implement most points as indicated from the observation indicators.

Table 3. Class Observations when Doing Semi-Scripted Role Play

No	Indicator	Implementation	
		Yes	No
1	Students are well prepared for the teaching learning process.		√
2	Students take notes of teacher's explanation related to the objectives of the teaching learning process.		√
3	Students actively divided themselves in groups to carry out any learning tasks.		√
4	Students actively share knowledge to one another in their group.		√
5	Students actively help one other for best performance.		√
6	Students use English language during teaching learning process.		√
7	Students enthusiastically come forward before the class for demonstration.		√
8	Students get nervous, shy, and uncomfortable when invited to demonstrate a role-play in front of the class.	√	
9	Students voluntarily do a role-play demonstration in front of the class.		√
10	Students spoke loudly and clearly in front of the classroom.		√
11	Students speaking practice runs smoothly.	√	
12	Students speaking test runs smoothly according to the plan.		√

As can be seen from Table 4, the mean scores from pre-test (57.37), role play activity (68.4), and post-test (72.6) are valuably increasing. That is important

to prove the researchers' assumption that learners will really enjoy role play so much and will improve their speaking skill especially in English language.

Table 4. Students' Scores of Pre-test (Describing Picture)

No	Grammar	Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Fluency	Self-Confidence	Total Score	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	75	90	81	86	90	422	84.4
2	73	90	82	84	90	419	83.8
3	77	90	81	82	86	416	83.2
4	77	90	84	84	86	421	84.2
5	65	84	82	82	89	402	80.4
6	72	79	81	80	81	393	78.6
7	75	79	82	73	74	383	76.6
8	75	79	78	79	87	395	79
9	75	84	81	73	73	386	77.2
10	82	81	82	63	73	381	76.2
11	75	84	81	73	73	386	77.2
12	69	79	68	68	67	351	70.2
13	69	63	63	63	65	323	64.6
14	68	67	61	61	67	324	64.8
15	67	67	64	64	65	327	65.4
16	70	70	73	63	60	336	67.2
17	73	75	79	72	63	362	72.4
18	67	66	73	61	65	332	66.4
19	70	63	63	61	61	318	63.6
20	65	60	61	63	61	310	62
21	65	66	65	62	63	321	64.2
22	66	65	67	65	61	324	64.8
23	73	73	74	73	75	368	73.6
24	66	71	63	62	61	323	64.6
25	79	71	81	74	73	378	75.6
26	72	61	61	71	62	327	65.4
27	65	69	75	72	81	362	72.4
28	66	76	83	73	84	382	76.4
Total	1991	2092	2069	1987	2036	10175	2034.4
Average	71.1	74.7	73.8	70.9	72.7	363.3	72.6

Table 5 shows the mean scores of speaking skill terms. The average scores for pre-test is 57.34, role play is 68.01, and post-test is 72.64.

Table 5. Comparison of Mean Scores of Speaking Skill Terms

Speaking Skill	Pre-test	Role Play	Post-test
Grammar	54.5	66.6	71.1
Vocabulary	59.3	69.2	74.7
Pronunciation	59.4	69.6	73.8
Fluency	55.7	66.3	70.9
Team Work	-	68.6	-

Self-Confidence	57.8	67.8	72.7
Average	57.34	68.01	72.64

DISCUSSION

The activity practices (from pre-test, role play, and post test) approximately lasted for about 2,5-3 hours (already have the permission from the English teacher and the headmaster), and did in turn (in the first chance, student A become A, student B become B, and for the second chance, student A become B, student B become A). And according to the table, the students are getting nervous, shy, and uncomfortable when invited to demonstrate a role-play in front of the class, but the speaking practice runs smoothly when applied in the class. This phenomenon is common practice for young learners studying English. Leong & Ahmadi (2017) stated that speaking is one of the most important skills to be developed and enhanced as it is considered as the most difficult aspect in language learning. So, many learners find their self in difficulty to express their ideas even to start a small conversation (Bashir et al., 2011).

The researchers also conclude that most of the students are really dependent and didn't have any initiative even to start a conversation or role play, and the rest are doing conversely. In addition, half of them also feel panicked suddenly after they read the semi-scripted text which already distributed by the researchers, and after some approach that did by the researchers, they confessed that they are confused what will they say in front of the class when doing the role play. Some of them (who get the long script) and find it difficult also surrender by see the script just in a glance, suddenly asks for their friends who they think are able enough to handle the script (because their friends often getting good marks in English subject).

However, the result of speaking skill when it was conducted in the role-play rather than in the pre-test were quite different. We have assumed the reason why the students get higher grade when doing role play rather than in pre-test was because they already have speaking before, so they already have confidence to speak English in front of the class. Actually, before the students do role play in front of the class, they did some practice for the dialogue that have been distributed by the researchers in their own desks in order to make them feel more confident and reduce their anxiety when doing the role play in front of the class. Besides, when they have difficulties, the researchers will let them know the example of the full-scripted role play that they've got (just a glance, so they will not copy and memorize the example. The researchers expect more from them instead), and give them some directions as well. Also when they already in front of the class, they are allowed to bring the semi-scripted text.

Although they already have some rehearsal before going forward, not all of them had performed well when doing the role play. They often feel awkward each other, especially there are three stranger researchers in their class, so it's still understandable for the researchers. Also, the students didn't have any experience to be evaluated on their speaking ability, especially speaking in English language. Like a wise word, "if we are have a second chance, surely we will do better than what we do before." And the researchers think that this wise word is suitable for the class that had been observed. They will perform better if they have second chance to do the role play. But unfortunately, because of the limited time, the researchers just conduct the role play once time.

We would like to prove that semi-scripted role play was suitable for A1-A2 learners (in this case is 8th grade of junior high school students that approximately in 12-15 years old). The data of mean scores of pre-test and post-test have useful informations about the effectiveness of the role play teaching strategy (especially semi-scripted role play), that the students made a big progress with this kind of treatment.

After looking at the mean of each activity (pre-test, role play, and post-test), with this research, it already becomes an evident that role play really affect the students' speaking skill in terms of their improvement in grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and their self confidence. In role play, the students can express their feeling freely (eventhough it still have to in context with the role play theme), become more motivated, more creative, can develop their social skill, and they also can explore the feeling of the role that already played by them. Also, it proves to us that speaking skills can't improve instantly, but with some treatment and experiences, the students can develop their speaking skill with the interactive and interesting way. This finding confirmed what has been done by Krebt (2017); Castro & Villafuerte (2019).

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions can be drawn from this study. Students' scores and their speaking skill are still in average since they are still in pre-intermediate level of class and beginner level of English comprehension. Actually, they should already in A2 level, but in average it's still fine to have them still in A1 level. The students thought that they aren't able to speak in English because they already feel afraid and shy to be laughed by their friends and to made mistakes in speaking English. Most of the students really want to have speaking class in their English subject (proved by their intention and their activeness in role play activities). As a result, role play makes the students can freely express their feelings and makes them able to explore their creativity more. Role play also can be as their preparation when they face a real situation.

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