# DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILL THROUGH ROLE PLAY ACTIVITIES

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**Abstract.** This study aims to investigate the implementation of role play activities in developing students' speaking skill and how it affects students' enthusiasm during the language learning process. It is designed as classroom action research with 32 first year senior high school students as the research subjects. Data for the research was collected in two cycles during the research through speaking test and observation checklist. It is found that the implementation of role play activities can improve students' speaking skill where the students also found the learning process to be challenging and fun. It also indicates that the implementation of role play activities for teaching speaking has positive impact on students' motivation as shown in the result where the majority of the students were active and enthusiast during the classroom learning process.

## INTRODUCTION

Improving speaking skill is one of the main goals in an English language learning classroom as fluent English speaking skill will help the students to be able to communicate effectively. The speaking skill will include the ability to express opinions, ideas, and giving explanations which for many students considered to be very difficult. In fact, studying English as a foreign language has its own difficulties especially when the classroom is the only place students can practice their English. Therefore, teachers have to maximize the classroom activities to provide the best learning experience for the students in developing their English speaking skill.

Textual language learning, i.e. reading and writing, is very common and dominant in English classroom which even the English subject examination will focus on paper-based test. Therefore, some English language learning class may only implement grammar-translation method which mainly focus on reading and writing skills. However, students that are able to write their ideas in a certain topic might fail to communicate the same ideas orally because speaking is also affected by other factors such as motivation and anxiety. In this case, speaking and listening skills should also be considered in the learning process so the students will be fluent in both textual and oral skills.

In Indonesia, English is one of subjects to be learned in formal educations. Though, as a foreign language, teacher have to work extra hard to improve the students' language skills especially for speaking skill. Actually there are so many activities for teaching speaking that can be implemented in a language learning classroom such as: role play, simulations, information gap, brainstorming, storytelling, interviews, story completion, reporting, playing cards, picture narrating and describing, and find the difference (Kayi, 2006). There are also many teaching technique that has been proven to be effective for teaching speaking such as: index card match (Tugiman et al., 2022), three-step interview (Hidayat & Ariani, 2023), communicative games (Dewi et al., 2016), and role play (Suryani, 2015). Teacher already has many options of techniques and activities to be implemented in the classroom. However, teacher need to observe the students first to consider and design suitable materials and activities for the students in the classroom.

Based on observations to students and interview to teachers at SMKS 6 Pertiwi on English subjects and speaking skill, students still had many problems in improving their speaking skill. Students mostly could not speak English well which is mainly caused by lack of vocabularies and less interest in the English subject. Students might also assume that they will not use English in their daily activities as English is a foreign language for them, therefore they do not have enough motivation to learn the language. This is an important case because nowadays English has become a language for international communication as the globalization and information technologies has also lead us to easily communicate with people from abroad. Hence, teacher has to design a proper language learning activities that can help the students to learn speaking and improve their motivation in the learning process.

Language learning is not only about vocabulary and grammar, but also about how to use the language effectively and fluently for communication. In this case, speaking skill need to be considered in the language learning process. Role play in language learning is proven to effectively improve students speaking skills. Some results from previous studies about role play in relation with speaking skills are: role play activities enhance learners' performance in a speaking test (Rahimy & Safarpour, 2012), significantly improve speaking skill (Neupane, 2019; Suryani, 2015; Altun, 2015), increase and encourage students' motivation (Lutfi et al., 2018; Gusmuliana et al., 2021; Purnamawati et al., 2015), and has more impact than lecture method teaching (Rayhan, 2014). Based on this positive effect of role play activities, also the problems found in SMKS 6 Pertiwi related to English subjects and speaking skill, it is important to try out role play technique whether or not it is suitable to be implemented in teaching speaking at the classroom.

