

EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF THE USE OF ROLE PLAY IN SPEAKING CLASS

Yenni Widiarti; Irma Windy Astuti

Universitas Islam Indonesia

yenniwidiarti@gmail.com ; irma.windyastuti@uii.ac.id

*Role play,
Speaking class,
Teachers'
perception,
Thematic
analysis*

106

Abstract - *This research aims to describe two English teachers' perceptions regarding their experience in using role play to facilitate the students' speaking practice at different English courses in Yogyakarta. The research participants are two teachers teaching speaking skills and have used role-play as one of the tasks in their classes. The researchers employed a descriptive qualitative design and thematic analysis to collect and examine the data obtained from interviews. The findings show that the use of role-play was: driven by the classes' learning objectives, necessarily taking real life-like situation set up, having generally a significant impact on the students' speaking fluency whilst boosting their confidence and on occasion, gaining various response from the students.*

Keywords: *role play, speaking class, teachers' perception, thematic analysis*

I. INTRODUCTION

Role play is one of the activities used by foreign language teachers to facilitate their students' speaking skill practice. Role play is an activity mostly done in the classroom that provides students with speaking practice through taking a role of being a person in a specified situation that is set like a real situation. Generally speaking, many teachers agree that role play is suitable for speaking class. According to Ladousse (1987) there are several reasons for using role-play in teaching speaking; it can be brought into the classroom and the teachers can train their students' speaking skill for any situations.

Role play is very helpful for students to try and experiment in class. In addition, role play places students in situations where they are asked to use and develop certain forms of language that are indispensable in anointing social relations. Moreover, role playing helps many shy students by giving them roles that are not like themselves. On top of that, probably the most important reason for using role playing is because it is fun. Employing role play may help English language learners

SPECTRAL

Jurnal Ilmiah STBA
Vol.9 No.2
Juni 2023
ISSN 0216-3381

develop and improve their communication skills. It also gives learners ample opportunity to express their knowledge and ideas using the target language. Role play activity is also believed to boost learners' self-confidence in dealing with other people and it helps them react accordingly in a particular situation (Ampatuan, Jose, 2016).

In the existing studies about the use of role play, many of them focused on its effectiveness; its effect or impact of role play in speaking class. Arham, Yassi, and Arafah (2016). It showed that role play improved students' speaking performance significantly. This learning activity also allowed students to have social experience in specific context of communication. Furthermore, students get much opportunity to practice speaking during the role play. Additionally, role play conditioned students to play different roles in their language learning, and it put them at the center of the learning. Lastly, role play also stimulated and urged students to speak; making improvisation during the conversation.

Based on Anjaniputra (2013) on his study about the strategies of teaching speaking. He investigated several strategies that were effective to improve students' speaking performance, those were cooperative activities, creative task, role play, and drilling. In this research, role play fostered positive attitude in the students. Role play also helped the students to speak, and their oral language production received more emphasis. Much the same, role-playing technique gives beneficial contribution in improving students' speaking performance and improving their self-confidence (Rayhan, 2014; Atas, 2015; Christie and Listyani, 2018; Ampatuan and Jose, 2016; Umam, 2011). Studies on role play from the Indonesian context, such as that of Suryani's (2015), it demonstrated the significant effect of role play in improving the students' speaking ability. Furthermore, in Fadilah's (2016) role play can develop students' fluency, make the students interact with others in the classroom and make the learning process more enjoyable.

The more recent studies on role play confirm its relevant use to the contemporary educational style which promotes student-centeredness and how it syncs with and enhances some aspect of students' learning in the context of some of the current and longstanding learning approaches like TBLT, cooperative learning, CLT and ESP (Rojas & Villafuerte, 2018; Susanti et al., 2022). A close

scrutiny on the use of theme-based role play has also reported on a positive development of students' communicative competence (Waluyo, 2019). In reference to the above explanation, it appears that the use of role play particularly in English speaking class has not been studied thoroughly especially from the angle of teachers' perception. Hence, this study was conducted to find out how role play was used by two English teachers, and how its implementation was perceived by the teacher-participants. This study aims to describe the English teacher's perception on how they use role play to facilitate their students' speaking practice at their respective English school/course.

