

## TEACHING SPEAKING BY ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITY

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### **Abstract**

*The students often find some problems in practising English speaking. The problem frequently found is that their native language causes them difficult to use the foreign language. Other reason is because of motivation lack to practice the second language in daily conversation. They are also too shy and afraid to take part in the conversation. Many factors can cause the problem of the students' speaking skills namely the students' interest, the material, and the media among others including the technique in teaching English. There are many ways that can be done by the students to develop their ability in speaking English. The appropriate technique used by the English teacher also supports their interested in practising their speaking. One of the techniques that can be applied is role play.*

### **Key Words:**

Teaching Speaking, Role-play activity

### **A. Introduction**

Speaking is perhaps the most fundamental of human skills, and because we do it constantly, we do not often stop to examine the processes involved<sup>1</sup>.

The students often find some problems in practising English speaking .The problem frequently found is that their native language causes them difficult to use the foreign language. Other reason is because of motivation

lack to practice the second language in daily conversation. They are also too shy and afraid to take part in the conversation. Many factors can cause the problem of the students' speaking skills namely the students' interest, the material, and the media among others including the technique in teaching English. There are many ways that can be done by the students to develop their ability in speaking English. The appropriate method used by the English teacher also supports their interested in practising their speaking.

One of the techniques that can be used by the English teacher is Role

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<sup>1</sup> Hayriye Kayi, *Teaching Speaking: Activities to Promote Speaking in a Second Language*, The Internet TESL Journal, Vol. XII, No. 11, November 2004. Available at [http://iteslj.org/Articles/KayiTeaching\\_Speaking.html](http://iteslj.org/Articles/KayiTeaching_Speaking.html). p. 1 - 2.

– Play activity. Role play is very important in teaching speaking because it gives students an opportunity to practice communicating in different social contexts and in different social roles. In addition, it also allows students to be creative and to put themselves in another person is placed for a while.

According to Stephen D. Hattings based on his observation in the conversation class, the role play would seem to be the ideal activity in which students could use their English creatively and it aims to stimulate a conversation situation in which students might find them-selves and give them an opportunity to practice and develop their communication skill<sup>2</sup>.

## **B. Literature**

### **1. How to Teach Speaking**

When teaching young learners, we constantly have to keep in mind the fact that what we have in front of us is a mixed class with varied abilities, expectations, motivation level, knowledge and last but not least, different learning styles. Thus, we need to vary our approaches and offer as much opportunity as possible to make the whole class find a little something to hold on to, expand and grow.

Young learners are like sponges, they soak up everything we say and how

we say it. Thus clear and correct pronunciation is of vital importance, since young learners repeat exactly what they hear. What has been learned at an early stage is difficult to change later on. One rule that applied here is slowly and steadily through constant revision and recycling. With the help of mixed activities, such as dialogues, choral revision, chants, songs, poems and rhymes, students speaking abilities grow, their pronunciation gets better and their awareness of the language improves. When applying the above-mentioned tools into the teaching practice, what should be kept in mind is that interaction is an important way of learning. Therefore, increased oral emphasis should be included in our teaching to give the students as much speaking time as possible.

There are many activities to promote speaking. As Hayriye Kayi inferred from many linguistics on her article in the internet on Teaching English as A Second Language (TESL) Journal, one of them is Role Play Students pretend they are in various social contexts and have a variety of social roles. In role-play activities, the teacher gives information to the learners such as who they are and what they think or feel. Thus, the teacher can tell the student that "You are David, you go to the doctor and tell him what

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<sup>2</sup> Jo MC. Donough and Christoper Show, *Material and Method in ELT: Applied Language Studies*, (Cambridge : Blackwell, 1993), p. 165.

happened last night,"<sup>3</sup>.

## 2. Definition of Role Play

Role-play is any speaking activity when you either put yourself into somebody else's shoes, or when you stay in your own shoes but put yourself into an imaginary situation!

Imaginary people – The joy of role-play is that students can 'become' anyone they like for a short time! The President, the Queen, a millionaire, a pop star ..... the choice is endless! Students can also take on the opinions of someone else. 'For and Against' debates can be used and the class can be split into those who are expressing views in favour and those who are against the theme.

