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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ROLE-PLAY IN LEARNING ENGLISH TO ENHANCE ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS AT THE FOURTH SEMESTER ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF UNIVERSITAS BANDAR LAMPUNG

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Abstract

This research aimed to explore the implementation of role-play as a strategy to enhance English speaking skills among students at the Fourth Semester English Department of Universitas Bandar Lampung. The implementation of role-play as a strategy was very significant in enhancing English-speaking skills for students. The study employed a qualitative descriptive method with a purposive sampling technique to select participants. Classroom observations and interviews provided a comprehensive understanding of the students' experiences and improvements in speaking skills as the data collection. The results showed that the role-play strategy significantly boosted students' confidence and fluency in speaking English, and it created a supportive environment that encouraged active participation and real-life communication scenarios. The conclusion indicated that role-play was an effective activity in the learning process that alleviated students' worries and enhanced their English speaking skills. It was accessible to everyone, particularly those looking to improve their speaking abilities. This research contributed valuable insights for educators seeking to enhance English language instruction through interactive and engaging methods.

Keywords: *Speaking, Role-Play, Language learning, Classroom observation*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a crucial skill in daily life, requiring both accuracy and fluency for effective communication (Derakhshan, Khalili, & Beheshti, 2016). Accuracy, encompassing grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary, is essential for learners to convey clear and comprehensible messages (Harmer, 2001). Fluency, on the other hand, refers to speaking smoothly at a comfortable pace, avoiding unnecessary pauses that could hinder understanding. Bilbrough

(2007) asserts, communication involves both transmitting information and receiving feedback, with practice being key to developing language proficiency.

Speaking itself is not as easy as it appears. Students were afraid of making mistakes and of not being understood by their friends when they speak English. So, they cannot express their ideas in English,

especially in speaking. Communicating is not only giving information but also receiving feedback. Many students struggle with spoken English due to limited knowledge, lack of practice in daily life, and feelings of embarrassment. However, students often face challenges in spoken English due to factors such as limited knowledge, insufficient practice, and fear of making mistakes. This fear can lead to difficulties in articulating thoughts, impeding effective communication.

Role-play is a strategy that forces students to perform specific roles by speaking, acting, and sharing (Altun, 2015). Role-play refers to the technique used in this research, in which students are instructed to practice the dialogue in front of the class. Role-play enables the learners to experience the problems they might face in the real world and actively apply the knowledge in simulated situations (Turzak, 2017). According to McSharry and Jones (2000) although role-play may not be difficult for many learners, it is advisable to start with short role-play and move gradually to longer role-play after both the teachers and the students gain some initial experience and confidence. The role play activity also should not come immediately before or right after an exam because the exam can cause stress for the students and negatively influence the effectiveness of this activity (Case & Cheek-O'Donnell, 2015). It is helpful for students to try and experiment in class (Dakowska, 2005). Role-play gives many benefits to student speaking achievement. According to Hankin (2019), role-playing gave the students a lively discourse method.

Numerous studies have explored the use of role-play in language learning, each with its limitations. Utami's study employs Classroom Action Research but lacks details on duration and control groups, making it hard to assess long-term effectiveness. Hana's research addresses a gap in modified role-play strategies, providing empirical data on their impact on EFL learners' speaking skills and suggesting a framework for future longitudinal studies. Henisah's study highlights role play's effectiveness for vocational high school students but does not examine its application in other educational settings or age groups, nor does it address psychological factors like anxiety and self-confidence that affect speaking abilities (Henisah et al., 2023). Overall, further research is needed to understand the long-term impact of role play on speaking skills and how it can be adapted to various contexts and psychological barriers (Brown, 2004; Thornbury, 2005; Nation & Newton, 2009).