II. METHODS

Research Design

The researchers chose descriptive qualitative design to guide and conduct this study in order to describe the English teachers' perception on the use of role play in their speaking class. According to Sadelowski (2000), descriptive qualitative studies propose a wide summary of an event in the everyday terms of those events. It is in line with the aim of descriptive research, to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics. In this study, the researchers employed thematic analysis as a research method to describe the English teacher's perceptions on their experience in using of role play in teaching activities with regard to facilitating their students speaking skill practice. According to Braun and Clarke (2012), thematic analysis is a method for identifying, organizing, and offering insight into thematizing the data results that allow the researcher to write and make sense of shared meanings and experiences.

The participants of this study were chosen in reference to purposive sample technique. This required the researchers to take into consideration a criteria, such as: the participants' teaching experience in particular event that would be suitable with researchers' practical knowledge of the research area, literature, and evidence from the study (Marshall 1996). The participants of the study were two teachers coming from different English schools or courses whom have had long teaching experience, taught English especially speaking skill in a conversational English type

of program, and both have used role play as one of their teaching techniques. The researchers interviewed the teachers regarding the aim of this study. One of the researchers also managed to observe the classes taught by one of the teacher-participants that implemented role play activity in her speaking class.

Data Collection

Data collection techniques is one important element in research in terms of determining the validity of this study. In this research, the researchers collected the data through in-depth interviews involving the study participants. The purpose of interviewing participants is to find out what was on the participants mind; what the participants thought or how they felt about something – their pedagogical decision makings and action / classroom practices (Fraenkel,Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). Fraenkel,Wallen, and Hyun, (2012) also define interviewing as an important way for researchers to examine the accuracy of the impression that the researchers have gained through observation.

Data Analysis

In this study, the researchers used thematic analysis as a technique for analyzing the data that has been obtained. The reason for which the researchers used thematic analysis for this study were its accessibility and flexibility to use as a data analysis technique. Thematic analysis provides a method for a qualitative research that systematically teaches the mechanisms for coding and analyzing qualitative data which can connect to bigger theoretical or conceptual issues (Braun&Clarke,2012). In analyzing the data, the researchers went through several stages of familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, themes searching, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and the last is producing the report.

III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The result from the in-depth interviews showed that the two participants basically had the same basic implementation of role play, those were: modeling (the

examples of conversational sentences / set of spoken expressions), comprehension checking, and role play simulation. Both participants also had the same view in implementing role play, by way of always considering the level and characteristics of their students. However, the first participant was tending to prioritize topics and settings in a role play, so that students performed it with more confidence and comfort during their speaking practice. Meanwhile, the second participant always tried to emphasize on her positive rapport building with her students in the classroom, so that they had more courage and confidence in their speaking practice.

Based on the result of the interviews, the participants reasoned and resorted to use role play in most of the activities in their speaking classes because the language had to be used frequently so that it made it easier for the students to apply it in the real life. By doing role play, it also had a higher chance to increase their students' ability to interact with others which is the core of an English speaking program that will eventually contribute to students' confidence in using the language. The participants also felt the positive impact of using role play, in terms of their students' comprehension, interaction, confidence boost, improvement on their communicating skills, classroom atmosphere, response, ease, reduced nervousness and less use of mother tongue.

Table 1. The Study Theme Findings

Themes	Samples from Interview Excerpts
<i>The Use of Role Play</i>	I use role play because of ... the language basically has to be used often. ... Because if language is learned only in theory which we sometimes don't do that. Children can't speak directly, like that. (RP-RP/ T1-15.9) The self confidence. That's all, why do I often use role play. (RP-RP/ T1-20).
<i>Real Life-like Situation</i>	For the media, I usually play only videos. ... mostly videos. I usually show a movie scene first. One scene, one film cut. Later they will say, oo I see Ms, oo I see Ms. Well, they will see in their minds.. they will start to be stimulated like that. Then the second resource is usually short story books. I told them to read it, like that. (RLLS -RLLS/ T1-23.1) The variations make it different. They can learn from what their friends apply but also see that, ooh, it turns out that in different contexts there are differences ... That is a variation in the situation, we make the situation varied. That apart from making it even more interesting; it gives them multiple points of view, points of view on different role plays. (RLLS -RLLS/ T2- 11.2). Yes it could be eeh.. often used continuously. ... for example, when the difference occurs, this is when I teach in formal schools with educational institutions (courses), yes. It is much different. Where is the difference? Usually the students that have courses, courses like ... They get more fluency. (FP -FP/ T1-31.1)
<i>Fluency Practice</i>	

Ee here, for example, ee **fluency is always prioritized in role play. So when they make mistakes, in practice skill, we can immediately correct which one is wrong. But if ... it's time to act out, we can't interrupt. Teachers must understand ...** If necessary, we give general feedback first, ... , then let the students know the generic error is this this this. (FP -FP/ T2-17).

