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## THE USE OF ROLE PLAY TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' ENGLISH ORAL COMMUNICATION

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### ARTICLE

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims at describing the implementation of role play technique in order to improve students' English oral communication. The subjects of this study were forty students of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang majoring at Islamic Banking who are taking English 1 as a compulsory subject at semester III. To meet the objective of this study, Classroom Action Research (CAR) which involved planning, acting, observing, and reflecting was used as the design of research. The data of this qualitative study were gathered through observation, interview, and documentation. Meanwhile, the result of this study was presented descriptively based on the phenomena occurred during the implementation of role-play in the process of teaching and learning. In addition, the findings of this study revealed that by applying role-play technique, the students are able to improve their English oral communication as well as increase their motivation in learning English. Role play technique allows the students to be more active in the class as they get much opportunity to speak based on the context given in a real-life situation..

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## INTRODUCTION

The goal of learning English is to communicate. As the importance of communicative competence, the process of teaching and learning should meet the objective of enabling students' in practicing the target language. As stated by Brown (2007) that in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), it involved doing activities in a real communication, carrying out meaningful tasks, and using language which is meaningful to the learner promote learning. The learning activity should engage learners in communication including the process of information sharing, negotiation of meaning, and interaction. The use of communicative teaching approach is important to foster students' motivation in learning the target language. Students learn much on how to use the language properly. According to Littlewood (1981), one of the characteristics of CLT is that the approach pays a systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of the language. In addition, the CLT approach also emphasizes the communicative activities which involve the use of language in real daily-life situations.

However, in fact, there are some problems faced by learners in mastering English oral communication. They have difficulties in expressing ideas in English due to the lack of vocabulary understanding, grammatical aspect, and anxiety in making mistakes while speaking. Besides, lack of practicing the target language also becomes one of the students' problem. Therefore, to improve students' communication skill, the use of appropriate teaching technique is needed in the process of teaching and learning in which the students are able to take part in the learning process as well as increasing their motivation and self confidence in practicing English in real life situation. One of teaching technique, which is highly recommended by some educators to overcome students' problem in learning English, is a role-play technique. This approach comes with the activities that would promote students' self-training and directly involved in the process of learning.

Role-playing technique is considered as one of the most effective learning activities that can be applied in teaching and learning process. Role-play has been described by some experts. Tompkins (2001) defines role-play as one of the teaching techniques, which can encourage students to actively participate in learning English. Thus, foreign language students are able to practice the target language to real-life situations without any stress and shyness. According to Qing (2011), role-playing simulation produces artificial environment activities that provide experiences for learners. Besides, Larsen-Freeman (1986) explains that role plays are important in the communicative approach because the learners get much opportunity to practice communicating in different social contexts and social roles. Since role-play uses different communicative techniques, it develops fluency in learning the target language, promotes interaction in the classroom, and increases motivation in the process of learning (Ladousse, 1987). As the importance of role-play technique in the process of learning activities, Hyland (1993) suggested the reasons of applying role-play in learning English. First, it can increase students' motivation and encourage them to learn more through scenarios in participating real life situations. Second, by focusing on the playful experience, this activity is able to create a supportive and non-threatening environment for learners to use their English well. Third, role-play activity can give learners a courage for purposeful communication and build up their sentence structures, vocabulary, and strategies of communication based on real life situations.

Over recent years, role-playing technique has been considered as a teaching technique that is widely used to improve students' English oral communication skills, thus, number of studies showed a positive effect on using it in EFL classrooms. A study conducted by Krebt (2017) revealed that there is a significant difference on the improvement of speaking skill for experimental group with role play activities. Besides, Arham's (2016) study resulted that the students' speaking achievement can be improved through role-play. Since, the students get learning experience as a real-life, they are able to

develop both their speaking skill and nursing skill. Akter (2017) also concluded on his study that role play becomes one of the best ways to develop communicative competence among tertiary level students in Bangladesh. However, a study conducted by Tipmontree (2018) revealed that there is an improvement on the students' speaking skill, although some students still had difficulties in delivering dialogues while performing the role-play due to their anxiety in speaking.

