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**ROLE-PLAYING TO IMPROVE SPEAKING ABILITY AMONG STUDENTS****By****Rini Yudiati<sup>1</sup>, Anni Annisa<sup>2</sup>****<sup>1,2</sup>Universitas Wiraraja Madura****Email: <sup>1</sup>[rini.fkip@wiraraja.ac.id](mailto:rini.fkip@wiraraja.ac.id), <sup>2</sup>[anniannisa@wiraraja.ac.id](mailto:anniannisa@wiraraja.ac.id)**

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**Abstract:** *English as a foreign language in Indonesia is taught at University as MKU (Mata Kuliah Umum) public course. The implementation of English teaching at present is based on the Content Standard. Its target is to have the students reach an informational level of literacy. The objective of the study is intended to describe how the speaking ability of the third semester of teaching and science education department be improved through role-playing technique. The design of this study was classroom action research and used 2 cycles. This design will be chosen since this study dealt with the classroom setting and the study was directed to implement the teaching technique in that specific class in order to find out solutions to the classroom problems in the teaching of speaking. In conducting this research, the researcher worked collaboratively. The result are the researcher implemented 7 (seven) major steps in the procedure for the role play activities. First, the teacher decides on the teaching materials. The second step is organizing the group of the students. The third step is providing the situation and dialogue to be role played. The fourth step applied by the researcher in implementing role-playing technique is explaining the situation in the cue card as well as the dialogue. The fifth step is having the students practice the role plays. The sixth step is having students modify the situation and dialogue. The last step is having the students perform the dialogue in front of the class.*

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**INTRODUCTION**

English as a foreign language in Indonesia is taught at University as *MKU (Mata Kuliah Umum)* public course. The implementation of English teaching at present is based on the Content Standard. Its target is to have the students reach an informational level of literacy. It means that the students are expected to be able to access knowledge by using English (Depdiknas, 2006). It is in line with the idea of Wells (1987, in Alwasilah, 2006:109) that learning a language, basically, aims at developing 'the four levels of literacy, namely performative, functional, informational, and epistemic levels'. These four levels of literacy respectively refer to the ability to read and write, the ability to use the language in everyday communication, the ability to access knowledge, and the ability to transform knowledge.

Alwasilah (2006:110) proposes that the four levels of literacy are taught in stages in accordance with the levels of education: the first level of literacy is taught to elementary school pupils, the second level to junior high school students, the third level to senior high school students, and the fourth level to university students.

In fact, the English instruction in some universities does not demonstrate a satisfactory result. Many students fail to reach the goal of the English teaching. They are not able to communicate with the language either orally or in written form although they have learned English for many years (Lestari, 2000:27). Many of the learners in a speaking class are reluctant speakers. This reluctance is partly due to their prior learning experience. Many of them were educated in a large class in schools situated in noisy neighborhoods where opportunities to speak are severely limited. Others were taught in schools where speaking was simply not encouraged.

We cannot deny the fact that this failure is caused by many problems during the instructional process. The problems of English teaching seem to be of particular importance. They have become interesting topics to discuss and analyze, especially those who are directly involved with the teaching of English. However, the most important thing is that we, as the English teachers who are directly involved with the instructional activities, must try to look for the best solution to overcome the problems in order to reach the target of the teaching of English.

Based on the preliminary study will conduct at Wiraraja University on the third semester of teaching and science education department on Januari to Maret 2013, the researcher found out some problems related to the instructional activities in this school. Those problems are that: 1) the students have low speaking ability; 2) the students have low motivation in learning English; and 3) the teacher still uses monotonous and inappropriate teaching techniques.

Considering the problems faced by the teacher above, it can be said that the English teacher of Wiraraja University still meets some serious problems in teaching and learning process. The three problems- the students' low speaking ability, the students' low motivation in learning English, and the teacher's monotonous and inappropriate teaching techniques - are very close connected and correlate one another. Referring to the result of the observations, informal interview, document study, and analysis above, the researcher supposes that the above unsatisfactory proficiency of the students' speaking is not caused mainly by the students' low motivation, high anxiety, or limited vocabulary; rather, the primary cause of their poor skill is the inapt technique the teachers utilize and the inadequate "space" they provide to facilitate students' speaking.