Mostly, most of them are happy because they can explore on their own. Yes, they can explore what they can, they can talk freely. Eee what else, **but there some who are embarrassed, depending on the students.** (SVR -SVR/ T1-68)

Okay, yes. At the lower level, always at the beginning, they are always a little scared, that's normal, it's a normal fear. But in general, when we help with simplifying the dialogu lines ... give the video that's genuine, but they are still afraid. (SVR -SVR/ T2-30.1).

So, how the role playing, that goes back to the topic, ... What certainly **touches their daily lives and what their daily looks like.** Like that, **they will be more confident.** So later, to improve to the next level ... (BSSC-BSSC/ T1-57.2)

Eee role play itself in relation to confidence is very **different at each level ...** So at the **lower level it makes them comfortable**, having freedom, **at the middle level it makes them feel comfortable because they feel they can do what they are assigned to, at the level above them. You can express yourself and you can even explore yourself to be someone who is more fun, convincing or even inspiring** to inspire others, that's for the **high level class.** (BSSC-BSSC/ T2-25)

The Use of Role Play

Role play in the speaking class has often been used by the two participants. The two participants used role play in their speaking class with the similar basic steps. However, the implementation has not always been similar. The first participant focused on using the role play activities was to facilitate comprehension. Menawhilehile the second participant's aim was to enrich her students' knowledge of the material on a particular lesson. The principles of role play implementation by Huang (2008) were also carried out by the two participants of this study. Starting with providing an understanding of the material, creating the role plays and the role play simulations. In general, the use of role play in the speaking class is quite flexible and easy to do as long as the students' understanding of the material and rules of the role play have been reached.

The frequency of using role play has a strong basis of reasoning for the two participants. The reason for using role playing in the speaking class is so that the language is used directly, not only in theory and that it can increase students' confidence. Using role play in the class also makes the class more interactive, especially in the conversation / speaking class. Role play also provides interaction between students without having to be fully controlled by the teacher. In line with

the reason of using role play, Ladouse (1987) also stated that one of the reasons for using role play in teaching speaking is that role-playing put students in a situation that required the use and development of certain forms of language that are essential in social relations works.

Real Life-like Situation Set Up

Preparing students for a real life-like situation is one of the important things before going into the main role play activities. The teachers usually set the real life-like situation before simulating the role play. There are many ways that teachers do to prepare a real life –like situation in a role play along with the materials and media to stimulate the students' positive response and enthusiasm. The teacher must complete the step in this activity in order to support students in learning new language forms, so the student can easy to remember it (Liu & Ding, 2009). For example, one of the participants used film / video and flashcard to enrich the students' vocabulary mastery and model the spoken expressions for her students in preparation for the role play. The other participant provided a variety of situations to make future role play activities more interesting and facilitate the creation of a different point of views. Laddouse (1987) stated that the purpose of this activity is to reveal and explore the concept of role play in a simple and fun way as it was used in the classroom. Students were also given motivation so that they were ready to face real life challenges of using the target language functions. The preparation of the real life like situation before the role play was considered important by both participants. First, they did not want a direct translation from Indonesian to English in their students' role play. In addition, the students had to learn the material in context to make them more familiar with the material as it was presented in a more authentic way. It resulted in making students feel comfortable with the material / activities assigned to them.

Fluency Practice

Role play is one of the speaking practice activities that has a significant impact on student fluency. According to Purnawati and Suhartono (2015), fluency is the capability of someone to continue their speaking spontaneously with the ability to

read, speak, or write easily, smoothly, and expressively. In other words, the speaker could understand and respond to the language in clear and brief manner while relating to the meaning and context of the conversation. According to Negara (2021), students will experience an increase in fluency by giving them the chance to role-play and by allowing students who do not often use the English language to participate. In role play activities, students must play something according to a determined role without looking at the text and they are required to improvise when / whilst speaking during which the fluency practice works.

