The Effect of Role-Playing for Building Students' Speaking Motivation and Positive Characters

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Abstract: This study aims at investigating the effect of using role-playing on building students' English speaking motivation and positive characters. This case study focused on finding the students' perception towards the use of role-playing method during their speaking class in the English Education Department at one of the universities in Indonesia. The data were collected through questionnaire and face to face semi-structured interviews with the first, third, and fifth semester students. The results of this study indicated that students had positive attitudes towards the use of role-playing during their speaking class. They claimed that the use of role-playing method during the class could lead them to have better communication, interpersonal skills, and management development since they would have to interact most of the time with one another starting from preparing for the script, practicing, until performing the plays. Role-playing was believed to build the students' speaking motivation and four main positive characteristics, namely cooperation, creativity, responsibility, and discipline.

1 INTRODUCTION

Many educators agree that teaching methods that use students' experiences can help to generate enthusiasm for active involvement in learning process. Role playing is one effective method that encourages such experiences. It provides an opportunity for acting out conflicts, collecting information about social issues, learning to take on the roles of others, and improving students' social skills (Somervill, 1995, p. 28).

Role playing normally involves students playing imaginary people in an imaginary situation. Role playing is one type of active learning which is the process of having students engage in some activities that force students to reflect upon ideas and how they are using those ideas (Michael, 2006, p. 160).

In addition, role playing also provides a collaborative learning environment in which students can employ scientific principles in their daily life (Sloman and Thomson, 2010; cited in Duban and Duzgun, 2013, p. 47) and become active in participating in the learning process (Gonen and Uyar-Dalkilic, 2003; cited in Duban and Duzgun, 2013, p. 47). Role playing can make students inevitably immersed in a social milieu and create more experiences for students on learning how to get along with other people.

Meanwhile, role playing is also claimed as a group process that always activate and develop social learning, emotional intelligence, argument on values, spiritual thinking, intuition and other meta-learning skills that have been recognized as essential elements in learning process of a human being (Piekkari, 2002, p. 13). Pedagogically, sound scenario-based role plays are activities with a specific learning outcome designed to create a realistic learning experience for participants (Neuendorf and O'Connell, 2011, p. 2182), in which with a little preparation, role-playing activities in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class can help students take control of their learning, develop as individuals, and learn that English lessons can be both enjoyable and productive. Therefore, drama or in this case role playing is invaluable as a means for developing language skills, encouraging social interaction and group participation and teaching students how to listen and respond appropriately (Thomson and Evans, 2005, p. 14.

The value of role playing lies in the creative process and its effective opportunity for working with others. The process of preparing, practicing, and performing role play in the classroom will lead to the practice of building good characters for the students. They will face a lot of opportunities to build good characters among their classmates as well as their teachers. For example, Gower (2010) states that role

playing method can build the characters of (1) developing skills in listening, decision making, and citizenship, (2) understanding the importance of respecting others, (3) understanding that everybody is different and that it is natural to make mistakes, (4) identifying people (in this case can be the teachers as well as their classmates) students can trust, (5) introducing responsibility, (6) developing social skills and facilitating cooperation by having students work in groups, and (7) enhancing self-esteem.

However, good character is not formed automatically; it is developed over time through a sustained process of teaching, for example, learning and practice. Therefore, role playing is considered as one of the most important speaking activities in teaching a speaking class because it is also assumed to be a suitable activity to enhance students' positive characters. A role play project has always been a compulsory assignment to be carried out by the first semester students for the course of Intensive English Course (IEC) Speaking in the English Education Department at one of the universities in South Sumatera, Indonesia.

First semester students commonly face problems related to their limited English Language ability, especially in the speaking skill. The problem also includes social interaction matters among new classmates. Increasing speaking motivation by having a group activities to perform a role play project during the class is expected to overcome these problems. Therefore, this study aims at investigating the students' perception towards the use of role-playing method during their speaking class in relation to build their speaking motivation and positive characters while working in a team for a role play project.

2 METHOD

This study was conducted as a qualitative case study. The participant of which were 168 first, third, and fifth semester students from six total classes that had been exposed with role playing method in the Intensive English Course (IEC) Speaking class during their first semester.

The data were collected through a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The questionnaire consisted of two open-ended and 15 close-ended questions in a form of Likert-scale, while, for the interview there were five open-ended questions given to the sample. Five students from each class were taken as the sample for the interview, so there were 30 students having the semi-structured interview. The ten questions for the interview asked about the students feeling and attitude (comfort, seriousness,

usefulness) when participating in the role play activities in relation to their speaking motivation and positive characters.

3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings From the Questionnaire

3.1.1 Speaking Motivation

The first open-ended question on the study concerns the answers of the students to the question "What are the effects (advantages and disadvantages) of using role play in your Intensive English Course (IEC) Speaking class?" Table 1 and 2 show the views and relevant frequency.

