USING ROLE-PLAY IN TEACHING SPEAKING

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FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION
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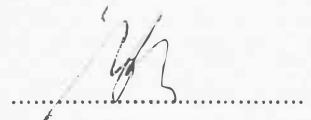
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ABSTRACT

USING ROLE-PLAY IN TEACHING SPEAKING

English, an international language is a tool of communication that has been playing a very important part in learning and acquiring scientific, technical and also cultural knowledge. Global competition has made English necessary to be learned as it is widely spoken around the world and has become a common tool between countries. It is the language used for collecting worldwide information and carrying out international exchange and cooperation. The status of English Language in Malaysia is as a second language. It is a compulsory subject in all government schools. There are four skills needed to be mastered in order to communicate using this language efficiently and accurately. One of the most important skills is speaking skills. Possessing a good speaking skill will give great advantages as one can convey his ideas easily and can talk fluently. Improving students' oral English skills has become more and more important. One of the most effective methods to teach and motivate students' to speak English is role-play. The objective of this research is to see the advantages of role-play activity in improving students' ability to speak this language. This study is conducted in two form two classes in a secondary school in Kota Kinabalu. One of the classes is an average class and the other one is an intermediate to advanced class. Three informants had been interviewed from each class. The researcher does the research by using observation notes and the interview data collection methods. Through the four weeks research, it is generally proven that the students in both classes have shown improvements in their speaking skills and become more interested in speaking English in the classroom. From the result of this research, we know that in schools, the teacher can use some communicative classroom activities such as role-play to help students to improve their speaking ability and arouse their motivation of English speaking. However there are also some limitations of this research for example, because the sample size was small, the results might not reflect the whole classes and also maybe there were some unstable data because the time of research was too short.

ABSTRAK

PENGGUNAAN MAIN-PERANAN DALAM PENGAJARAN BERTUTUR BAHASA INGGERIS

Bahasa Inggeris, yang merupakan bahasa antarabangsa adalah alat komunikasi yang telah memainkan peranan yang amat penting di dalam pembelajaran dan memperolehi ilmu pengetahuan dalam bidang sains, teknikal dan budaya. Persaingan dunia telah menjadikan Bahasa Inggeris wajib untuk dipelajari kerana ia adalah bahasa pertuturan yang digunakan di serata dunia. Ia juga merupakan bahasa untuk mencapai maklumat serata dunia dan menjalankan perniagaan. Status Bahasa Inggeris di Malaysia adalah sebagai bahasa kedua. Ia adalah matapelajaran yang wajib untuk dipelajari di semua sekolah di Malaysia. Terdapat empat kemahiran yang harus dimiliki untuk berkomunikasi menggunakan bahasa ini dengan baik. Kemahiran bertutur adalah satu kemahiran yang sangat penting. Jika seseorang memiliki kemahiran bertutur yang baik menggunakan bahasa ini, akan mudah baginya untuk berkomunikasi. Meningkatkan kemahiran bertutur pelajar dalam Bahasa Inggeris telah menjadi bertambah penting. Salah satu kaedah untuk mengajar dan memotivasikan pelajar untuk bertutur dalam Bahasa Inggeris di dalam bilik darjah adalah melalui aktiviti main peranan. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk melihat bagaimanakah aktiviti main peranan berfaedah dalam membantu meningkatkan kemahiran bertutur pelajar dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Kajian ini telah dijalankan terhadap pelajar di dua buah kelas di sekolah menengah dalam daerah Kota Kinabalu. Sebuah kelas adalah merupakan kelas yang sederhana dan kelas yang satu lagi merupakan kelas pertengahan dan cerdik. Tiga orang pelajar dari setiap kelas ini telah ditemubual. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah pengumpulan data melalui temubual dan nota daripada pemerhatian. Setelah tempoh empat minggu kajian berlangsung, telah didapati bahawa terdapat peningkatan terhadap kebolehan bertutur pelajar dan juga peningkatan motivasi mereka untuk bertutur dalam Bahasa Inggeris di dalam bilik darjah semasa pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris. Daripada dapatan kajian ini juga kita telah mengetahui bahawa guru boleh menggunakan beberapa aktiviti komunikasi bilik darjah seperti main-peranan ini untuk membantu pelajar meningkatkan kemahiran bertutur dalam Bahasa Inggeris dan juga memotivasikan mereka untuk bertutur dalam bahasa ini. Walaubagaimanapun, terdapat sedikit limitasi terhadap kajian ini kerana saiz sampel yang kecil dan tempoh masa yang singkat untuk menjalankan kajian ini. Terdapat kemungkinan ketidakstabilan terhadap data yang diperolehi.

