

# Students' perception on the use of role-play to improve students' communicative competence

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## ABSTRACT

Recently, speaking is important in many aspects. A technique which can be used to increase speaking skill is by using role-play. It can develop communicative competence of the students. The aim of this study is to understand the students' problems in doing role-play and to recognize the effects of role-play for the students in communicative competence aspect. The participants were fifth semester students of English Education Department, and it included 108 students. This study was conducted in campus 4 of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. The instruments used questionnaire and interview. In calculating the questionnaire, SPSS 17.0 was used by the researcher. The questionnaire result showed that using role-play in learning process improves the communicative competence of the students. It is supported by interview result which described that (1) using role-play can increase vocabularies of students, (2) it gives new atmosphere in the classroom, and (3) the students get some experiences to add their knowledge.



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## 1. Introduction

Language is as a communication tool that influences students to achieve the goal in foreign language learning. Speaking is the most important skills that must be mastered by students. Recently, good speaking is needed to get job. Speaking is done by someone or people in communication. Good speaking requires good listening (Harmer, 2001). It is because speaking is always connected to listening aspects. Speaking can be done everywhere, and it becomes important parts of our daily activities. Among other English skills, speaking skill is the most difficult, and it is difficult to be mastered by the learners.

English speaking is one of the students' abilities in English learning. It is used to develop the student communicative competence. For a successful life in many activities, especially in working, communication skill is most important. Many organizations not only look for the workers with good knowledge, but they also look for the workers who have good communication skill. According to Grehension in Rahim, Yassi, and Arafah (2016), he found 70% of Indonesian workers have problems to communicate in English. Because of this condition, speaking becomes the most essential skill in English teaching and learning.

For the success of English learning, the teacher must give the students more opportunities to overcome their difficulties. It means, the students need to be more practical in the real situation. By speaking, people will be able to communicate with others. In mastering speaking skill, the students must study the speaking components. The components are pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary.

There are three main reasons why students need to speak in the class activity (Harmer, 2007). The first reason is that speaking activities in the class can be rehearsal opportunities. The second reason is speaking assignments which are given to students need to use the learned language, and the activities give the students and the teachers to get feedback. The last reason is that students get some opportunities to activate various language elements.

As teachers, they have to motivate the students to speak as often as possible. It becomes the problem in speaking class because some students feel afraid and shy to have conversation in the class. To solve this problem, the teachers have to use the best techniques to create good atmosphere to practice in the class. Role-play can give students a chance to practice speaking in different social roles. Role-play can also become the right technique in English speaking practice because it is more fun for the students. Students act and speak the language to understand their role in the future (Cruz & Thornton, 2010). In this term, the experts agree that role-play can be used in teaching and learning speaking. Role-play is great strategy for teaching speaking because it can make the student practice communicating in different social contexts and social roles. To achieve this goal, the researchers set research questions as follows:

- 1) What problems do the students have in doing role-play?
- 2) What are the significances of using role-play as a technique in learning English speaking skill?

The objectives of this study are to understand the students' problem for having role-play activity, as well as to find the significances of role-play activity for the students.

### 1.1. The Definition of Speaking

Speaking is one of the basic skills in English learning. Speaking skill is important because it is used in communication. According to Jones as cited in Dewi (2017), speaking is a communication form. It is important for you to say something in the most effective way, and make sure that the meaning is relevant to what you say. Briefly, speaking is important when someone wants to communicate to others. Bygate as cited in Argawati (2014) also gave a definition of speaking, he said speaking skill deserves deep attention in first language and second language every bit as well as literary skill. This skill is one of the most frequently judged, and it is also an excellent way for having social solidarity, social ranking, professional advancement, and good business. In this term, speaking will be used in every situation, especially in English language class, the students can get some effects from speaking skill. Speaking is a process to pronounce words or sentences in a communication or conversation to give or share information, knowledge, and idea to the others.

### 1.2. Teaching Speaking

As a mean of communication, speaking is closely related to listening. It means that there is an interaction between speaking skill and listening skill in a conversation. The learners must make the listeners understand about their speaking by using current proficiency. Sometimes, the learners have some mistakes when they deliver a message. The errors which are found in the message are pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, social and cultural rules.