The monotonous and inappropriate teaching technique used by the teacher might cause low motivation on the students in learning English which affect their ability in speaking. Most students are unmotivated in learning as the result of the teacher's monotonous teaching techniques, so that the students soon get bored and uninterested in learning.

when they are always exposed to the monotonous instructional activities; and therefore, they do not participate actively. This instructional process happens even though the students are not showing their interest in this kind of classroom activity. Theoretically, it is impossible for the students learning English with low motivation to have good speaking

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ability if they are inactive during the instructional process. For example, the students with low motivation will be defensive to use their English in oral communication while monotonous classroom does not stimulate them to participate in classroom interaction. In fact, whether or not the students' speaking ability improves is greatly influenced by the intensity and frequency of their participation in oral communication. So, it can be said that the root of the three problems above is the monotonous and inappropriate teaching technique used by the teacher. Hence, it needs to propose the appropriate technique to overcome the students' low speaking ability. It is the responsibility of the teacher to find out effective techniques for presenting the materials in order to stimulate the students' positive attitude toward the speaking class (Burns & Joice,1997:10)

Comparing to other techniques, role-play seems the most interesting one for the students. In role-playing technique, the students act or pretend to be someone else in the actual world situation that is brought into the classroom. Utilizing the technique, peer learning is also encouraged and sharing of responsibility between the teacher and the learner in the learning process takes place. Besides, for the shy learners, for instance, role play helps them by providing a mask where learners with difficulty in conversation are liberated.

Based on some reasons mentioned above, the researcher implemented the use of role-playing technique at the third semester of teaching and science education department. Hopefully, it will be useful to be used by the English teachers at this school or other people as one of teaching strategies among many other strategies in improving students' speaking ability.

Role-playing technique is one of the strategies to teach speaking skill to the students. Huang (2008), in her study, concludes that role play is really a worthwhile learning experience for both the students and the teacher. Not only can students have more opportunities to "act" and "interact" with their peers trying to use the English language, but also students' English speaking, listening, and understanding will improve. Role play lightens up the atmospheres and brings liveliness in the classes. Students learn to use the language in a more realistic, more practical way. Thus they can become more aware of the usefulness and practicality of English. Role play is indeed a useful teaching technique which should be experimented and applied by ESL/EFL teachers more often in the ESL/EFL classrooms.

Based on the theoretical background and the findings of some previous studies about the effectiveness of role-playing, the researcher chooses this technique to be used to improve the speaking ability of the third semester of teaching and science education department. This technique is chosen to improve their speaking competence since it provides the students with practices in using English and encourages them to make use of the language naturally.

The terms 'speaking', according to Brown (2001:267), is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs. We generally use speaking as a means of communication in daily interaction. The presence of speaker and listener is a must to build up a mutual communication in speaking activity. Thus, speaking is considered to be inseparable to something we call communication. Communication is the

way individual can show the feelings, tell the thoughts, ask questions, ask for help, argue, persuade, explain, and give order each other.

Mastering the spoken language is not merely mastering its articulation and forms. The ultimate aim of mastery of spoken language is to communicate. This means that mastery of rule of speaking and conversational skill is necessary. In other words, the students must be able to use English for either interactional or transactional purposes. Therefore, the students must be taught about the acceptable expression of language functions and formulaic expressions when opening, responding, and terminating a conversation. For this reason, the teachers of English need to use teaching techniques by which the students can be involved in the communication actively.

Considering how important a teacher should make his or her lesson classroom activity enjoyable, active, secure, and full of more exposure to language input and more choice to practice the languages, he or she needs to develop his or her teaching techniques. One of the techniques to be used in teaching the speaking skill is role-play. Role play allows students to explore their inner resources, empathize with others, and use their own experiences as scaffolds upon which credible action. As a result, students can improve their ability to produce the target language, acquire many of its nonverbal nuances, improve the ability to work cooperatively in group situations, and effectively deal with affective issues. Role play has high appeal for students because it allows them to be creative and to put themselves in another person's place for a while (Richard-Amato, 2003:214, 222).

To reach the objectives of the role-play technique, some important aspects should be considered. Those aspects are learning and teaching activities, role of instructional materials, the procedure of role-play, the media and the setting of role-play, the students' role, and the teacher's role. According to Brown (2001: 183), role-play minimally involves (a) giving a role to one or more members of a group and (b) assigning an objective or purpose that participants must accomplish. He suggests that role-play can be conducted with a single person, in pairs or in groups, with each person assigned a role to accomplish an objective.