Shortly, teaching English must include an environment that allows students to engage in speaking as well as a meaningful and adaptable activity in many situations. English teaching activities need to adapt to an environment that encourages students to turn up and speak up in the class as well as boost students' confidence in speaking. To improve the learning aim, the teacher should be imaginative in selecting teaching strategies that enable students to speak up. Additionally, Scrivener (2005) highlights the importance of empowering and encouraging students to speak, as it facilitates their ability to communicate effectively using the language learned. That is why in this research, the researcher uses role-play. Use role-play is one of the practices that encourage students to overcome this problem.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking Skills in English Language Learning

Speaking is recognized as one of the four fundamental language skills that English language learners must acquire. This skill

requires particular attention, as even the most valuable ideas may lose their effectiveness if not communicated clearly and appropriately (Fitriati, 2016). Effective oral communication necessitates an awareness of context, such as whether a conversation is formal or informal, as well as the ability to distinguish between standard and non-standard forms of English. Richards and Renandya (2005) emphasize that the ultimate goal of language teaching is to develop learners' communicative competence; therefore, classroom activities that enhance learners' ability to express themselves orally are integral to language instruction. In this regard, teaching techniques play a crucial role, as they determine how teachers facilitate the teaching and learning process. Specifically, strategies employed in teaching speaking should foster students' ability to communicate both efficiently and effectively. Furthermore, Richards and Renandya (2005) note that teachers who design and implement such communicative activities hold a central role in the success of language learning. Similarly, Laoma (year) highlights that speaking is not only an essential component of the language curriculum but also a critical focus of assessment in language education.

In the contemporary context, the ability to communicate in English is increasingly valuable across diverse settings. Thornbury (2005a) further emphasizes that effective conversation requires teachers to possess distinct instructional traits and employ appropriate teaching techniques. The accuracy and fluency of a teacher's speech serve as important indicators of their effectiveness in teaching speaking. Consequently, teachers are encouraged to explore and adopt the most effective strategies to support the development of proficient English speakers. From this perspective, speaking can be understood as a productive skill that enables learners to articulate ideas, express thoughts, and convey meaning effectively in oral communication. Katemba (2016) adds that teaching techniques and task selection in speaking instruction should not only align with program objectives but also be tailored to students' developmental stages, ensuring that learning is conducted smoothly and that learners can communicate effectively.

Challenges in Developing English Speaking Skills

Teaching English speaking presents particular challenges, especially within ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts. Nazaruddin (2017) emphasizes that although speaking competence is widely recognized as essential, teacher-centered instructional practices often limit students' opportunities for active participation. Similarly, Sukma et al. (2019) highlight that many teachers encounter obstacles such as limited pedagogical competence, insufficient understanding of the nature of speaking skills, difficulties in motivating learners, and challenges in conducting accurate speaking assessments. In both ESL and EFL settings, these issues are compounded by broader instructional difficulties, including effective classroom management and the creation of supportive environments conducive to communicative activities (Chowdhury & Shaila, 2013; Nanda, 2016; Pertiwi et al., 2020; Nanda & Susanto 2020; Seraj et al., 2021). Another notable challenge faced by learners in developing English-speaking proficiency is mother-tongue interference. Language plays a crucial role in shaping how individuals interact with one another and interpret their surroundings. As Cook (2016) notes, language is frequently utilized in communicative exchanges between individuals who may not share the same first—or even second—language. Through the process of language learning, individuals are enabled to engage in interaction, exchange information, and

foster communication across diverse contexts. Furthermore, Mohtar et al. (2015) emphasize that students who demonstrate a strong interest in studying English are more likely to actively participate in communicative practices, despite the persistent influence of their native language on their spoken English.

Role-Play as a Teaching Strategy in Language Learning

Role-play has long been recognized as an effective pedagogical strategy in the teaching of language and education. According to Race (2010), successful student learning is influenced by multiple factors that educators must carefully consider when designing lessons and structuring the learning process. The implementation of role-play as a teaching and learning method has been shown to reinforce understanding and enhance knowledge retention in classroom settings (Jiaotong-Liverpool, 2020). Similarly, CJ (2018) emphasizes that role-play fosters the development of speaking skills by encouraging students to assume alternative identities, engage in improvisation, and simulate real-world scenarios within diverse contexts. Because role-play, through engaging in games related to the material taught, can aid students in developing a deeper understanding of the subject matter. The goal is to implement authentic activities that can engage learners (Reeves, Herrington, & Oliver, 2002). Duxbury and Ling (2010) stated that using role play, educators should motivate students to perform as well as possible while avoiding instructor interference.