There are several reasons why ESL learners need to learn speaking (Kayi, 2006): a) they can produce speech and sound patterns of English, b) they can use word and sentence stress, intonation and the rhythm of English, c) they can prefer convenient words and sentences based on the social setting, participants, situation and material, d) they can manage their ideas in a valuable and sequential context, e) speaking includes some expression values and judgment in using language, f) speaking can be faster and confident in using the language (Nunan, 2003).

Producing a speech, it is necessary to pay attention on few aspects such as in producing the sentence, stress, intonation, and rhythm. The aspects will be useful and meaningful in using the second language. On the other hand, there are five principles in teaching speaking based on Nunan (2003). Firstly, the teachers can differentiate between second language and foreign language learning context. A foreign language context is called target language. A second language context is a language that is used for communication. Secondly, the teachers give a task for speaking skill to the students to practice with fluency and accuracy which they have learnt. Thirdly, the teachers should provide opportunities for students to talk in group, and minimize the teacher's involvement in speaking. It means that the students are asked to talk in groups, and the teachers only facilitate and give the instruction. Fourthly, the teachers should design some speaking activities which involve

the students actively in the learning purposes. The last, the teachers are supposed to create some class activities that involve transactions and interactions in speaking as guidance to the real practice. Interactions and transactions are different. The difference is that the interaction focuses on maintaining and establishing social relationships its purpose, while transactions speaking focus primarily on delivering the meaning of the message.

### 1.3. Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is usually used to achieve successful communication by using learners' language abilities. Communicative competence is divided into four aspects (Canale & Swain, 1980). Those aspects are regulation, application, coherent, and cohesion. Teachers can combine listening and writing competencies by designing some activities such as drama, note taking, and summarizing.

Communicative competence in this context is related with the learners' language proficiency. Communicative approach deals with the learners' behavior to the repetition, and the ability to remember grammar. Communication can be done everywhere by the learners using proper language which can be accurately understood.

The meaning of communication in second language consists of social, cultural, and pragmatic implication. This term (CQ) is coined from Hymes (1972), a sociologist who convinced that Chomsky's notion of competence was too limited. According to Brown (2001), in obtaining some meanings from what was asked, it needs communicative competence. It was called advantageous of phrase. Brown also mentioned parts of components which are adopted from Bachman (2001). The components are group competence that organizes grammar and discourse, pragmatic competence which includes function and sociolinguistic, strategic competence, and psychomotor skill.

### 1.4. Role-Play

Role-play technique is commonly used in the class. Brown (2001) stated that role-play (a) consists of one or many peoples in each group, and (b) has the goal to be finished. There are some problems for the application of role-play. It requires the students to participate in a play to represent certain role or character. It is an important way for the students to practice speaking. In addition, this way gives the students chance to communicate with other people provisionally. Ladousse as cited in Rayhan (2014) explained that "role" is someone in a specific situation, and "play" must be carried out in a safe environment, where the students can be a creative person. Role-play makes the students feel like in the situation of their imagination.

Role-play is a famous activity in speaking class. In doing role-play, students need extra time to prepare what they have to say. The role gives some opportunities for the students to use script with its difficulties. The teachers can guide the role-play. The level of responsiveness to the complexity are the technique to decide the score. This technique makes the test-takers more simple, intensive, and responsive.

Role-play is defined as a scene in the real world, but the roles are given to the students. They are told the identity of character, so they can take the role which suit to their characteristic. Golebiowska as cited in Adnan, Ilias and Ali (2012) said that role-play is a task that has to be finished by the students as a communicative activity. In order to make the role-play alive, the identity of the character is told clearly. The students are asked to speak spontaneously, and even sometimes the teacher asks the students to answer a question based on their opinion.

P'Rayan as cited in Adipranata (2009) said that role-play is an act in which students take a role, and have conversation one and another in a group. Each group creates a story, and presents the role-play in front of the audiences. In this activity, students do an activity like a drama. Students create some dialogues which have a theme, character, and characterizations. Role-play is considered as one of communicative-based activities which allow the learners to practice the target language, and interact with others for the purpose of their proficiency Livingstone, as cited in Blatner (2009). According to Livingstone, as cited in Krebt (2017), role-play is an activity in the class that gives a chance for the students to become completely and actively involved in using the language.

