ENHANCING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS FOR ELEMENTARY LEARNERS THROUGH ROLE PLAY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract

Speaking as the output of language requires the speaker to have vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency ability. On the contrary, young learners have a tendency of short term memory. It makes the language teachers for young learner creative. Hence, this research is conducted to investigate teachers' and students' responses to teaching English speaking skills using role-play technique, and to identify students' difficulties during the learning activities. A descriptive qualitative design has been applied in this research. The primary participants in this research were twenty-nine students of the fifth-grade elementary private school in Bandung. The instruments used were observation, questionnaire, and open-ended question. This study revealed that the students became exciting and motivating to learn English because they had chance to practice their pronunciation and fluency. Moreover, they could understand the material given easier and involve instantly into the material to integrate it with their real life. Some of students in middle-low ability still troubled in pronunciation followed by the problems in vocabularies adequate. It gives negative effect to their fluency and courage to speak English. Overall, the role play method can overcome the difficulties in speaking English.

Keywords: Vocabulary, Speaking Ability, Role Play Method

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English in Indonesia is challenging. English is learned not only as international foreign language in aim to build communication around nations (Rahmawati & Ertin, 2014 cited in Lestari & Sridatun, 2020). English has become the graduated parameter in Junior and Senior High School. According to the government regulation, one of the goals in language learning is the students should be capable in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Lestari & Sridatun, 2020). Another problem comes up when the regulation and implementation of Indonesian Curriculum 2013 states that English no longer learns in Indonesian elementary school and kindergartens. Its position is only as local content, additional subject/ extracurricular subject, or activities. Combined with the statement that English is a difficult scary subject that makes the students' hesitation to speak in English (Kolnel & Zendrato, 2019). It is the English teachers duty to create the English Class as a fun subject to learn and breaking down the negative conception (Wacana, 2018). English has touched every part of human life all over the world in every subject, nevertheless Indonesia which has entered the global market. Lutfi et al. (2018) says the urgency of English ability makes parents, teachers think that it need to be mastered by their children and students. Among listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills, Rees (2004 cited in Lestari & Sridatun, 2020) states that speaking has become essential aspect in communication with others. Suyanto (2015) and Ayuningtias et al. (2019) explain that speaking is one of English language skills that depending on oral ability to share feeling, thoughts, or ideas and information through speak the words or sentences for communication purposes, in interpersonal texts and simple conversation. Saddhono and Slamet (2014) as cited

in Kolnel & Zendrato (2019) explains to have good speaking skills must fulfill these linguistic aspects, including the vocabularies mastery, grammar acquisition, correct pronunciation and punctuation, words' stress, and intonation; and non-linguistic aspects, namely language fluency, can mastery the material, courage, orderliness, enthusiasm, and attitude.

Turk (2003, cited in Lestari & Sridatun, 2020) states that many people even the professionals looks anxious and afraid to talk in English. Wacana (2018) says that the students in his class looked hesitate to speak in English, seemed uninteresting as the reason was lack of vocabularies banks. Ayuningtias et al. (2019) explains the situation as below:

> "The students in vocabulary mastery is less, so, if they are less of vocabulary, automatically, their speaking skills are also less".

Another issue about speaking is they do not have enough room to speak in English to communicate in their real life, and it happens in both adult learners and young learners (Lestari & Sridatun (2020). An extra challenge is English teachers may not teach grammar structure or sentences pattern or language rules literally to young learner (Suyanto, 2015). Indonesian Education Regulation No. 23 (2006) states that the learning objective in English speaking for Elementary Students and High School Students is able to express a simple verbal utterances into interpersonal and transactional texts. The Curriculum 2013 put English as the graduated parameter from Junior and Senior High School but in Elementary School, English is no longer set as the main subject to learn, nor as the local contain. This is contrary to the writer's belief after being an apprentice teacher at a vocational school that English learning should be started as early as possible. In addition, Scott and Ytreberg (1990) cited in Yuliawati & Nuriyanti (2019) points teachers must be familiar the characteristic of young learners before using the appropriate techniques in the class. Kaswan et al., (2016) explains teaching English skills to young learners is stressing the children to have the speaking ability as the first form of language output by the constant exposures of listening English. He adds the nature of children is *playing*, which means *play* is a system used by children to improve their language abilities, and language is used to express their thought, felling and behavior in their interaction with peers, other children and adult persons.