TABLE OF CONTENT

LIST OF FIGURES / PHOTO

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

Global competition has made it necessary to learn a second language, and English has become a common communication tool between countries. Learning a second language is like trying to reach another world. Everyone agrees that the subject of English Language is vitally important of all school subjects, principally because reading, writing, speaking and listening are needed to a greater or lesser degree in every other school subject, and for adult life.(Goodwyn and Branson, 2005).

Nowadays, the culture of Malaysian schools put emphasis on students' ability to read, write, and speak good English. Students' English oral abilities have been emphasized in English Language as a Second Language.

Ministry of Education Malaysia, (2003) Curriculum Specifications English Language Form Two emphasizes that English is taught as a second language in all primary and secondary schools in line with its status as a second language in the country. Learners are taught the English language to enable them to use the language to further their studies and for work purposes.

For those who have the facilities, the use of English in ICT has been included to enable learners to access knowledge of the Internet and to network with people both locally and overseas. The purpose is to keep up with the growing use of English in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Ministry of Education Malaysia (2003).

The curriculum specifications clarify the aims and objectives of the English language. The aims of the English syllabus are to extend learners' English

proficiency in order to meet their needs for English in everyday life, for knowledge acquisition, and for future workplace needs. The objectives of the English Language Curriculum enable learners to;

     i.   Form and maintain relationships through conversation and correspondence; take part in social interaction; and interact to obtain goods and services;

     ii.   Obtain, process and use information from various audio-visual and print sources; and present the information in spoken and written form;

     iii.   Listen to, view, read and respond to different texts, and express ideas, opinions, thoughts and feelings imaginatively and creatively in spoken and written form; and

     iv.   Show an awareness and appreciation of moral values and love towards the nation.

The curriculum specifications underlined the importance of oral skills not only writing and reading skills, from the objectives most of its are for conversation and correspondence, social interaction, present information in spoken, listening to and for information and express ideas, opinion, thoughts and feelings imaginatively and creatively spoken. Ministry of Education Malaysia (2003).

Raminah Hj. Sabran (1993) said that language is an important tool in human life. Through language, people can communicate with others to convey their wish, feelings, ideas, experiences, knowledge, to get information, to understand others and so on. Learning language is crucial not only to gain ideas, knowledge and so on but it is important in communication especially in oral skills because without a good understanding and good oral skill in language, we cannot communicate or convey ourselves clearly and effectively.

Oral communication is a vital component of the English Language curriculum in Malaysians schools. It provides the basis for growth in reading, writing and listening activities. Oral communication consists of both verbal and non-verbal communications. As learning and applying oral skills are so closely related, the classroom should be placed where the use of spoken language is sensitively supported and where active listening is also developed and valued. (Nor Azmi B. Mostafa, 2004).

According to Brown, (1994), by communicating with each other students can do relation between what they know and what they learn. Davison and Moss (2000) shared the same opinion, they believed speaking and listening are perceived as vital communication skills and talk is acknowledged as a medium for learning and personal development. Hybels and Weaver (2004) added the importance of communication skills when they said that as we prepare to enter the workplace and to engage in deeper relationships, our communication skills will be paramount to our success.

Based on these statements, we can clearly see that speaking skills is very important as it is the tool of communication and it is also important for every student to master it before they learn reading, writing and listening skills. Both listening and speaking skills are important for students in developing themselves.

The Ministry of Education has made the oral or speaking skills one of the important components in the English Language Curriculum in all schools and it is an assessed component in the Malaysian examination in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examinations and the Malaysian University English Test (MUET).

1.2   Background of the study

There are several teaching methodologies. According to Larsen-Freeman (2000) there are eight teaching methodologies, namely The Grammar-translation Method, The direct Method, The audio-Lingual Method, The silent Way, Desuggestopedia, Community Language Learning, Total Physical Response and Communicative Language Teaching. Each methodology has its strengths and weaknesses. Previous

studies have shown that the most suitable methodology to teach speaking skills effectively is Communicative Language Teaching.