## 1.5. Theoretical Studies

Some researches indicate that students can achieve better results and are more satisfied with their learning experiences in role-play. In the first relevant study, it was found that role-play activity is one of teaching ways in the class (Inawati, 2004). It inspired students to cooperate actively in learning English. Alwahibee as cited in Inawati (2014), showed that for the students learning speaking is attained by achieving the activity arrangement which can be included into three elements, namely previous, during, and after the role-play activity. Another decision showed that the students get three types of speaking performances during the teaching and learning process. By attending role play, the students will get many benefits such as understanding words based on its context.

The second study's result showed that the students can get better achievement through role-play technique (Yuliana, Kristiawan, and Suhartie, 2014). The students have the chance to stimulate their speaking skill, and they can perform it in front of the class easily. In other words, role-play gave benefits to the students to advance their speaking competence. Hedge as cited in Yuliana (2014) stated a number of advantages have been claimed for role-play as a fluency activity if it is performed in pairs or groups rather than in the class. The students can choose the role they want to play.

In the third relevant study, the result was the using of role-play in the classroom is concluded as the relevant method of English speaking competence (Oradee, 2013). The fourth relevant study's result showed that the use of role-play improved the success of the students' goal (Oradee, 2013). The last study's result of the research showed that role-play has benefits to improve the students' speaking competence and develop their ability in conversation (Naksevee, 2013).

## 2. Research Method

This study used qualitative study. It took place in Universitas Ahmad Dahlan and conducted on October, 8th to October, 13th, 2018. The populations of this research were the bachelor degree students of English Education in Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. The number of samples was 108 students who enrolled in Univeritas Ahmad Dahlan in 2016, and they were in the fifth semester.

Regarding the collection of data, the researchers provided interview and questionnaire. In the interview, the students are asked by the researcher about speaking skill and role-play in the classroom. Before that, the researchers distributed a questionnaire to the students. The interview and questionnaire formats are adopted from some experts who did the similar research. The questionnaire items will be shown in appendix I. To strength the instruments, the researchers used SPSS to calculate the validity and reliability.

In measuring the validity and reliability, the researchers used IBM SPSS version 22 and r-table. The researchers asked 50 students to fill the questionnaire and calculated it. Based on the calculating, the validity result was  $r\text{-observed} > r\text{-table}$  meant the questionnaire was valid. 24 items have result more than 0.3. The reliability result was  $r\text{-observed} > r\text{-table}$  meant that the questionnaire was reliable. Based on cronbach's alpha, the result must more than 0,6. After calculating, it found that the questionnaire was 0.914, it meant that the questionnaire was reliable for this research.

The questionnaire was analyzed by using descriptive analysis. The questionnaire result was displayed in the table. To calculate the data, the researchers used SPSS 17.0. It consisted of three things, they are mean, modus and median. The interview result explained in two subsections.

## 3. Findings and Discussion

### 3.1. Questionnaire Result

There were 108 students as participants, and all of the students answered the questionnaire. The researchers chose 6 students as interviewee. They are chosen randomly, but the researchers pay attention and consider the interviewees' answer. The questionnaire consisted of some aspects which are divided into several statements (25 statements). To analyze the questionnaire result, the researchers used SPSS 17.0, and it explains as mean, median, and mode. The questionnaire result is presented in Table 1 below:

**Table 1.** The Questionnaire Result

N	Valid	108
	Missing	0
	Mean	77.7870
	Median	77.0000
	Mode	75.00 <sup>a</sup>
	Sum	8401.00

The table described that there were 108 data, and there are 0 missing data. It means that the questionnaire is valid. The result showed the mean of 77.78, median 77.00, and mode 75. With the result, almost all of the students agreed about the use of role-play in language learning. It also has good effect for their communicative competence.

From the data collection, the researchers discovered many teachers using role-play in the teaching process. It is based on the students' statement, they said that often use role-play in learning process, and it continues until now. In this semester, they got TEYL (Teaching English for Young Learners) subject. They are requested by the lecturer to act as teachers and students. The goal was the students get used to the class atmosphere.