As can be seen in the previous research works, it might be considered that a role-play technique is a highly flexible learning activity which can help learners to interact with other people as in a real-life situation, thus, it can improve their communicative competence. As stated by Englander (2002: 9) that real-life communication in the classroom is intrinsically interesting and useful to the students. By applying In line with the importance of role-play in learning English, the present study aims at describing the implementation of role-play technique to improve students' oral communication, especially for banking students.

## **METHOD**

By using qualitative research method, this study aims at describing the implementation of role-play technique to improve students' English oral communication. The subjects of this study were 40 students majoring at Islamic Banking who are taking English 1 as a compulsory subject at semester III. The data were collected through the process of teaching and learning which include preliminary observation, documentation, interview, taking notes, and participatory observation. Since the researcher is the lecturer who teach the subject's class, the researcher actively participated in the process of obtaining the data. Meanwhile, in the interview section, the researcher took the data from three students as randomly selected in the class. After obtaining the data, it was analyzed by the researcher as presented descriptively based on the phenomena in the real condition of learning process.

In the present study, the researcher conducted Classroom Action Research (CAR) to identify the implementation of role-play in teaching and learning process. As stated by Creswell (2002), action research designs are systematic procedures done by teachers aimed to improve the practice of education by studying issues or problems they face. The scope of action research provides a means for taking action and to do so by participating in research. Classroom Action Research activities involve repeated cycles, each consisting of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Planning refers to the proposed instructional strategy to be developed in the research to solve instructional problems. Acting refers to the implementation of the strategy that has been planned. Observing and reflecting refers to assessing the success of the implementation of the strategy in

solving the instructional problems. In observing, the data indicating the success and other instructional problems are recorded, while in reflecting all the recorded data are analyzed to judge how much the implemented strategy has effectively solved the problems (Latief, 2013).

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

As the objective of the present study on the use of role-play techniques to improve students' English oral communication, Classroom Action Research (CAR) was applied by the researcher. Four key terms that are used in Classroom Action Research are planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Before applying the stages of Classroom action research, it is important to do preliminary observation to identify the classroom problems that would be improved to result in a better learning achievement (Latief, 2013). As the result of preliminary observation, it was found that the students' have difficulties in expressing idea while they have speaking activity due to the lack of vocabulary items and difficulty in composing sentences and pronouncing the words correctly.

Thus, in line with the previous observation, the researcher conducted a planning as the first stage in Classroom action research. In the process of planning, it included preparing the instructional materials to overcome students' difficulties in learning English, especially speaking skill. The instructional strategy was elaborated in a detailed scenario of instruction. In this stage, the researcher prepared a lesson plan as well as speaking materials related to the topics of banking which would be implemented through role-play technique. The materials involved in the speaking skill are: the topics about banking services, job interview, and handling a business meeting. Moreover, the researcher also provided the assessment instruments to identify the criteria of success in implementing role-play.

The next step was acting or implementing the role-play technique in the process of learning English based on the instructional materials planned. The actions were arranged as follows: 1) giving an introduction to the topic discussed in the form of brainstorming, 2) showing the examples of expressions as well as some vocabulary items related to the topic, 3) grouping and asking the students to prepare their own dialogue based on the topic given, 4) asking the students to do role-play by practicing the dialogue as in a real-life condition, 5) giving feedback and evaluating the students' performance. As the result of action stage, the students gave a positive attitude towards learning English. The researcher also engaged the students by giving much motivation in order to meet the objectives of learning English.