Imaginary situations – Functional language for a multitude of scenarios can be activated and practiced through role-play. 'At the restaurant', 'Checking in at the airport', 'Looking for lost property' are all possible.

Role defined as the person whom an actor represents in a film or play, while role play is a method of acting out particular ways of behaving or pretending to be other people who deal with new situations. It is used in training courses language learning and psychotherapy.

In this case, Gillian Porter

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<sup>3</sup> Kathleen Bailey, *Issues in teaching speaking Skill to Adult ESOL Learners* (Cambridge : 2002 ), p. 121.

Ladousse illustrated that when students assume a Role-play, they play a part (either their own or somebody else) in specific situation. Play means that is taken on in a safe environment in which students are as an inventive and playful as possible.

According to Crookal, there is a little consensus on the terms used in the role playing and simulation literature. A few of the terms that often used interchangeably are, simulation, games, role play, simulation-game, role play simulation, and role playing game. <sup>4</sup>

There seem to be some agreement; however, simulation is a broader concept than role playing. Simulations are complex lengthy and relatively inflexible events. Role play, on the other hand, can be a quite simple and brief technique to organize. It is also highly flexible, leaving much more scope for the exercise of individual variation, initiative and imagination. And role play also included in simulation as well.

In defining role play, Donn Byrne gave comments that role play is a part of drama activity. In details, he described that there are three terms to cover the drama activities. They are mime (mimicry-memorization), role play and simulation. He distinguished the terms as follows:

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<sup>4</sup> Donn Byrne, *Teaching Oral English: Longman Handbooks for English Teacher*, (Singapore: Longman Group, 1986), p. 115

- a. **Mime**, the participants perform actions without using words (although as we shall see, this activity leads naturally on to talk).
- b. **Role play**, the participant interact either as themselves in imaginary situations.
- c. **Simulation**, this involves role play as defined above. However, for this activity the participants normally discuss a problem of some kind with some setting that has been defined for them<sup>5</sup>.

Both role play and simulation are commonly used in foreign language classes to facilitate communicative competence. Whereas mime seems more appropriate as a language game. It is performing actions without using words. For instance, if someone mimes and action, the others try to guess what it is.

Another definition is stated by Joanna Budden in British Council Teaching English (BBC) on her article with the title Role Play. She said that role-play is any speaking activity when you either put yourself into somebody else's shoes, or when you stay in your own shoes but put yourself into an imaginary situation.<sup>6</sup>

What is meant by imaginary people is that students can become

anyone they like for a short time. The President, the Queen, a millionaire, a pop star, the choice is endless. Students can also take on the opinions of someone else. 'For and against' debates can be used and the class can be split into those who are expressing views in favor and those who are against the theme.

Functional language for a multitude of scenarios can be activated and practiced through role play in imaginary situations. 'At the restaurant', 'Checking in at the airport', 'Looking for lost property' are all possible role- plays.

From those explanation above, the writer views that role play is a technique which involves fantasy or imagination to be someone else or to be ourselves in a specific situation for a while, improvising dialogue and creating a real world in scenario. It aims at the students to encourage thinking and creativity, lets students develop and practice new language and behavioral skills in a relatively non-threatening setting, and can create the motivation and involvement necessary for learning to occur.

### 3. Types and Procedures in Using Role Play

In view of the persons taking an actor, Gillian explained that there are several types of role. The first is the roles which correspond to a real need in

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.156.

<sup>6</sup> Joanna Budden, *Role Play*, (BBC ñ British Council Teaching English).

the students' lives. In this category, it involves such roles as doctors dealing with patients, or salesman traveling abroad.

The second type of role is the students play themselves in a variety of situations which may or may not have direct experience. The example which include in this category is a customer complaining or a passenger asking for information. The third type is the type that few students will ever experience directly themselves, but it is easy to play because the teachers have such vast indirect experience of them. The television journalist is a good example of this type and it is very useful kind of role taken from real life. The last type is fantasy roles, which are fictitious, imaginary, and possible even absurd.

In case of role play activities, according to Donn Byrne, role play can be grouped into two forms, scripted and unscripted role play. In details, those types of role play activities described as follows<sup>7</sup>.