This study would like to explore more about role-play technique in teaching speaking especially for senior high school students. Eventhough English has been learned since elementary school, many students still find it difficult especially for speaking skill where English is a foreign language for them. This study also would like to investigate on how the role play activities will affect the students motivation during the learning process. Motivation is considered as an important factors in language learning as well as language anxiety. Therefore by implementing role play activities in the speaking class, it is hoped to add more knowledge on the correlation about motivation, language anxiety and speaking skill.

**METHODS**

This study was a classroom action research with 32 first year students of SMKS 6 Pertiwi Curup. It was conducted following Nunan (1989) four stages of action research: planning, action, observation, and reflection. In the beginning, teacher designed activities and materials to be implemented in the learning process. Before starting the learning activities, teacher firstly give a pre-test to get baseline data of the students. After that, in action stage, the designed activities and materials were implemented while during the implementation the teacher also observed the students. Finally, there was a post-test to see the improvement of students speaking skill. In the end of the cycle, teacher reflected what had been done as an evaluation to design the next cycle. Following those stages, this research has done two cycles to get the result leading to the conclusion about role playing implementation in teaching speaking.

Each cycle has been done in two meetings within a week. In the first meeting, teacher gave pre-test to assess students baseline data for speaking skill, explained the materials regarding role play speaking activities, provided and gave role play script for students to be practiced. The following meeting would be the students doing role play while teacher doing observation, and at the end of the meeting there will be a post-test. The next cycle was done following the same steps, however there was no pre-test in the cycle because post-test from the previous cycle is already considered as the pre-test for the following cycle.

Data for the research was collected through observation checklist to and speaking test (pre-test and post-test). The result from pre-test and post-test was to see how is the speaking skill of the students, whereas the observation checklist tried to see their performance during the implementation of role play activities in each cycle. There is also score interval from 0-100

based on Ur (1996), as can be seen from Table 1, to categorize students to be successful or unsuccessful in speaking, where the score below 65 is categorized as unsuccessful or failed. There was also target of students average scored at 70 to satisfy the results.

**Table 1.** Speaking score sheet

| Accuracy | Score | Fluency | Score |
|---|---|---|---|
| Little or no language produced | 1-10 | Little or no communication | 1-10 |
| Poor vocabulary, mistake in basic grammar, may have very strong foreign accent | 11-20 | Very hesitant and brief utterances, sometimes difficult to understand | 11-20 |
| Adequate but not rich vocabulary, makes obvious grammar mistakes, slight foreign accent | 21-30 | Get idea across, but hesitantly and briefly | 21-30 |
| Good range of vocabulary, occasional grammar slips, slight, foreign accent | 31-40 | Effective communication in short turns | 31-40 |
| Wide vocabulary appropriately used, virtually no grammar mistakes, native like or slight foreign accent. | 41-50 | Easy and effective communication, uses long turns | 41-50 |

Moreover, the checklist is designed to see how was the students' performance which in this case is classified into active, regular, and less active. Students that shows enthusiasm and being active during the activities will be classified as active, whereas the students that were not very interested or active will be classified as less active. There were also students that were not very active nor less active which is classified as regular. This classification is hoped to indicate students' motivation to learn English speaking skill during the implementation of role playing activities.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The performance of the students in speaking was observed during the implementation of role playing activities and tested in pre-test and post-test in the form of speaking test. The results indicate that role play has some impact to improve students speaking skills and motivation during the learning process. In cycle 1, students were already enthusiast to learn English through role playing activities as they got many opportunities to practice their English as well as seeing their classmates performing in front of the class. Cycle 2 showed that more students were actively following the lesson during the learning process.

### Implementation of Cycle 1

In the beginning of cycle 1, teacher gave a pre-test to see the baseline score of students' speaking skill before implementing the role playing activities. The learning activities were done following the designed plan which included giving and explaining materials, chosing role playing topics, preparing script for role playing, doing the role play, and having a post test. The result of pre-test and post test from cycle 1 can be seen at Table 2.