METHODS

The research was designed in a qualitative descriptive method. It focused on the implementation of role-play to enhance English speaking class. The role-play was derived from Indonesian ethnic stories which are converted into English. As Creswell (2014) emphasizes, qualitative research investigates and aims to comprehend the interpretations that people or groups make of social or educational phenomena. The study was conducted with students enrolled in the fourth semester at Universitas Bandar Lampung, Indonesia. A total of 15 students from a single class, specifically the Creative Writing: Drama course, participated in the study. Participants were selected based on specific criteria, including English language proficiency, class participation, and speaking ability. Ultimately, 7 students were selected by the researcher for inclusion in the study. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure the inclusion of participants who were actively engaged in the learning process. Data was collected from audio recorded interviews. Interview consisting of 9 questions aimed at examining various aspects of students' learning experiences. The interviews were conducted in relaxed and open settings after they implemented drama activities. The responses gained from the interviews were transcribed and coded based on the themes. Data collection conducted in July 2024 utilized observation and interview. Observations were made in three meetings by performing the drama in front of the class.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The students' drama, based on the Indonesian folktale "Keong Mas" from East Java, illustrates the consequences of ingratitude and conveys moral lessons relevant to local wisdom. Incorporating traditional folktales into English language instruction serves as an effective means to introduce cultural heritage. Prior to the performance, the researcher guided the students in preparing for the role-play, equipping them to engage with the material effectively. This approach enhances their understanding of cultural

narratives while fostering language skills through active, performance-based learning.



Figure 1. Students' preparation for English drama performance.

A. Observation Results

In the initial observation, students exhibited challenges related to anxiety, diminished self-confidence, and mispronunciations. Students (R.H) and (R.M) encountered difficulties with stammering and incorrect pronunciations, while (F.B) and (M.L) demonstrated insufficient vocal volume and intonation issues. Additionally, (M.N) communicated in a soft and apprehensive manner, and (R.N) displayed a lack of confidence accompanied by inconsistent intonation. During the second observation, students demonstrated progress in pronunciation, fluency, and intonation, although some continued to mispronounce specific words. Students (R.M) and (M.N) exhibited increased self-confidence, and (R.N) made advancements in pronunciation but remained somewhat hesitant. In the third observation, the incorporation of role-play with costumes significantly enhanced students' confidence and fluency. All students displayed marked improvements, characterized by heightened motivation, clearer articulation, and greater engagement in their assigned roles.

B. Interview Results

The researcher conducted interviews with four students R.H., R.M., F.B., and M.L. from the Creative Writing: Drama class at Universitas Bandar Lampung to gather insights on their English speaking skills. It is based on some criteria including English language proficiency, class participation, and speaking ability. All respondents expressed enthusiasm for improving their speaking abilities through drama, highlighting the importance of role-play as a pedagogical strategy for enhancing proficiency. They also indicated a preference for collaborating with partners for dialogue practice, which fosters a supportive learning environment and improves their speaking skills. The findings from these interviews will enhance the understanding of role-play's effectiveness in language acquisition and the development of speaking competencies in an academic setting. In response to the fifth question, all respondents R.H., R.M., F.B., and M.L. agreed that role-play is an effective strategy for improving their English speaking skills, highlighting its importance in language acquisition. In addressing the ninth question, they noted that speaking activities significantly enhance their understanding of role-play and improve their pronunciation. Additionally, the seventh question revealed that role-play facilitates peer monitoring, enabling students to collaboratively identify and correct mistakes. This process fosters a supportive learning environment that encourages mutual feedback

and collective improvement, underscoring the diverse benefits of role-play in language education.