Table 1: Views on the advantages of using role play.

	f
Improving speaking skill	162
Self-confidence	122
Fun	151
Comfortable	125

One hundred and sixty two students (96.43%) claimed that role playing method could improve their speaking skill, and 122 (72.62%) students assumed it could build their self-confidence. It was also assumed to create a fun classroom atmosphere by 151 (89.88%) students, and 125 (74.40%) students felt comfortable during the role playing activity.

Table 2: Views on the disadvantages of using role play.

	f
No disadvantages	110
Time-consuming	58
Noisy class	57
Unequal role	38
Uncomfortable	34
Other friends' personality	3

Role playing was considered time-consuming by 58 (34.53%) students. Fifty seven (33.93%) students believed that it made the class become noisy, and 11 (6.55%) students claimed that they could share unequal role in which some would speak very much while others would speak very little. Thirty four (20.24%) students felt uncomfortable because they were shy or they had to play the role that they did not like. While, three (1.79%) students even hate to confront with their friend due to the annoying personality of the friend. However, one hundred and ten students (96.43%) claimed that role playing method had no disadvantages.

The second open-ended question on the study concerns the answers of the students to the question "Do you agree with the statement "Using role playing can increase my speaking motivation in the class"? Why?"

All students agreed with the statement. One hundred and fifty two (90.48%) students claimed that role playing activity can build their self-confidence, so they were more confident to speak in front of the class. Moreover, 109 (64.88%) students also stated that they always got feedback from the lecturer, so they became more confident with their grammar and pronunciation. Ninety eight (58.33%) students claimed that they had more preparation before performing in front of the class, and it could decrease their anxiety.

3.1.2 Positive Characters Building

Four questions in the close-ended questionnaire directly related to how the students' see role playing activities to build their positive characters. Table 3 gives the percentage on how the students' perception toward the use of role playing to build the characters of cooperation/teamwork, creativity, responsibility, and discipline.

Table 3: Role playing to build students' positive characters.

	%
Cooperation/teamwork	57.74
Creativity	51.79
Responsibility	58.93
Discipline	55.95

The data showed that responsibility is the most well-built character, followed by cooperation, discipline, and creativity.

3.2 Findings from the Interview

The data from the interview supported the finding from the questionnaire. They revealed the proof that the students had positive perception towards using role playing to build their higher speaking motivation and positive characters.

They enjoyed the fun and exciting role playing activities, in which they could avoid the textbook-based and conventional learning strategies. However, they still followed each stage in the role playing activities (sharing roles, preparing script, practicing/rehearsal, and performing/recording the final plays) seriously because it was part of the speaking class assignment. Therefore, they believed they had to force themselves to increase their speaking motivation.

Besides the four characters (discipline, responsibility, cooperation/teamwork, and

creativity), the data from the interview showed that the students' self-confidence, tolerance, and leadership skills are other positive characters that can be built using role playing.

3.3 Discussion

The results of this study indicate that students had positive attitudes towards the use of role-playing during their speaking class. They claimed that the use of role-playing method during the class could lead them to have better communication, interpersonal skills, and management development since they had to interact most of the time with one another starting from preparing for the roles/script, practicing, to performing the plays.

Students had fun working cooperatively to plan and act out because most of them agree that enjoyment leads to better learning. They gained higher self-confidence, so their motivation to speak increased. Having adequate preparation and feedback also led to the students' higher speaking internal motivation. Furthermore, since role playing was one of the projects/assignments compulsory for the speaking class, some students claimed that their speaking motivation was forced to increase due to this reason.

In addition, preparing for a role play project requires a great deal of time and effort to be successful. However, the class atmosphere was considered fun and engaging, although some students would claim that it was too noisy. Indeed, having a classroom full of students having fun while learning can be loud, but it is actually productive noise (Wong, 2014).

Working together as a team in a role play project put students in an engaging as well as uncomfortable situation. Therefore, students then learn to manage themselves for the sake of their individual and group needs, in which they could still gained higher motivation and well-built good characters. Responsibility, cooperation, discipline, and creativity are the most well-built character besides self-confidence, tolerance, and leadership skills. It is in line with Joyce and Well (1986, cited in Somervill, 1995), who believe that role playing plays an indispensable part in human development and offers a unique opportunity for resolving interpersonal and social dilemmas.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Role playing provides an authentic learning experience for students. Using role playing to learn English results in real communication, involving

ideas, emotions, feelings, appropriateness and adaptability. It can also be a fun and engaging way to nurture values and develop positive characters and skills of initiative, communication, problem-solving, self-awareness, and working cooperatively in teams.

In this study, role play is believed to build the students' speaking motivation and four main positive characters respectively, namely responsibility, cooperation, discipline, and creativity.

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