The problem in using Grammar -Translation Method, which is the traditional teaching method, does not apparently enhance students' oral ability in English and their attitude toward learning English. The traditional teacher-centered Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is still dominant in schools and this hinders students' learning of English, especially to enhance their oral communication or speaking skills. (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

Those who adopt Grammar -Translation Method tests believe that second or foreign language learning occurs through a detailed analysis of grammatical rules and the application of that knowledge to translate sentences into or out of the target language. Researchers support the idea that GTM can partly improve students' learning of English but cannot positively make a quantitative change in their speaking ability.

Because traditional teaching methods have been used for such a long time, students lose their enthusiasm to put greater effort into learning a second language that is English. Moreover, students barely help their classmates solve academic questions. Most students think, "I can learn more only when you learn less" and "I succeed only when you fail." Those kinds of thoughts have emerged in traditional classrooms, and these biases can deter students' learning. (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

High-achieving students easily become more self-centered, regarding their classmates as their opponents, in the traditional teaching environment. In addition, the high-achieving students easily become unwilling to help low-achieving students in the traditional environment classrooms. Moreover, some high-achieving students are afraid that the low-achieving students will get better scores and surpass them.

Wei (1997) also stated that it is easy to turn students into passive learners who have diminished interest in learning English when traditional teaching methods are used. Similarly, Chen (2001) stated that learning is one way (teacher to

4

student) in the traditional grammar translation method. The only way to improve students' speaking ability, however, is to make them speak more with classmates.

Under the grammar translation method, not all students receive enough interaction with their classmates in the learning process to experience this interaction. Teachers control the English learning instruction in a traditional grammar translation classroom. In these kinds of ESL classroom in Malaysia, teachers directly lecture to students. Consequently, students listen to lectures more than they practice English conversation with their classmates. They may have a chance to speak in English in the traditional classroom, but the chance is limited and it is difficult for them to speak in front of the whole class. (Larsen-Freeman,2000).

Furthermore, in some schools, many Malaysian secondary students are not taught to freely and publicly express their feelings and opinions. What usually happen in the schools, teachers usually asked students questions by randomly calling their names during the class. If the student did not give a correct answer, most teachers gave students a negative response such as telling them not to sit down. As a result, students tend to feel anxiety when they are sharing their opinions or ideas in front of the whole class. They are afraid to give wrong answers and make errors because they feel they will lose face or be teased publicly.

This is the reason why the students are often passive learners. In this environment, students usually think they are forced to learn rather than take an interest in learning. Freeman and Freeman (1998) stated that students who are more inhibited cannot interact in authentic ways when traditional teaching methods are employed.

According to Larsen-Freeman (2003) eleven methods are mostly used in teaching second languages. Of these instructional methods, cooperative learning and role-play learning belong to the student-students interactive pattern. In this interactive pattern, students lead their team by themselves; the role of the teacher is to monitor and guide them once he or she observes students needing help

Cooperative learning, also known as collaborative learning, basically gets students involved in a group and lets them work with their team members (Larsen-Freeman, 2003). It is not the group configuration that makes cooperative learning distinguished; it is the way that teachers corporate with students that is important (Larsen-Freeman, 2003). The collaborative instructional method has been employed in different areas of education for many years, becoming vital as an effective teaching method in various areas of learning. In Malaysia communicative Teaching Method is carried out broadly at various educational institutions and levels and has become more popular.

In Communicative Language Teaching, the quantity and quality of language learning is much greater than for example in the grammar-translation instructional language learning method. This is because students are not asked to answer or respond to teachers' questions individually. Instead, they are asked to speak in the target language with their peers. Additionally, the communicative learning approach is especially profitable with students who have limited English proficiency.

One of the teaching activities for oral English under Communicative Language Learning is role-play. Jesness (2004) stated that role-playing is a good way to help your students acquire survival-level English speaking skills. In role-play activities, students are similarly required to cooperate with each other. The role-play instructional model is designed to encourage students to think in terms of positive interdependence, which means that instead of thinking competitively and individualistically, students are cooperative in the group.

In addition, during role-play activity, students often stay together in the same groups for a period of time so they can learn how to work together better. The role-play instructional model enables students to learn from other team members and also gives them a chance to practice in getting along with people different from themselves. Moreover, it is based on team rewards because an individual, whether he or she helps or is helped, is not the only one to be rewarded; the team itself is rewarded.