Referring to the explanation above, the writer chose to investigate a role play method in teaching speaking. As Setiawati (2016) cited in Kencana Sari, (2018) argues that role playing method is part of psychodrama that helps the learners to get the finer understanding about the material and the students will be interesting to involve in the learning process, the material, also how to integrate the knowledge into the real life activities by making problem solving, looking for alternative way, and finding a new creative solution. Awiria & Jamaludin (2020) adds that role play can emotionally connect the students with others in the play, building their sympathy and empathy on other, and solving problems from different point of view. Byrne (1985, cited in Wacana, 2018) mentions that as a form of drama, there are three elements that also should be exist in role play. Firstly, mime; secondly, simulation; thirdly, role play. According to Gillian (1995, cited in (Wacana, 2018), a role/character in the play can be: (a) the characters that relate with the need in live, such as the imaginary scene, (b) the students act as themselves in a sort of setting, (c) some students and the teacher might ever be in the situation of the play, and (d) an imaginary play in an unreal condition. In another words, role play is a method that teachers may consider to be applied in the classroom because it can motivate the students to involve learning process (Wacana, 2018), stimulate the cognitive and the affective side of the students (Kencana Sari, 2018), and improve the students' speaking skills (Ayuningtias et al., 2019), so they are able to speak in English fluently.

METHOD

This study is a qualitative descriptive method. Qualitative method is focused on the human as center of the research (Creswell, 2014). This study was held in an elementary private school in Bandung. Twenty-nine students from the fifth grade become the primary participants of the research with age between eleven to twelve years old. The data was collected through observations, questionnaires, documents analysis from three times meeting. All the data collected is analyzed by item then interpreted and described descriptively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The writer collected data from the teaching learning process to build data analysis and discussion. In this research, the writer used role play technique implemented with *Helping at Home topic* taken from *Guess What! Pupil Book* (Reed & Bentley, 2015) in teaching English speaking ability and the lesson plan. The research sample is fifth grade students of elementary school which is classified into young learners. Considering this, the writer arranged the assessment of proficiency in speaking English only stresses on their vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency in English.

The data in the table below is compiled from the observation sheet. The writer collected it based on the students' response or attitude shown during the technique was being implemented in the classroom. The writer shows the result as below:

Table 1. Teacher Observation Sheet

No	Indicator	Description	Number Of Students In Metting		
			1	2	3
1	Attention	High willingness to learn speaking using role play	26	28	28
		Eliminate the wrong concept	23	25	27
		The concept can be remembered longer/meaningful	26	25	28
		Understand the material easier	28	28	29
2	Relevance	Interesting and not boring	27	27	28
		The time needed to master the concept of learning	26	27	28
3	Confidence	Motivated to get the achievement	28	28	29
		Individual critical thinking is to improve	25	27	27
4	Satisfaction	More appreciate in expressing opinions	25	28	28
		Dare to deliver an opinion	25	26	28

Based on the results of the observation sheet above, the students' responses in the class during the role play method implemented was positive. Mostly they involved in every stage of the learning process. It is proved by the number of students showed a positive response. Only a few students with middle low ability, especially they who had lack in vocabulary mastery need more effort to follow the lesson given. Using role play method related with the students' material about "Helping at Home" was able to help student understanding the material. The students had courage to speak their mind in creative way and enthusiast to learn English.