Moreover, while implementing the action stage, the researcher also did an observation as the step to collect the data indicating the success of the strategy in solving the problems of students' speaking skill. In this step, the data were gathered through documentation, interview, and taking field

notes. The data were obtained during the process of role-play activity. At this observing stage, the researcher who is also the lecturer acts as a facilitator, a monitor, and a guide in the process of teaching and learning. During the implementation of role-play, the researcher gave much guidance to the students when they have difficulty in understanding the topic as well as speaking process. The result of observation step showed that the students were able to use their target language and get more fluency in using their English based on the context given. By doing a role-play activity, the students were able to practice both their English and how to give a good service to the customer in banking situation. It was found that the students engage more on their speaking activities while they have a role-play. For instance, when they get the topic about a banking service in opening a bank account, they should act as a customer service and a customer, thus, they imagine themselves to be involved in a real bank situation.

After observing the students' activity, the reflecting stage is also important which aims at evaluating the target of criteria of success that has been achieved by the students in applying role-play technique for their speaking activity. In this stage, it determines whether the cycle of classroom action research is revised in the second cycle or not. Moreover, the data obtained during an observation stage were also analyzed at this stage. Thus, based on the data gathered by the researcher, it showed that the students are able to enjoy their speaking activity while the did a role play in the topic about banking service. The students also became more active in improving their speaking skill which can be indicated from their score of at least 75.

Based on the result of implementing the stages in classroom action research involving planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, it revealed that the students' problem on the difficulty in improving their English oral communication could be solved through applying a role-play technique. This result is in line with the study conducted by Arham (2016) that showed the improvement of students in learning English, especially their speaking skill. As the advantage of role-playing activity, it can provide learners of English with a set of tasks and problems through which react based on real life situations. Therefore, it can turn create positive impacts on the social and intellectual development of learners (Jenkins & Gibson, 1999).

In addition, the finding of this study was also revealed that the students engage more on the speaking activity since they have an experience to practice as a real-life situation. For instance, when they got the task on running a business meeting, they were able to interact with one another by sharing their ideas and thought as in a real business meeting. As the concept of role-play technique stated by Kim (2018) that learners of English who participate in role-play activities can have the opportunity to



have communication as they play out their roles in a given scenario. Thus, the student-centered learning can be built effectively in the classroom activity.

Besides, as the benefit on implementing role-play technique in learning activity, this study showed that the students were able to increase their motivation in learning English. They can enjoy themselves during speaking activity without any stress. As suggested by Harmer (2003) that by having role-play activity, the students can be motivated to speak in a relaxing environment which can also increase their speaking self-confidence. In addition, while applying role-play activity, it could stimulate and urge the students to speak. Students were urged to make improvisation in the conversation. For instance, when they have a conversation about job interview, they act as an interviewer and an interviewee, thus, they have an opportunity to be more creative in using language as well as give a value for their future in getting a job. As said by Nunan (2001) that role-play is approved to be communicative language learning since students are actively gets involved in conversations.

In the present study, by providing role-play technique, the students played much role in the learning activity. The lecturer functioned as a facilitator, a guide, and a monitor during teaching and learning process. The lecturer guided the students when they had difficulty in finding the appropriate words or composing the correct sentences during speaking activity. While, in the process of role-play activity, the students got much opportunity to be more creative in expressing their idea based on the context given as in a real-situation. Role-play allowed the students to get meaningful learning as they developed their speaking skill and banking skill at the same time. They got a lot of time to practice their speaking related to banking field as their major which also became valuable for their future career. However, although it was found that some students are still less improved in their speaking ability, they had good motivation in learning English since they got an interesting activity in the class. Therefore, the implementation of role-play in speaking activity gave much impact to the students learning process.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

Regarding to the result of this study, the implementation of role-play in speaking activity can improve students' English oral communication. Role-play technique allows the students to be more active in the class as they get much opportunity to speak based on the context given in a real-life situation. They are able to experience themselves in the context of banking and learn the materials in interesting way that can motivate them to learn English more. In applying role-play technique, the lecturers need to provide the lesson plan as the instructional media to guide them in teaching and learning process. In addition, in light of these findings, it is recommended for EFL teachers to

consider an appropriate technique in teaching speaking. By assisting students in employing role-play technique, the teachers can engage students in learning the target language and make the learning process more enjoyable and effective.

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