Use of the role-play instructional model can help students obtain social skills that need to be explicitly taught (Birch, 1998). These skills include acknowledging another's contribution, asking others to contribute, and keeping the conversation calm. In this instructional model, although students work together, each student is individually accountable. Consequently, students also can learn responsibility and accountability. Littlewood (1981) identified that some of the contributions that communicative activities can make to language learning under four headings:

1. They improve motivation;

2. They provide 'whole-task-practice';

3. They allow natural learning;

4. They can create a context which supports learning.

In this model, language acquisition is facilitated by students interacting in the target language. Each student in a group should be encouraged to feel responsible for devoting effort and participating in learning whether it is from a language or social aspect. As a result, leadership is distributed. The key in the role-play activity is that teachers not only teach language, they teach cooperation as well.

Manifestly, it is important to recognize methods that link thoughts and actions because teaching is not entirely about one or the other. Therefore, this study attempts to contribute to the knowledge base by investigating the effects of the role-play instructional method towards students' English oral communicative or speaking skills. With the results from this study, the researcher hope to add strength to the existing findings on the role-play instructional method by either supporting its efficacy or rejecting its significance. Most importantly, based on the findings of this study, suggestions and recommendations were made to help students or English as a Second Language learners solve their problems in learning English particularly in speaking skills.

1.3   Statement of the Problem

Secondary school students need an environment in which they can interact with their peers and friends in the classroom. Therefore, this research emphasises further study of the effectiveness of the role-play instructional method as compared

7

with that of the other method such as Grammar-Translation method in English lesson classrooms. Although a great number of studies have been conducted to explore how students can be affected by cooperative learning, not all English teachers use the role-play instructional model or activity or they rarely use this technique to teach and improve their students speaking skills in their classrooms.

Role-play is particularly profitable for students who may not speak the second language at home. Burke and O'Sullivan (2002) stated that students who participate in role-play activities are aroused to employ the language and improve fluency, pronunciation, and intonation.

A number of studies have examined how role-play or drama teaching has had a profitable effect on students' learning in such broad aspects as learning attitude, speaking ability, social skills, and achievement. Thus, this study aimed to investigate whether role-play activity has a positive impact on secondary school students' learning focusing on their speaking skills ability.

1.4   Research Questions

In order to teach English effectively, it is very important to use an effective learning method. This study tried to find the answers to the following three research questions concerning the effectiveness of the role-play activity, which is an activity under Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) or Communicative Teaching method. The research questions look at how the role-play instructional model affects the students' English oral performance or speaking skills. These are the research questions:

i.   How does role-play activity enhance teaching speaking skills.
ii.   How effective is role-play activity in teaching and learning oral communication in the classroom setting.
iii.   Can the role-play activity arouse students' motivation to speak English in the classroom setting.

1.5   Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is;

    i.   To find out what are the advantages of using role-play activity in teaching and learning speaking skills.

1.6   The importance of the study

Generally, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of the role-play activity on the students' English oral communications or speaking skills performance in term of fluency and accuracy for form two secondary school students learning English. Other than that the aspect of students' motivation is also investigated.

Therefore the findings of this study will tell the English teachers whether the role-play activities can be effectively used in their classrooms to teach or improve their students' oral communication or speaking skills. It also contributes towards giving English teachers guidelines on how to solve problems concerning teaching and improving their students' speaking skills ability.

1.7   Definitions of Terms

1.7.1   Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching method refers to the instructional use of interactive group learning activities. Communicative Language Teaching puts students into small groups with a specific learning task and provides them with opportunities to work together to maximize each other's learning, accomplish common goals, and share rewards for their efforts. It aims broadly to apply the theoretical perspective of the Communicative approach by making communicative competence the goal of language teaching and by acknowledging the interdependence of language and communication. (Larsen-Freeman, 2003)

1.7.2   Role-play teaching methods

The communicative language teaching is a teaching methodology, which requires learners to practice in real situations. (Liu, 2010). One typical classroom activity is

9

role-play. Role-play is one of the most creative ways to engage students in their learning. Role-play in its simplest form means asking the students to imagine that they are either themselves or another person in a particular situation.

The students are asked to behave exactly as they feel the other person would behave. As a result of engaging in this activity, the players, the class, or both will be in a better position to empathize with, understand the reactions of, and clarify the feelings, values, and attitudes of the person or the situation.
 (Holt and Kysilka, 2006).

1.7.3   Oral communicative or speaking skills performance

Oral performance means oral language proficiency levels including fluency and accuracy (Chastain, 1988).

1.8   Limitations

There are several limitations in this study. First, the data collections in this study are restricted to two classes in this school. The sample six form two students from each class in this school. Because of these restrictions, it will be difficult to generalize the results to the other classes of form two in this school. Second, the learning styles, individual differences and other environmental factors cannot be controlled.