As the additional, the table below shows the students' responses based on the questionnaire given to them:

Table 2. Questionnaire

(Result by students' amount in percent)

NO	QUESTIONS	YES	NO
1	Through learning techniques that have been implemented, do you have a high desire to learn English?	83%	17%
2	Does the learning that has been implemented eliminate the afraid of making mistake in you?	62%	38%
3	Does the implemented method gives certain meaning to your learning?	45%	55%
4	Does the learning technique bring you to understand the material being taught?	93%	7%
5	Does the learning process become interesting and fun?	86%	14%
6	Do you think the time used in understanding the subject become shorter?	48%	52%
7	Are you motivated to get a good achievement?	83%	17%
8	Does the learning process improve your critical thinking ability?	55%	45%
9	Are you more able in delivering your opinion during the learning process?	48%	52%
10	Are you more courageous in expressing your opinion in the learning process?	55%	45%

Based on the table above, the students' responds on the subject of teaching speaking ability using role play with the students' topic about "Helping at Home" is positive. It is proved by the collected data from the questionnaire. Mostly, the students gave "Yes" response for each question. Except for question number 3, 6, and 9, which talks about the implemented method gives certain meaning to the students' learning, the time used in understanding the subject become shorter and the students' ability in delivering opinion during the learning process, only reaches 45%, 48% and 48%.

From the open-ended question, the answers of five students reflected the general difficulties experieced during learning speaking using the role play method that is implemented in the topic given. The result of the question shows below:

Question : **(What difficulties are faced in learning process?)**
Student 1 : (I only understand a few meaning in Indonesian language because I have only a few English vocabulary.)
Student 2 : (I understand a few words spoken in English, and have difficulties in answering the question from teachers and classmates.)
Student 3 : (I have difficulties in answering the questions that are given by the teachers and friends because only can understand a little from those words in Indonesian language.)
Student 4 : (I'm not really understand the meterial because the explanation given is not clear enough)
Student 5 : (I often forget the English vocabularies that have ever learned.)

The students' answers above described they are inadequate in vocabularies mastery. It made them hard to understand the material and the explanation given. They got difficulties in communicating their ideas before their fellow friends and teacher because of it. Sometimes they also forgot the words that they wanted to say.

Besides from the data above, the writer also found some difficulties that were dealt with the students during the teaching process. The data was obtained from the speaking assessment which was set out twice, in the first and the last meeting. The data presented below were taken from 9 students with good, middle and low abilities. The results of the assessment are shown below:

Table 3. The Result of Speaking Assessment I and II

| No | Name | Proficiency Description (scale 1-4) | | | | | |
| | | Vocabulary | | Pronunciation | | Fluency | |
		I	II	I	II	I	II
1	S7	4	4	3	4	3	3
2	S18	4	4	3	3	3	3
3	S11	4	4	3	4	3	3
4	S5	3	3	2	3	3	3
5	S9	4	4	2	3	3	3
6	S1	2	3	3	3	2	3
7	S27	1	2	1	2	2	3
8	S8	4	4	1	2	2	3
9	S13	2	3	2	3	3	3

From the result of the first assessment, it can be explained that the element of pronunciation and fluency are still the most difficult parts for students. The high score is only three. Even the vocabularies acquisition is in high rate for students who have good ability, but they still need to improve their pronunciation and fluency. In this study, the grammar is not the part to be assessed for young learners, because according to Suyanto (2015) young learners still in the copying stage. They are still not in period of critical thinking about or to set a comprehended sentence based on the grammar rules

From the result of the second assessment, the writer can see there is some improvement especially in pronunciation. The vocabulary and fluency elements also get improvement especially for the students with low speaking ability. This is happened because their motivation and attention to involve in the learning process also became more positive after the role play method was implemented.

Discussion

Role Play Method as Teaching Challenges

The study was conducted for the fifth grade elementary school students. Teaching English Foreign Language to young learner required extra time to arrange the lesson plan and the details. In implementing role play method to teach speaking ability with the "Helping at Home" topic, the writer had prepared the lesson scenario and the role play script for the children. The explanation was given in detail about the objectives and how to do the role they would play during the meeting. Referring to the writer's observation finding above a few number of students showed middle to low level speaking ability in delivering opinion during the learning process.