**Table 2.** Speaking test score (cycle 1)

| No | Criteria | Pre-test | | | Post-test | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | % | Average Score | N | % | Average Score |
| 1 | Successful | 12 | 37.5 | 61.09 | 15 | 46.88 | 65.47 |
| 2 | Unsuccessful | 20 | 62.5 | | 17 | 53.12 | |

*Source: analyzed data from pre-test and post-test*

The pre-test score showed that there are only 12 out of 32 students (37.5%) who were classified as successful with 61.09 averaged score for all students. After doing the role playing during the learning activities there were some improvements in students' score and add 3 more students to be classified as successful in speaking. The increased average score is not very significant, however it shows that role playing has improved the students speaking ability.

The observation has been done during the implementation of role playing activities. Data was collected to record the students performance during the learning process. The result showed that some sudents were active, less active, and in-between as can be seen in Table 3. The implementation of role play technique seems to improve students confidence and motivation, however there were still many students that are passive during the classroom learning process. The students passiveness in learning process might be because of lack in vocabulary, grammar knowledge, or confidence which make them so reluctant to perform and speak English.

**Table 3.** Students' performance (cycle 1)

| Classification | Total Students | % |
|---|---|---|
| Active | 8 | 21.88 |
| Regular | 14 | 31.25 |
| Less Active | 10 | 46.87 |

Results shown from cycle 1 already indicated that role playing activities can develop speaking skills. However, result from post-test is not very significant and have not yet meet the score to satisfy the research which is 75 average score. There were also less students that is classified as active compared to regular and less active students. Therefore, based on those reflections, teacher evaluated the designed materials and activities to be implemented in cycle 2 which was implemented in the following week of cycle 1. The next cycle is also intended to verify the students improvement in speaking skill and enthusiasm in learning English.

**Implementation of Cycle 2**

During the implementation of cycle 1, there were already improvement in students speaking skill and increased motivation. However, to confirm the findings, cycle 2 need to be done. Teacher make a reflections of cyle 1 to evaluate the results and students' performance. From those reflections, teacher had design a new cycle to confirm the effectiveness of role play activities in developing students' speaking skills. The stages of cycle 2 was the same, starting from desiging materials and activities, implementing the design, observing the students' performance, giving post-test, and finally reflecting the activities done. The difference is there was no pre-test in cycle 2 because the post-test in cycle 1 is already considered as pre-test for cycle 2. The result of the test also show that there are improvements in students' speaking skill as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Speaking test score (cycle 2)

| No | Criteria | Pre-test | | | Post-test | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | % | Average Score | N | % | Average Score |
| 1 | Successful | 15 | 46.88 | 65.47 | 21 | 65.63 | 70.31 |
| 2 | Unsuccessful | 17 | 53.12 | | 11 | 34.37 | |

*Source: analyzed data from pre-test and post-test*

The result from cycle 2 confirms that the implementation of role play activities can improve and develop students' speaking skill. It was shown in Table 4 that there are more students that categorized as successful (21 students, 65.63%) with the average score of all students is 70.31. Compared to the score of pre-test, it is a good improvement from the students. Though the score improvement is still in the same interval compared to the previous cycle.

Observation result from cyle 2 was also collected to record the students performance during the learning process. The result showed that more students become active during the learning activities, also there are less students that can be classified as less active (Table 5). The implementation of role play technique in this cycle showed that students' enthusiasm and motivation is affected positively which might also affect to improve their speaking skills. However, there are still 5 students that stay passive during the activities and have not show significant improvement compared to the previous cycle.

**Table 5.** Students' performance (cycle 2)

| Classification | Total Students | % |
|---|---|---|
| Active | 12 | 37.50 |
| Regular | 15 | 46.88 |
| Less Active | 5 | 15.62 |

To conclude the result, there are improvements in students' speaking skills which is shown in their score from test in each cycle. There are also indication that role play technique affect the students' motivation and enthusiasm which make them less reluctant to perform role play and speaking. This findings prove that role play can develop students speaking skill, especially for 32 first year students at SMKS 6 Pertiwi Curup.

