ROLEPLAY: ONE ALTERNATIVE AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING METHOD TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' COMMUNICATIVE SKILL

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Abstracts

Most students study English and hope they can understand English actively. In fact, they don't have lot of chances to practice English in communication. They are reluctant to speak and afraid to make mistakes. They know much about English but they don't know how to use it in communication. An effort to improve the students' speaking skill is to use a role play as one method to teach English by creating English speaking atmosphere in class. In role play the students are set in a certain situation and they interact with their friends or partners to use English for communication.

Key words: alternative, chances, atmosphere, role play

A. BACKGROUND

The process of English teaching and learning has begun since students began studying English. They learned English at the Elementary, Secondary and even at Senior High School. Although they have studied for long, they still have faced problems in learning English. The School has set curriculum for teaching and learning English. The English curriculum emphases on the fourth skills, namely, listening, reading, speaking and writing, but speaking skill does not get much attention. The English teachers do not create the English speaking atmosphere. They do not give chances to the students to express their feeling by communicating to each other. They do not present knowledge such as, language function and language competence to students. They teach and explain the English phrases or daily

speaking expressions but they teach the students without giving a lot of time to practice.

The conditions cause the students do not know how to used the expression in real life situation. They are reluctant to speak in English. They prefer speaking Indonesian to English at the time the teacher does not give speaking test. To make matter worse the exercises made are only prepared for the test model. These will cause the students not to be able to apply speaking expression in different atmospheres.

In fact, the mastery of speaking English is really important. In this era, the effect of globalization influences people who want to communicate, to talk to foreigners in many fields in society, such as in business, in industry, and even in education. People need a language as a language of communication. Having the ability in speaking English is urgent in order they can keep pace with the advancement of the era.

Seeing this, English teachers should change the way how the English teaching and learning can improve the students' speaking mastery. The teaching of speaking skill should be increased. It will be needed by the students in their future career.

One alternative of effective teaching English to improve speaking skill is by a role play. What and why a role play can support the method of teaching speaking interactively

B. ROLE PLAY

A role play is a kind of a life game that has a goal, rules and involved a feeling of fun. In the role play the students are put in a certain atmosphere outside of the class atmosphere. According to Oxford English Dictionary, a role play is "the changing of one's behavior to fulfill a social role, the term is used more loosely in three senses that a role play is:

- To refer to the playing of roles generally such as in a theater, or educational setting;
- To refer to a wide range of games including computer role playing games, and more;
- To refer specifically to role playing games.

According to the meaning in the dictionary a role play can be used for playing a role in educational setting, such as in classroom. The students in class can practice a role with a specific atmosphere. It can help them to practice their ability in their communication. It is a kind of activities or practices than can be created according to atmospheres intended. Rebecca (2009) explained that in most role-playing exercises, each student takes the role of a person affected by an issue and studies the impacts of the issues on human life and/or the effects of human activities on the world around us from the perspective of that person.

It is interesting and useful to students because it emphasizes the real-world. It presents the students a valuable opportunity to learn and practice the language. The students are set in a certain situation like the real life. This role playing exercises can motivate them in learning the language. It is widely agreed that learning takes place when activities are engaging and memorable. Jeremy Harmer advocates the use of role-play for the following reasons: It's fun and motivating .Quieter students get the chance to express themselves in a more forthright way. The world of the classroom is broadened to include the outside world. Thus, it offers a wider range of language opportunities. Larsen-Freeman (1986) as cited in Pamela Kris explains that role plays, whether structured or less structured, are important in the communicative approach because they give learners an opportunity to practice communicating in different social contexts and in different social roles.

A role play is a highly flexible learning activity which has a wide scope for variation and imagination. According to Ladousse (1987), a role play uses different communicative techniques and develops fluency in the language, promotes interaction in the classroom and increases motivation. Role play can improve students' speaking skills in any situation, and helps them to interact. As for the shy students, role play helps provide a mask, where students with difficulty in conversation are open minded. In addition, it is fun and most learners will agree that enjoyment leads to better learning.

C. HOW TO TEACH USING A ROLE PLAY

The teacher needs to decide the context for the exercise and the role(s) that the students will play. If the students are taking human roles, the context is generally a specific problem such as working in an office or dealing with persons. Lessons need to be carefully explained and supervised in order to involve the students and to enable them to learn as much as possible from the experience. However, a well-done scenario never runs the same way twice, teaches people things they might not ordinarily have learned, and tends to be fun for all involved.