Huang (2008) applies six major steps in the procedure for the role play activities in her classes. Those are 1) Deciding on the Teaching Materials, 2) Selecting Situations and Create Dialogs, 3) Teaching the Dialogs for Role Plays, 4) Having Students Practice the Role Plays, 5) Having Students Modify the Situations and Dialogs, and 6) Evaluating and Checking Students' Comprehension.

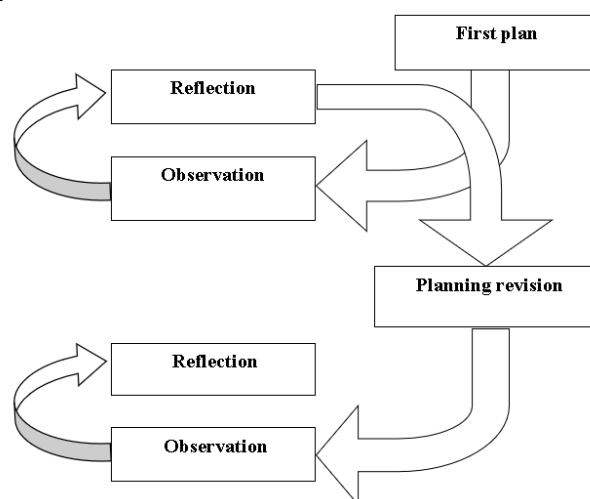
## **METHODE**

### **a. Research Design**

The design of this study was classroom action research. This design will be chosen since this study dealt with the classroom setting and the study was directed to implement the teaching technique in that specific class in order to find out solutions to the classroom problems in the teaching of speaking. In conducting this research, the researcher worked collaboratively. It is in line with the characteristics of classroom action research proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988: 22-23) who state that: 1) it is carried out by practitioner or a classroom teacher rather than outside researchers, 2)

it can be conducted collaboratively, 3) the aim of action research is changing things, and 4) action research is group activity.

Considering this idea, the researcher worked together with the collaborative teacher. Her collaborator was one of English teacher in Wiraraja University who had been teaching in this University for more than 5 years. In this study, the researcher aimed at implementing the role-playing technique to solve the problem of poor speaking ability of the third semester of teaching and science education department. The researcher implemented the action in the form of cycles that followed Kemmis and McTaggart's model (1988:11) namely, planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The visual illustration of the design of this study can be seen from **Kemmis and Mc. Taggart** bellow:



#### b. Setting and Subjects of the Study

This study will be conducted at Teaching and science education department< Wiraraja University, located on Jl. Raya Sumenep- Pamekasan Km. 5 Sumenep, East Java. It is about 5 km from the center of the city, or it takes about 10 minutes to reach this place from the center of Sumenep city by motorcycle. There is only one class in this department. There are 37 students of the third semester of 2023/2024 academic year participating in this research. The researcher chose the third semester students as the subjects of the study.

#### c. Research Procedure

In conducting the research, the researcher will follow several steps. Those are preliminary study or reconnaissance, planning the action, implementation, observation, and reflection.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Findings from Cycle 1

In this cycle researcher explain about the finding on the students' speaking performance, finding on the students' self-confidence, and reflection.

#### **Finding On the Students' Speaking Performance**

From the analysis of the students' speaking performance, it was found that they still made mistakes on some language elements being observed namely fluency, grammar,

pronunciation, and vocabulary. In terms of fluency in speaking, most students were influenced by their mother tongue. They had difficulties avoiding this since they seldom practice for several times. They made a lot of repetition in the sentences. Most of them hesitated in almost every sentences, ended sentences half-way, and then repeated them. Only several students are reached the level *very good*, which means that they hesitated at a few places and their fluency was not seriously affected. None of them could reach the *excellent* level.

No	Predicate	Total Student	Prosentage
1.	Poor	4	20%
2.	Fair	4	20%
3.	Good	10	50%
4.	Very good	2	10%
5.	Excellent	0	0%

### Finding On the Students' Self-Confidence

Based on the data obtained from observation checklist, the researcher had the data about the students' self- confidence during the instructional process. Concerning the students' self-confidence in the first cycle, there were 10 students who still hesitated in speaking and they did not express themselves at ease. seven of them showed nervousness in speaking. 3 students did not reduce the use of mother tongue. They tended to speak in bahasa Indonesia more than in English. The number of the students who hesitated to give feedback to their peers was 12 students. 17 students thought too much about form and rules of language. This condition caused hesitation for them in the use of English in oral communication.