The assessment result revealed that the students had difficulty in vocabulary. They only memorized a short of vocabularies, mainly in memorizing the vocabulary in long sentences. The other students were preferred to speak in Indonesian language as their mother tongue than translated it into English before they spoke or answered. They also had difficulty in pronouncing the sentences correctly. This both problems gave effect to their fluency and their courage in speaking English in public especially for students in middle-low ability. The students needed more time to practice the material into role play. Couple times repetition of drilling practice was needed before the role play begin. The limited meeting period was not enough to do the best role play because the writer as the teacher had to split the time to teach sub material from the lesson plan and prepared the role play.

Besides that, as they performed the roles in front of their friends, some of them looked nervous and speaking in low voice. Some other students felt embarrassed and seemed unconfident to act out the role they got. This anxiety's problems made the role play uninteresting to be watched. Even they had gotten the big picture of the material they still failed to express it into the play. Basically, they were afraid if their fellow friends would laugh at them if they make mistake.

Role Play Method as Teaching Opportunities

The student responses in using role play to teach speaking ability with the "Helping at Home" topic was positive. First, the students as the participants quite could involve into the learning process. Second, the speaking difficulties faced by the students were eventually increase after the writer implemented role play method in learning process. They showed a better fluency and got courage in speaking English in public especially for students in middle-low ability. During the learning, The students could show good attention, higher motivation, interest and confident gradually.

This study stressed on the Role play as the method and technique implemented in the teaching and learning process. Role play method was quite known among the teachers and students in the previous grade in Elementary School, in several subject lessons such as Indonesian Language, Social Science, and Science. It is in line with the statement of Setiawati (2016) cited in Kencana Sari (2018) that Role Playing technique can integrate the knowledge, skills, and ability of a subject or lesson learned by the students and as practical implementation. Furthermore, the study result proved that role playing method has worked well in teaching speaking skills a\ s they could free to talk and motivate the students to practice the material given. A role play method can be an alternative way to emerge students' interest in learning speaking skills. Lestari & Sridatun (2020) even shows that the role play method can be applied in any grade and level of students.

CONCLUSION

This study conduded that, role play had been an alternative method in motivating students to learn English, especially in speaking ability. They were motivated to speak in English. The lively class situation brought them to enjoy the learning process. Young learners loved to share their mind. Conversation can be one of the tools. Role play pushed the students to speak in English and they had chance to practice their fluency. It was a fun activity and decreased the students' anxiety in learning English speaking. Through role play technique and activity, and supporting by the appropriate teaching tools, the learning speaking became lively learning. So, role play can be a choice in speaking activities.

Speaking is still considered as unpleasant thing to do in communication, especially to speak foreign language in public. The students who had learned English for years still found it hard to speak in English fluently. They only memorized a short of vocabularies and some other was preferred to speak in Indonesian language as their mother tongue than translated it into English before they spoke or answered. The wrong concept that English is a foreign language or not a must to learn subject for Elementary School, bring them to put the English in the second place. Sometimes they forgot the words in English and had some mispronounce when they spoke during role play. The other problem is they sometimes looked afraid to speak loud or hesitated to communicate their mind through the spoken words. They were afraid if their fellow friends would laugh at them if they make mistake. The method implemented helped them to learn speaking, its elements and how to speak the word rightly, so they wanted to involve in learning actively. It had become interesting way in learning English to overcome the difficulties faced by the student in learning English speaking skills.

This study recommended the role play method as the references for those who need to find an alternative in teaching and learning. Role play method can be implemented to students of any grade, level, and age. The implementation can be modified based on the students' need and material. For the higher level of schooling, the speaking assessment can add with the grammar and comprehension.

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