DISCUSSION

Drama pedagogy may be characterized as a group of instructional techniques that use drama to get pupils interested in the material they are studying (Lee, Patall, Cawthorn & Steingut, 2015; Uysal & Yavuz, 2018). Using drama pedagogy as a teaching strategy will help students learn English better, according to the exploration. It can enhance their reading skills, including understanding and learning about people's lives, cultures, and knowledge, in addition to helping them learn the language. Further, Norris (2000) confirmed that using drama in an educational context is effective to help students to understand live experiences that they do not have.

A. Interpretation Findings

Beneficial Results on Student Capabilities: Language understanding and Social Engagement: The study found that role-playing greatly enhanced students' language understanding and social engagement skills. The active participation of educators in role-playing and as facilitators improved this.

Creativity and Communicative Expertise:

Educators' participation in drama exercises encouraged students' creativity and communication skills by assisting them in discovering their capacity to investigate and comprehend circumstances. Students' imaginative involvement in drama helped them strengthen their improvisational language use.

Engagement learning:

Students appeared more capable to acquire self-knowledge and deal with real-life circumstances attributed to educators' facilitation that integrated academic material and social experiences. The learning environment became more dynamic as a result of the drama activities' successful engagement of the students with the material.

B. Alignment with Previous Study

Numerous prior studies have investigated the significance of employing role-play techniques within educational contexts. Notably, the research conducted by Utami effectively demonstrated that the implementation of a structured role-play approach significantly enhances students' attitudes toward English speaking, particularly in terms of their interest, participation, and confidence. This enhancement was achieved through a cyclical process encompassing planning, action, observation, and reflection, which included specific stages of role-play and ongoing instructional modifications. Otherwise, the distinctiveness of this paper is characterized by its focused examination of English drama pedagogy in educational institutions, its dual exploration of both student engagement and teacher perceptions, and its innovative integration of local cultural narratives into drama activities.

C. Role of Peer Interaction

Collaborative Learning: Drama activities, by their very nature, are collaborative. Students must work together to rehearse, perform, and interpret roles. This collaboration fosters significant peer interaction as they negotiate meanings, practice dialogues, and coordinate their actions.

Communicative Practice:

The spontaneous language use observed by the researcher suggests that students were actively communicating with each other in English during the drama. This provides a low-stakes environment for practicing language skills with peers, reducing anxiety often associated with speaking in front of the teacher.

Shared Understanding:

As students discuss characters and their motivations, they are likely to share different perspectives, leading to a more comprehensive and shared understanding of the story and its themes. This exchange of ideas is a key aspect of peer interaction.

Reflection

The pedagogical application of drama cultivates critical reflection, evidenced by students' capacity to analyze character motivations and the inherent moral implications of narratives, transcending mere rote memorization of dialogue. Furthermore, this immersive engagement fosters the development of self-knowledge, enabling students to extrapolate insights from dramatic scenarios to real-life contexts, thereby prompting introspection on personal values and potential responses to analogous situations. Concomitantly, the structured debriefing and reflection components embedded within each activity facilitate a metacognitive process, wherein learners synthesize their experiential knowledge, articulate emergent understandings, and forge substantive connections between theatrical engagement, academic content, and broader social experiences, thereby reinforcing learning and augmenting comprehension.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms the efficacy of role-play in significantly enhancing English speaking skills, fostering increased confidence and fluency, and effectively addressing common speaking difficulties through a supportive and engaging learning environment. Practical implications for educators include integrating role-play, cultivating supportive atmospheres, utilizing diverse and relevant materials, and prioritizing practical application. Students are encouraged to actively embrace role-play, practice consistently, and overcome inhibitions. Research limitations encompass a small sample size, the qualitative descriptive approach precluding quantitative comparisons, inherent subjectivity in data collection, and a short observation duration. Future research should consider larger, more diverse samples, employ mixed-methods designs, conduct longitudinal studies, compare role-play with alternative strategies, investigate specific linguistic aspects, and explore teacher training and implementation challenges.

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