Third, the teacher may have had little formal training in role-play activity. Therefore, there could be a chance of language inaccuracies in this study. Fourth, the total experimental period is three months of instruction for two hours per week. The timeframe of this study may be too short to help the students in enhancing their speaking skills.

Lastly, role-play is time consuming and if not planned appropriately, it may be viewed as frivolous and feel threatening to teachers and students.

1.9   Theoretical Framework

Rules of grammar and semantics are not the only things that must be learned in order to speak a second language well (Holt and Kysilka, 2006). Learners also

should possess the basic knowledge of how native speakers use the language in the context of structured interpersonal exchange in which many factors interact. This is the reason it is challenging for learners to speak a second language smoothly and properly, especially for adult learners.

1.9.1 How role-play affects social skill ability

As stated previously, role-play activity enables students to think in terms of positive inter dependence, to learn how to work better together, to help not only the individual to be rewarded but others in the class, to acknowledge another's contribution, to ask others to contribute, to keep the conversation calm, to feel responsible for participating, and to help the teacher and students cooperate (Larsen-Freeman, 2003).

1.9.2 How role-play affects students 'motivation toward learning

Role-play can engage an entire class, and it can be fun and lead the whole team to more effective learning (Holt and Kysilka, 2006). Cornett (1999) found that students develop verbal and nonverbal communication skills when they are involved in role-play activity.
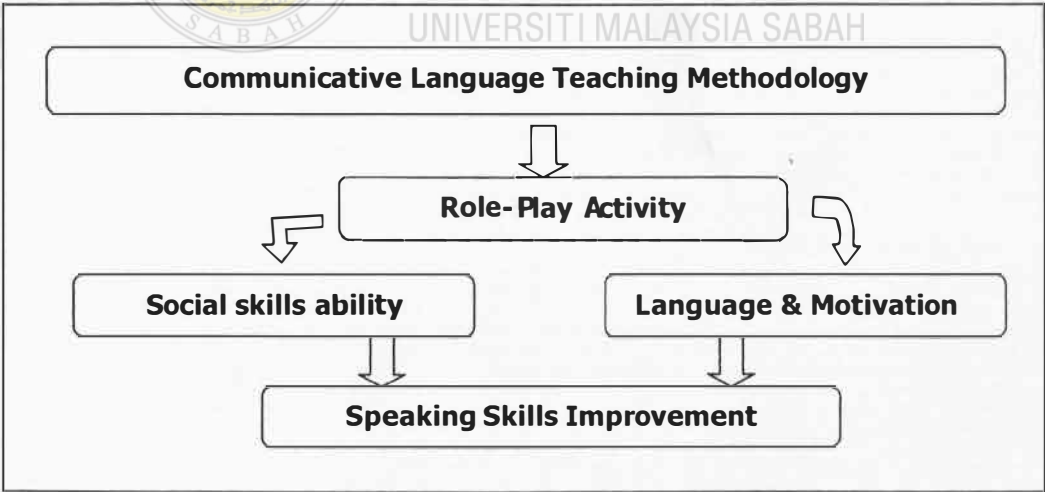

Figure 1.1 : Theoretical framework :Role-play effect on Speaking Skills

1.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, researcher has explained the research background, statement of the problem, research questions, the importance of the study and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

This chapter briefly reviews the literature relevant to the significance of implementing the role-play instructional method in the foreign language classroom. Furthermore, this chapter explores English-language instruction secondary school students and how to improve the teaching method. Indeed, it is necessary to adopt a proper teaching strategy in the classroom in order to elicit students' best learning proficiency.

2.2   The Objectives of English Language Learning in Malaysia

The Ministry of Education in Malaysia has outlined basic, but essential goals for students learning English as second language. At the end of the secondary program, students should be able to "communicate with people in different situations and daily life. Learning English will also give students "access to the wealth of information and communication technologies". The skills emphasized are reading , writing, listening and speaking. One of the objectives is competencies in each student interacts orally in English. Oral interaction is essential in an English classroom.

Oral interaction can be considered as the heart of all activities in the classroom: students use English to communicate with each other and the teacher to share their ideas while speaking, listening, reading, viewing, responding, writing, and producing. The challenge lies in having students engage in oral interaction while ensuring that the communication between students is actually done in the target language and not in their first language, which in this country Malay, Chinese, Indian and native languages. Over the years of schooling, students are expected to redirect their focus from refining their comprehension skills and acquiring vocabulary and English expressions to developing their fluency in English.