### Reflection

The data above then were used to measure whether the implementation of role-playing technique had met the criteria of success or not. The level of the students' speaking performance in this study was grouped into five categories; *poor, fair, good, very good, and excellent*. The implementation of this technique was considered successful if 60% of the students reached all *good* level of language elements being observed: fluency, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Based on the researcher's calculation, there were 4 students who reached *poor and fair* level, 10 students reached *good* level, 2 students reached *very good* level and none of the students and *excellent* level. This means that there were only 10 students who reached at least *good* level.

Related to the students' self-confidence, the criterion of success was 60 % of the students fulfilled 5 of 7 indicators of high self-confidence students when they were involved in the instructional process as well as when they performed the conversation. The data obtained from the observation checklist show that there were only 8 students (37, 5% of all the students) who fulfilled 5 of 7 indicators used in this study, which means that this percentage did not meet the second criterion of success yet. So, it can be said that the implementation of the technique was not successful in the first cycle.

Considering the fact above, the researcher made some reflections to do in the next cycle. First, the teacher had to change the way he delivered his teaching from speaking quickly to speaking at the students' phase of understanding in order all of the stages in the instructional process could be smoothly followed by the students. Second, the teacher had

to increase his guidance in every stage in order the students really understand the material taught by the teacher. Third, the teacher had to manage the students' group; not allowing the students to choose the members of their own group. Besides, the teacher had to give more motivation in order they were not afraid in making grammatical mistakes, so they would not be reluctant and shy to use their English. Third, the researcher had to add the time for modifying the dialogue from 35 minutes to 50 minutes in the third meeting. It was because most of the students complained about the short time provided for them to modify the dialogue.

## **B. Findings from Cycle 2**

### **Findings on the Students' Speaking Performance**

From the analysis of the students' speaking performance, it was found that there was a very significant improvement of the students' speaking performance. Although some of them still made some mistakes on some language elements being observed, namely, fluency, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary, the number of those who did so had decreased. In all terms, there were 9 students who could reach *good* level, 5 students *very good* level, one student *excellent* level, and only 3 students stayed in *fair* level. 2 of them stayed in *poor* level.

These data show some improvement because in the first cycle, several students (8 students) still reached *fair* level. The same thing happened in terms of the students' pronunciation. The observation checklist show that the quality of the students' pronunciation improved significantly. 12 students could even reach above *good* level: *very good* and *excellent*.

No	Predicate	Total Student	Prosentage
1.	Poor	2	10%
2.	Fair	3	15%
3.	Good	9	45%
4.	Very good	5	25%
5.	Excellent	1	5%

### **Findings on the Students' Self-Confidence**

Compared to the first cycle, there was a significant improvement concerning the students' self-confidence. The data show that 12 students spoke without any hesitations and could express themselves at ease. 4 of them did not show nervousness in speaking. 4 students reduced the use of mother tongue. They did not tend to speak in bahasa Indonesia anymore and preferred using English in speaking class. Only 9 students (38% of the students) thought too much about form and rules of language.

### **Findings from the Students' Questionnaires**

The data were obtained through open-ended questionnaire distributed to the students at the end of cycle 2. The data obtained from the students' questionnaires show that 15 students felt happy when role-playing was implemented in speaking class. Most of them (15 students) stated that their ability in speaking had improved after learning speaking using this technique. 16 students stated that they were braver to speak using English after being taught using role-playing technique. Most of them also stated that they felt more enthusiastic to use English orally if role-playing technique was implemented. 17 students wanted that this technique could be implemented in the next speaking class.

The data above show that most of them gave positive response to the implementation of role-playing technique in speaking class for some possible reasons. They might get bored when they were always exposed to the monotonous teaching technique and this role-play was new for them. They stated that they got bored when the teacher always explained and asked them to do the task during instructional process. They also could express various expressions in different situation in learning speaking utilizing this role-play.

### Reflection

After all stages of role-playing procedures were implemented in the second cycle, the researcher and the observer collaboratively evaluated the instructional process that had been conducted in the classroom.

The researcher used the data obtained in cycle 2 to measure whether the implementation of the role-playing technique had met the criteria of success or not. Based on the calculation, there were 12 students who reached at least *good* level. The data obtained from the observation checklist show that there were 15 students (75% of all the students) who fulfilled 5 of 7 indicators used in this study.