Using role-play in learning process makes the class become enjoyable. This statement is agreed by the students. A student gave totally agree with this statement. She said that using role-play in language class makes her improve her knowledge, and it can help her to practice in the class. On the other hand, a student did not like this technique because she suggested to use another technique in language learning to improve their communicative competence. Using role-play also makes the students to get pronunciation improvement. The students' pronunciation can improve in its accuracy, fluency, and diction. Many students agreed with this statement. Besides, a few students did not agree about some statements, one of them gave the reason that she was not confidence to act in front of the class.

The purpose of this technique is to make the students feel comfortable in learning speaking, but one of the learners disagreed. She explained that she had limited access to speak because it used transcript, and she could not explore many vocabularies. She also stated that she could not understand the material if it is explained by role-play. The teachers use role-play to simplify the learning process so that the learners can understand the material easily. On the other hand, few learners will be more understand when the materials are explained clearly by the teachers.

Role-play is a good technique in teaching. It gives some challenges for the students by its activities such as the students must master vocabulary, their pronunciation must be good in accuracy and fluency, and their expressions must be appropriate with the content. This technique will give good effect for the students in the future. As teachers or lecturers, they should pay attention for the theme and context if they use of role-play. The use of role-play must be based on the students' experiences of life because it can help them to speak spontaneously. It is in line with Albert P'Rayan who designed role-play activity by asking the students to create a story and act it.

Briefly, the use of role-play in language learning is very effective, and it offers great impacts for learners. It can be used to recognize the students' pronunciation, and vocabulary improvement. Moreover, teachers must see the difficulties which are faced by the students, and must have solution to solve the problems.

### 3.2. The Students' Problems in Role-play

The role-play is one of practices that needs skills. In the class, the students have important role in running the role-play. The role needs students' skill to get success. On the other side, almost all students have the same skills. In language teaching, the teachers will find the difficulties which are possessed by the students. The students' problems are different with others. It is because of their interest. In this context, the teachers must have solution to resolve the problems. After they did their role in role play, the students can evaluate themselves. In order to make the students understand their problems. It was found that role play could reveal the students' problem. The researchers found the students' problem which explained as follows.

Researcher: What problems do you have in doing role-play?

Student 1: I didn't master the material. I have difficulty in speaking so I can only say "Yes".

Student 2: The problems are sometimes I don't understand about my friends say. I also feel nervous when I play, and I can't speak spontaneously.

Student 3: I can't be confident when I do role-play, sometimes I can't remember any words which are used in role-play.

Student 4: I feel hard to memorize the mimics and remember the long text.

Student 5: Because I can't do public speaking, and I prefer in writing skill.

Student 6: Be a player in role play.

### 3.3. The Role-Play Significances for Students

The role play has various significances for the students. Before the role-play is started, the students should practice. It happens when role-play becomes a learning technique. It will encourage students' effort for trying to be an actor in role-play. Role-play can help the students to increase their ability either consciously or unconsciously. With this technique, the students got some experiences. Beside the problems, the students also got some benefits from using role-play in the class. In fact, the students received different effect of role-play.

Researcher: What are the significances of role-play for you?

Student 1: Because role-play gave some experiences which can make me to improve my knowledge. Automatically, role play gave new knowledge and can memorize. Then it can help me when I practice in the class. Because of role-play, the class isn't bored.

Student 2: Role-play instructs to unify. We can know each other, and we can study and play by using role-play. Role play also makes new atmosphere in the class.

Student 3: Role-play material based on my daily life, and role-play makes me to be creative.

Student 4: I can add my vocabularies, and I can control my pronoun.

Student 5: This activity makes the students to be more enthusiastic and participates as a player. Role-play creates togetherness and socialization between students. It also can increase the responsibility and professionalism when the students acted as a player.

Students 6: I can control the atmosphere in the classroom. Role-play is a measurement of confidence level.

The researchers took five classes that consist of 108 students. They have second language namely English language. Before they have used role play in class, this study wanted to find students' perception to improve communicative competence. In this study, the students are given the questionnaire and interview. The result of questionnaire showed that role play is good technique in teaching. This is very effective in language learning because the students get great impacts such as recognizing and improving the students' pronunciation. The researchers also found the result of interview about the students have different problems in doing role-play.