Role-playing exercises can be hard work for the instructor, both in preparation and in implementation, but the work tends to pay off in terms of student motivation and accomplishment. Therefore, the teacher should consider the following points:

1. Define Objectives. The details of what you need to do depend entirely on why you want to include role-playing exercises in a class.

- What topics do you want the exercise to cover?
- How much time do you and your class have to work on it?
- What do you expect of your students: reports, presentations?
- Do you want the students role-playing separately or together?

2. Choose context and roles. The teacher decides on a problem related to the chosen topics of study and a setting for the characters. It is a good idea to make the setting realistic, but not necessarily real. If the characters(s) used in the exercise are people, define his or her goals and what happens if the character does not achieve them.

3. Introduce the Exercise. Engage the students in the scenario by describing the setting and the problem. The teacher provides the students with the information he has already prepared about the characters the goals and background information. It needs to be clear to the students. Outline goals as the teacher expects the students to learn in this lesson.

D. TIPS ON SUCCESSFUL ROLE PLAY

1. Preparation

Role-play is possible at elementary levels providing the students have been thoroughly prepared. Try to think through the language the students will need and make sure this language has been presented. Students may need the extra support of having the language on the board. When the role-play began the students felt 'armed' with the appropriate language. At higher levels the students will not need so much support with the language but they will need time to 'get into' the role.

2. The Role of teacher

Some of the possible teacher roles are:

- Facilitator - students may need new language to be given by the teacher. If rehearsal time is appropriate the giving in of new language should take place at this stage.

- Spectator - The teacher watches the role-play and offers comments and

advice at the end.

- Participant - It is sometimes appropriate to get involved and take part in the role-play yourself.

3.Bring Situations to life

The real example and experience can bring a role play to life. A group of students can play the roles of chef and customer. A simple cone of white card with CHEF written on it took a minute to make and it made the whole process more fun and memorable for the class. As soon as it was placed on their heads they 'became' the chef and acted accordingly. Try to keep the roles you ask students to play as real to life as possible. However, it may be within their schema to imagine it.

a. Create a real life

Try to keep the roles you ask students to play as real to life as possible. It may be hard for students who have little opportunity to travel to imagine they are in 'the five stars restaurant' in London. However, it may be within their schema to imagine they have been asked to help an English speaker who is visiting their own country. This may involve using some L1 to explain about the local culture or to translate local menus into English for the guest to their country.

On the other hand, it is easy for students to role play 'going shopping'. They are used to acting out a visit to a shop, as that is how they play with their friends. Therefore, teachers' roles are important to help students create real life atmosphere.

b. Introduce the language

As students practice the role-play they might find that they are stuck for words and phrases. In the practice stage the teacher has a chance to give the appropriate language. This may need the teacher to act as a sort of 'walking dictionary', monitoring the class and offering assistance as and when necessary. If you are not happy doing this and you feel that the process of finding the new language should offer more student autonomy, you could have 'time-out' after the

practice stage for students to use dictionaries to look up what they need. By doing so, they will learn new vocabulary and structure in a natural and memorable environment. It is a chance to use real and natural language.

c. Error Correction

It is better not to give correction during the role play. There are many ways to correct mistakes when using role-play. It is rarely appropriate for the teacher to jump in and correct every mistake. This could be discouraged them! Some students do like to be corrected straight after a role-play activity, while the language is still fresh in their minds, while some do not like. However, sentences with errors can be written on the board for the group to correct together.

Other way, the teacher can make a note of common mistakes and dealing with the students in future classes ensure that the students don't lose motivation by being corrected on the spot or straight after the role play. It is better to negotiate with students and ask them how they would like to be corrected.

D. MATERIAL FOR ROLE PLAY

Material for role play can be found in newspapers, magazines, songs, poems, e-mails, any sources of human interest stories. The teacher can use the original story. Look at the example, the story is taken from ' Creative English Work book ',

I am Lita. Yesterday, Jessie, my friend and I were on our way to school. As we were crossing the road, we saw an old woman carrying a big basket of fruit. The old woman looked like she was in pain. She suddenly dropped her basket and almost fainted.