According to the participants' perspective, role play was the best way to observe their students' fluency practice. However, at the act out stage, the teachers must not interrupt, for example, when the mistakes were made by students. Fluency practice occurs during the role play when the student uses the language continuously. The point obtained from the two participants regarding fluency practice in role play is that teachers must be able to familiarize the students with learning material so that during their role play they are more fluent. Teachers also have to be creative in selecting and creating role play's topics and situations so that students are always challenged and not bored during assigned role play activities.

In practicing speaking skills using role play, besides paying attention to fluency practice, another thing that becomes a concern is accuracy practice. The participants in this study agreed that fluency is more important in role play activities. However, there were some parts of accuracy practice that needed to be considered and taught to their students in their use of role play activities, especially if it hampered the meaning or the message that students were intending to convey. In line with Bashir, Azeem, and Dogar (2011), in communicative output activities, the standard of learner's success is if they can get the information across. Accuracy is not a consideration unless the lack of it interferes with the message. So, mostly in role play, accuracy practice activities may not receive equal emphasis as that of fluency practice.

Students Varied Response

The improvement of skills, attention, and student participation will be positively impacted by providing a pleasant learning environments' (Negara, 2021).

Based on the interviews with all the research participants, both of them had different student responses when applying role play in their speaking class. The first participant mentioned that the students had more fun during the role play activity because they could explore on their own. Meanwhile, the students of the second participant tend to be afraid, especially those in lower level classes.

The responses given by the students were tackled by the teacher-participants in various ways. The first participant admitted that he underwent a difficult time when utilizing the role play activities in class because his students had rather unique characters of not wanting to be compared with other talents. On the other hand, the second participant tried to be responsive and make sure that her students understand the instructions. When she learnt that she could not successfully pull out her technique to remedy the situation to work out, she knew that should have been more responsive and creative in finding ways to make her teaching more suitable and appealing for her students.

Boosting Students' Self Confidence

The use of role play in speaking activities in the all of the participants' classes had different views and goals. In the process, both participants in this study agreed that role play helps boost their students' confidence in speaking. According to Brown (2001), self-confidence is the student's belief in their ability to complete tasks. The participant argued that role play can boost their students' confidence in speaking because of the selection of topics, locations, and characters for the role plays that have been prepared in advance. In line with this, Mustadi (2012) found that the outcomes of using role playing offer real experiences as preparations for joining the workforce that boost confidence. The teacher must ensure that students understand the topic and character being discussed. The teacher must also have the skills to simplify the topic so that students can understand the material / topic more easily. In addition to understanding the materials and characters, topics that resonate to students' daily lives or experience aid their confidence building in speaking practice.

Based on the participants' accounts, the role play seemed to affect students' confidence at different levels. At the lower level, the role play may give the students

some nerves, but it did not completely sink their confidence knowing that they had room to improvise. At the middle level, in general the role play made the students felt at ease due to the confidence which they gained from their ability to meet the roles / role play expectations. In the meantime, the higher level students showed positive attitude of self-exploration with their communication skills. According to the participants, the key on how the role play activities could help boost students' confidence is since they are doable. As perceived by both participants, in general the role play tasks were manageable and had fitting instruction to match their students' English level.

IV. CONCLUSION

The teachers' perceptions on the use of role play in their speaking class which are established as the findings of this study suggest that the frequent use of role-play in each of the participant's class was informed and driven by their teaching-learning objectives. They also recognized that the effective use of role play was determined by its real life-like situational set-up. In addition, the participants remarked that the use of role play has also resulted in their students' confidence boost, varied responses, and has been a useful tool to facilitate their fluency practice. At this stage, the current research contributes to the dissemination of EFL teachers' insight into the use of role play in their speaking classes; what aspects need to be taken into consideration and what impacts it has on their students' speaking skill. However, the effectiveness of role play is also determined by numerous contextual elements. While this study acknowledges the potential for more comprehensive insights by gathering perceptions from both students and teachers regarding the role play implementation, time constraints and a limited number of eligible teachers and speaking class in the context of this study hindered such possibility. Consequently, future studies could delve deeper into investigating the correlated and divergent perspectives of teachers and students on the use of role play activities, particularly within a more diverse learning context.