Referring to the data above, it can be inferred that the implementation of the role-playing technique could improve the students' speaking performance as well as students' self confidence. In preliminary study, there were 2 students stayed in *poor* level, 3 students *fair* level, and 9 students *good* level. Six of them reached *very good* or even *excellent* level. After role-playing technique was implemented, their speaking performance improved significantly. The number of the students who reached *fair* level decreased from 4 students in the first cycle to 3 students in the second cycle. On the other hand, the number of the students who reached *good* level decreased from 10 students in the first cycle to 9 students in the second cycle as well as 5 students who reached *very good* level in the first cycle to 2 students in the second cycle. two of the students reached *poor* and one students *excellent* level.

This means that the students' speaking performance improved their speaking. So it can be said that the implementation of role-playing technique was successful and met the criteria of success. Since the students' speaking performance and their self-confidence for every meeting show significant improvement and at the second cycle had met the criteria of success, then the study can be stated as a successful research project, and accordingly, the action research was stopped.

### Discussion

Based on the findings of the study, it was shown that the appropriate procedure of role-playing technique gives beneficial contribution both in improving the students' speaking performance and improving students' self-confidence during the instructional process. Role-playing technique implemented in this study consists of seven steps. Those are 1) deciding on the teaching materials, 2) organizing the group of the students, 3) providing the situation and dialogue to be role played, 4) teaching the dialogue for role plays, 5) having the students practice the role plays, 6) having students modify the situation and dialogue, and 7) having the students perform the dialogue in front of the class.



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The findings of this research show that the students' skill in speaking had improved significantly from one meeting to the next meeting, from one cycle to the following cycle. This can be seen from the result of each cycle. The students' speaking performance improved from 50% of all students who could reach at least *good* level at the first cycle to 70% of all students in the second cycle. Another finding shows that the students enjoyed performing role-play because of its challenging nature. It could be seen from their performance in front of the class. The classroom atmosphere became more alive and all the students were actively involved in teaching and learning process. They laughed at other group members who made any mistakes. They seemed relaxed and excited during the performance period. This means that there is an improvement on the students' self-confidence. The findings show that the students' self-confidence also improved from 45% of all students who could fulfill 5 of 7 indicators in this study at the first cycle to 75% of all students in the second cycle. This improvement might be due to some benefits of role-play technique. Since the criteria of success are 1) 60 % of the students reach at least *good* level of speaking qualification, and 2) 60 % of the students fulfilled 5 of 7 indicators of high self-confidence, so it can be said that implementation of role-playing technique was successful and met the criteria of success.

The improvement of the students' speaking performance in this study might be due to some benefits of role-play technique and this result appeared to confirm the result of a previous studies. Furness (1976, in Huang, 2008) states that a student can enjoy and profit from a role play experience "in terms of improved communication skills, creativity, increased social awareness, independent thinking, verbalization of opinions, and development of values and appreciation of the art of drama". It is in line with the statement of Siwu (2005) that the implementation of the role-playing technique had improved the students' speaking skill. It is revealed through the improvement of the students' speaking performance and their self-confidence.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, the researcher implemented 7 (seven) major steps in the procedure for the role play activities. First, the teacher decides on the teaching materials. The second step is organizing the group of the students. The third step is providing the situation and dialogue to be role played. The fourth step applied by the researcher in implementing role-playing technique is explaining the situation in the cue card as well as the dialogue. The fifth step is having the students practice the role plays. The sixth step is having students modify the situation and dialogue. The last step is having the students perform the dialogue in front of the class.

Based on the findings of this study, the strengths, and the weaknesses of this technique, then the suggestions are made. The suggestions are directed to other English lecturers whose students have similar classroom problems, characteristics, and situations with this school, and to the future researchers.

It is suggested to other English lecturers whose students have similar classroom problems, characteristics and situations with Students' Wiraraja University that the Role-playing technique could be used as an alternative approach to teach speaking skill at

university. Therefore, the English teachers are expected to socialize this approach through teachers' forums such as in-service training, workshop or seminars.

Nevertheless, the English teachers should consider some aspects in implementing the technique. First, the English teachers should set the time as effective as possible by considering the length of time allotted in every activity. Second, the English teachers should deliver the explanation using clear voice, not too slowly and not too quickly. Third, the English teachers should use Indonesian language if the students find it hard to understand the explanation. Fourth, the English teachers should provide the students with lists of vocabulary or ask them to always bring dictionary since they still have poor vocabulary. Fifth, the English teachers should distribute high achiever students in each group that they can help their low achiever friends in their group. Sixth, the English teachers should approach and guide students when they work on their tasks. And seven, the English teachers should be patient since this technique employs a lot of time and activities at every stage.

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