The result of this study also showed that role play can make the students to be success in speaking class. Using role-play in teaching speaking is a great technique in which can improve the students' communicative competence. This technique gives an opportunity to the students to be more active and creative in the class. The students get a chance to stimulate their speaking skill, and they can perform easily. In other words, this technique is good choices in teaching speaking, especially to improve students' speaking.

The finding of this study related to several previous studies. In the first study, it was found that using role-play is a technique which used to improve the performance in a test of speaking among Iraqi EFL students (Blatner, 2009). They can say the word pattern correctly, they can pronoun the word correctly, and they can also express their role very well. Besides, it was also found that students' perception in using role play to improve students' speaking (Adipranata, 2009). They were asked to performance with make their own script and property. So, the result of the study is role play

has positive perception and this technique also helps in speaking skills. Another study's result revealed that role-play is a communicative activity which involves the students to speak fluently with others using the target language (Adipranata, 2009).

From the above study, role play is very useful in teaching speaking in a class. This offers many insights that related with real life situation. Role play is a great technique in which can make the students to interact and communicate in pairs or groups. It can improve students' communicative. In university's level, role play helps to communicate in English language and give them background information as indirect experience. Based on the students' perception, role-play has positive impacts for them. It proved that using role-play technique is very recommended to the students, especially in improving communicative competence.

Using role-play in teaching speaking is a great technique because it consists of several aspects which can improve the students' communicative competence. Based on the interview, the researchers found that the students' ability about speaking English has improved. They can say the word pattern correctly, they can pronoun the word correctly, and they can also express their role very well. This concept is supported by some experts who said that role-play is a communicative activity which involves the students to speak fluently with others using the target language (Adipranata, 2009; Blatner, 2009; Krebt, 2017)

#### 4. Conclusion

In teaching and learning, there are many methods and techniques which can be used. Speaking is one of the skills in language learning. To teach speaking skill, the teachers must use new technique to improve the students' ability. According to Livingstone, as cited in Krebt (2017) role-play provides students' speaking as a chance to use language in classroom activity. It can help the students to get an achievement in communicative competence for their daily life. In sum, this study found that the use of role-play in teaching and learning process gives many benefits for the students. Furthermore, the students have some problems by using role-play as learning technique such as they did not feel confident, could not master the material, feel nervous, and find difficulties to memorize. The advantages are role-play gives some experiences, creates a new atmosphere, and builds creativity. The researchers also suggest to other teachers for using role-play as a technique in language teaching because it will give an opportunity for the students to improve their speaking.

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### Appendix 1. Questionnaire

This questionnaire is aimed to find out the students' perception on the use of role play in increasing English communication competence. Read the statements carefully and give your response by putting tick mark (✓) on each statement. (SA: Strongly Agree, A : Agree, D: Disagree, SD: Strongly Disagree)

Name :					
Semester :					
No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1.	I am interested in the use of role-play.				
2.	I agree that role-play is an effective technique to learn speaking.				
3.	The material in the class is suitable to be taught through role-play.				
4.	I feel challenged to speak when in the class conducts the role-play.				
5.	I feel satisfied in using role-play.				
6.	I feel confident in presenting role-play.				
7.	<i>Role-play</i> should be conducted based on a familiar situation.				
8.	<i>Role-play</i> gives extensive speaking practice to the students.				
9.	<i>Role-play</i> allows the students to speak naturally.				
10.	<i>Role-play</i> develops the students' creativity.				
11.	I get more experience through role-play.				
12.	Through <i>role-play</i> , I can be more active to speak.				
13.	I am more motivated to speak by using role-play.				
14.	I believe that I can get a better progress in learning by having role-play.				
15.	I pay attention when my friends perform their play.				
16.	I learn some new expression used in my friends' play.				
17.	My speaking fluency has improved through role-play.				
18.	My speaking accuracy has improved through role-play.				
19.	I can have pronunciation practice fluency through role-play.				
20.	I always prepare the play very well when I act as the player.				
21.	I am more comfortable speaking in English through role-play.				
22.	Role-play helps me in understanding the speaking materials.				
23.	I prefer to do role-play when learning speaking rather than just read dialogue with my friends.				
24.	With the role-play, I feel that speaking lessons become more interesting and challenging.				
25.	<i>Role-play</i> gives me the opportunity to speak up in front of the class.				