REFERENCES

- Ampatuan, R. A., & San Jose, A. E. (2016). Role Play as an Approach in Developing Students Communicative Competence. *International Journal of Innovation Education and Research*, 4(1).
- Anjaniputra, A. G. (2013). Teacher's Strategies in Teaching Speaking to Students at Secondary Level. *Journal of English and Education*, 1(2), 1-8.
- Arham, R., Yassi, A. H., & Arafah, B. (2016). The Use of Role Play to Improve Teaching Speaking. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 6(3), 239-241.
- Atas, M. (2015). The Reduction of Speaking Anxiety in EFL Learners Through Drama Techniques. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 176, 961-969.
- Bashir, M., Azeem, M., & Dogar, A. H. (2011). Factor effecting students' English speaking skills. *British journal of arts and social sciences*, 2(1), 34-50.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). *Thematic analysis*. In H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds.), *APA handbooks in psychology*. *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol. 2. Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological* (p. 57–71). American Psychological Association.
- Brown, Douglas. H. (2000). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy. Second Edition*. San Fransisco: Longman
- Brown, H. Douglas. (2001). *Teaching by principle. An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy. Second Edition*. New York: Pearson Education.
- Brown, G., & Yule, G. (1983). *Teaching the spoken language* (Vol. 2). Cambridge University Press.
- Christie, L. S & Listiyani. (2018). Teachers' Strategies to Improve Students' Self-Confidence in Speaking: A Study at Two Vocational Schools in Central Borneo. *Register Journal*, 11(2), 139-153.
- Daru Susanti, Edri, Arman Syah Putra, Nurhayati, Zikriah, & Nurul Aisyah. (2022). IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS MOTIVATION USING YOUTUBE VIDEO AND ROLE PLAY. *JOEL: Journal of Educational and Language Research*, 1(9), 1303–1310. Retrieved from <https://bajangjournal.com/index.php/JOEL/article/view/2039>
- Fadilah, F. (2016). Teaching Speaking By Role-Play Activity. *OKARA: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra*, 10(2), 209-216.
- Fraenkel, J. R., Wallen, N. E., & Hyun, H. H. (2011). *How to design and evaluate research in education*. New York: McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences/Languages.
- Gurler, I. (2015). Correlation Between Self-Confidence and Speaking Skill of English Language Teaching and English Language and Literature Preparatory Students. *Curr Res Soc Sci*, 1(2), 14-19.
- Huang, I. Y. (2008). Role play for ESL/EFL children in the English classroom. *The internet TESL journal*, 14(2), 181-195.
- Ladousse, G. P. (1987). *Role play* (Vol. 3). Oxford University Press.
- Liu, F., & Ding, Y. (2009). Role-play in English Language Teaching. *Asian Social Science*, 5(10), 140–143.

- Marshall, M. N. (1996). Sampling for Qualitative Research. *Oxford University Press, Family practice*, 13(6), 522-525.
- Mustadi, A. (2012). Speaking Skill Improvement Melalui Role-Playing Pada Kompetensi English for Instruction di PGSD. *Jurnal Didaktiva*, 3(Januari), 1–1
- Negara, I. M. (2021). LITERATURE REVIEW: WHY USE ROLEPLAY METHOD IN TEACHING SPEAKING?. *Journal Ilmiah Spectral STBA*, 7(1).
- Purnamawati, S., & Suhartono, L. (2015) The Use of Role Play in Teaching Speaking. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran*, 4(9).
- Putri, R. S., Yufrizal, H., & Simbolon, R. (2013). The Effect of Students' self-Esteem on Their English Speaking Ability. *U-JET*, 2(10).
- Rayhan, J. M. (2014). The Impact of Using Role Play Techniques on Improving Pupils' Speaking Skill for Primary School. *Basic Education College Magazine For Educational and Humanities Sciences*, (15), 516-530.
- Richards, J. C. (2008). *Teaching listening and speaking*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge university press.
- Rojas, M. A., & Villafuerte, J. (2018). The influence of implementing role-play as an educational technique on EFL speaking development. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 8(7), 726-732. doi: 10.17507/tpls.0807.02
- Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in nursing & health*, 23(4), 334-340.
- Suryani, L. (2015). The effectiveness of role play in teaching speaking. *ELTIN JOURNAL, Journal of English Language Teaching in Indonesia*, 3(2).
- Umam, C. (2011). Improving the Students' Speaking Ability through Role-Playing Technique. *Jurnal Inovasi*, 19, 347-364.
- Waluyo, B. (2019b). Task-based language teaching and theme-based role-play: Developing EFL learners' communicative competence. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 16(1), 153-168.
- Task-based language teaching and theme-based role-play: Developing EFL learners' communicative competence