#### **a. Scripted Role Play**

This type involves interpreting either the textbook dialogue or reading text in the form of speech. The main function of the text after all is to convey the meaning of language items in a memorably way.

For more details, an example of scripted role plays dialogue and reading text and how the process is:

- Man : Good morning,sir !  
Director : Good morning.  
Man : I am coming to ask you for a job,sir !  
Director : Take a seat,please !  
Man : Thank you sir,*is there any vacancy for me,sir ?* I am unemployed right now.  
Director : *What is your education background ?*  
Man : I have graduated from STAIN Pamekasan in Economic Faculty for accounting Major . So I am competent in accounting.  
Director : Have you ever been experienced before being an accountant ?  
MaN : I Have sir, i have enough experienced for administration staff at a small company.  
Director : How many years ?  
Man : More than two years.  
Director : Ok.Congratulation!! I am looking for an energetic and healthy young man that used to work hard.Welcome at my company as administration staff here.  
Man : Thank you,sir.

**(Adapted from English Textbook for Economic Students: Fadilah)**

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p.156.

To demonstrate a role play activity based on the dialogue, the procedures given by Adrian Doff is as follows: First, the teacher guides the role play by writing these prompts: (where? / air mail / how much? / post box? / thanks). Talk as you write to show what the prompts mean. If necessary, go through the prompts one by one, and get students to give sentences or question for each one. Call two students to the front: one play the role as Angela and the other one is the post office clerk. They should improvise the conversation using the prompts to help them. Point out that the conversation should be similar to the one in the textbook, but not exactly the same; the conversation can be shorter than the presentation dialogue. It should just cover the main points indicated by the prompts. Call out a few other pairs of students in turn, and ask them to have other conversation based on the prompts.

Based on these procedures, the writer views that the ways of organizing this dialogue can be carried out into pairs of students who would improvise a conversation in front of class, in turns. The teacher can also ask the students to practice the conversation privately with their partners before they act it out in front of the class.

#### **b. Unscripted Role Play**

In contrast to scripted role play, the situations of unscripted role play do not depend on textbooks. It is known as a free role play or improvisation. The students themselves have to decide what language to use and how the conversation should develop. In order to do this activity, good preparation from teacher and students is really necessary.

The example and procedures of unscripted role play which is adapted from Adrian Doff's book are as follows: One student has lost a bag. He/she is at the police station. The other student is the police officer, and asks for details.

*To bring out this ideas:*

#### **The teacher could prepare the whole class, by:**

- a. Discussing what the speakers might say (e.g. the police officer would ask the students how he or she lost the bag).
- b. Writing prompt on the board to guide the role play, and any key vocabulary.

#### **The teacher could divide the class into pairs, and:**

- a. Let them discuss together what they may say.
- b. Let them all try out the role play privately, before calling on one or two pairs to act out in front of the class.

Susan House explained that there are several procedures in using role play: 1) Students read and familiarize themselves with the

(example) dialogue. 2) Divide the class in pairs, A and B, give A and B roles from the dialogues. 3) Let students act out their role play, not just say them but students should read it loudly. 4) Walk around correcting and checking the students, swap roles and repeat, those whose finish first can be asked to make up their own role play, using different words to fill the gaps.

The above procedures do not mean an exact to be used. It is flexible; teacher can create or develop procedures which is appropriate and suitable with his/her own class.

### **c. Significance of Role Play in Teaching Speaking**

It has been mentioned before in the above discussion that role play is one of the activities to promote speaking. Through role play activities the students learn how to express ideas, opinions, or feeling to others by using words or sounds of articulation.

Larsen Freeman explained that role plays are important in the communicative approach because they give learners an opportunity to practice communicating in different social contexts and different social roles.

### **d. How to Teach English Using Role-Plays, and When (Not) to Use Them**

Role-plays give students the opportunity to demonstrate how to use English in real life situations and make

them focus more on communication than on grammar. Role-play activities can be a lot of fun however a class full of shy students may be reluctant to participate so it is important to know your students.

### **C. Conclusion**

In conclusion, role play is a technique which can develops students' fluency in target language, promotes students to speak or interact with others in the classroom, increases motivation and makes the teaching and learning process more enjoyable.

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