At once, we ran towards her. I asked her if she was all right. The old woman did not reply; she just shook her head. Jessie decided to call an ambulance, and quickly ran to public telephone ear a coffee shop.

The ambulance arrived a few minutes later, and took the old woman to the nearest hospital. We could not accompany her there because we had to go

to school.

After school, we visited her at the hospital. The old woman was very happy to see us and thanked us for helping her. Jessy and I were also very happy because we had helped the old woman.

The Activities

The teacher sets up the story on the whiteboard, introducing characters and answering questions, the teacher can ask where the story is, what the relation of each character is. When she is confident the students understand the narrative background and characters' interaction, he tells the story little by little. At any stage in the narrative, the students can ask any questions. First students read the story sentence by sentence. Then, they can write, negotiate and clarify sentences for their characters. Questioning and speaking to the teacher occur in early stages of the activity (setting up the story and telling the story). After each students is sure to act as each of the character, they practice their role. During the performance or on the stage they must listen to each other both as audience and also as performers, so that their version of events fits coherently with the versions of the other characters. They can create a special effect and attract people's attention

Another material can be used is from a song. The teacher can access a narrative from a song. It is from Conway Twitty: "Don't cry Joni."

The activities

First, the teacher plays on the song, the students listen to the song. The students read the lyrics sentence by sentence. After that they can ask questions, negotiate and clarify the characters each will role. They paraphrase the lyrics. The teacher contextualizes the story on the blackboard, name the characters (a boy and a girl) build up a fiction together with the students about where they lived, their relationship, their separation and the reasons why she left him. Next, the teacher asks

the students to read lyrics again and paraphrase the lyrics, find the characters' roles and create the sentences or expressions. The following is the lyrics of the song:

Don't cry Joni	By: Conway Twitty & Joni Lee - 1975 Margo & Daniel O'Donnell – 2006
Joni was the girl who lived next door I've known her, I guess, ten years or more Joni wrote me a note one day And this is what she had to say (JONI:) (Jimmy, please say you'll wait for me) (I'll grow up someday you'll see) (Saving all my kisses just for you) (Signed with love forever true) Slowly I read her note once more I went over to the house next door Her teardrops fell like rain that day When I told Joni what I had to say Joni, Joni please don't cry You'll forget me by and by You're just fifteen, I'm twenty-two And Joni, I just can't wait for you Soon I left our little home town Got me a job and tried to settle down But those words kept haunting my memory The words that Joni wrote to me	(JONI:) (Jimmy, please say you'll wait for me) (I'll grow up someday you'll see) (Saving all my kisses just for you) (Signed with love forever true) I packed my clothes and I caught a plane I had to see Joni, I had to explain How my heart was filled with her memory And ask my Joni if she'd marry me I ran all the way to the house next door But things weren't like they were before My teardrops fell like rain that day When I heard what Joni had to say (JONI:) (Jimmy, Jimmy please don't cry) (You'll forget me by and by) (It's been five years since you've been gone)

The teacher then asks students to write mini dialogues around the atmosphere. The dialogue must try to imply place/time, when the listener/speakers perform their mini-dialogue the listeners/watchers must listen carefully enough to infer where the

action is taking place and at what time.

E. CONCLUSION

In this article I would like to suggest that role play is something which can be included in language teaching to help make classes the dynamic, energetic, harmonious, speaking-focused experiences. Although at the beginning the students perhaps there are doubts and lacked confidence, the activity can be successful in achieving its aims. Teachers always want the students to gain fluency and accuracy in the oral presentation. Being accurate does not mean using structures and vocabulary correctly, but saying the right things in the right place, at the right time. It is important that the students comprehend so that they can manipulate, produce and interact using the language, English.

It is important for teachers to think a plan what should be done to encourage and facilitate the use of spoken English for academic purposes effectively when making oral presentation in classroom situations. They need to think of what kind of approaches can be created for students to participate actively in class and how to achieve the need of the weaker students successfully.

Language teaching can be an interesting challenge when teachers make the effort to explore a variety of approaches. Role play is just one of the many methods available for exploitation. With some attention given to the needs of the students, both the teacher and the students can play active roles in the classroom, making language classes livelier, challenging and fun.

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