**Discussion**

Results from this study prove that role play activities implementation in teaching speaking has positive impact in developing and improving students' speaking skill. This finding also supports the previous studies related to role play activities and speaking skill test (Rahimy & Safarpour, 2012; Neupane, 2019; Suryani, 2015; Altun, 2015; Lutfi et al., 2018; Gusmuliana et al., 2021; Purnamawati et al., 2015; Rayhan, 2014). Based on those studies, role play in teaching speaking can enhance students performance and encourage students' motivation which result in the improvement of students' speaking skill. Those findings are relevant to the findings of this research where the role play activities improve students score taken from speaking test.

Students' motivation is also an issue in this research which is found that the implementation of role play activities also improve students motivation. Lutfi et al., (2018), Gusmuliana et al., (2021), and Purnamawati et al., (2015) also found the same result where role playing activities in language learning classroom can increase and encourage students' motivation. Motivation plays important role in learning process because it can determine sudents' learning results (Andriani & Rasto, 2019; Alawiyah et al., 2019). However there are many factors that can affect motivation such as goals, learning quality, instructor quality, and facilities (Dauyah & Yulinar, 2018). The finding of this research showed that many students are active during the implementation of role play, though there are still some students that are classified as less active. It is safe to assume that the active students are motivated to learn English through role play activities whereas some of them still reluctant and hesitated to speak up their ideas. It might also related to students' learning strategy where role play activities is not suitable for their learning style as each students have their own learning style and strategy to be successful in learning English (Hidayat & Ariani, 2021).

During the implementation of role playing activities, students were given many opportunities to speak and practice their English. It can also be said that students have to speak in English following their role play script. In fact, forcing students to speak English may develop their confidence whereas anxiety may also reduce it. Students motivation or willingness to speak in English and students anxiety level will correlate to each other as mentioned by Liu & Jackson (2008) who found that students want to speak English but do not want to take risk because thay are afraid to be negatively evaluated. Therefore, during the implementation of teaching speaking with role playing activities, teacher has to avoid or solve the speaking anxiety sources like low self-esteem, competitiveness, negative experiences, fear of taking risk, and exposure variables (Occhipinti, 2009) so the opportunities to speak in English will be optimally taken by the students.

The implementation of role playing activities will make students feel enthusiastic and motivated during the learning process to develop students speaking skill. They will have many opportunities to practice their speaking skills. However, not all students may feel suitable with the learning activities as each students have their own preference on learning style and learning strategy. In this case, teacher have to observe all the students and decide which activities that suitable to be implemented in the classroom. Beside role playing activities, teacher can also try more activities for teaching speaking i.e. Kayi (2006) list of teaching speaking activities such as simulations, information gap, discussion, or interview.

**CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

**Conclusion**

From the results, role play activities has positive impact in developing students' speaking skill. Students also seems enthusiastic during that learning process which indicate that role playing activities can improve students motivation in learning English especially for speaking. Though not all students are very active during the implementation of role playing activities, it is safe to assume that most of the students can enjoy the learning process where

they have many opportunities to speak and practice their English. Teacher also need to observed the students thoroughly to be able to design the suitable materials and activities to be implemented during the learning process also to play attention to students' language anxiety level because it can affect the speaking activities. In conclusion, role play activities is considered to be a good option to be implemented in teaching speaking and develop students' speaking skill.

**Limitation and Suggestion**

This study was designed as a classroom action research which only focus on giving treatments to only one class of students. There was no comparison of the effect of role playing activities to the other classes. The study is also conducted only in two cyles which might be considered not enough to confirm the effectiveness of role play. Therefore, a new research design like experimental or classroom action research with more cyle might be done in the future to verify the result of this study.

The students motivation and language anxiety always exist in language learning activities. In this research, motivation and language anxiety are not properly studied. It might be important to study more about the correlation among motivation, language anxiety, speaking skill, and role play. Hence, further study on those variables might also be conducted in the following research to improve our knowledge of teaching speaking.

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