

A STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ROLE-PLAY TECHNIQUE IN ENHANCING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract: *This research was conducted with the aim of investigating the effectiveness of using role-play technique to improve first-year non-English-majored students' speaking skill at Hong Duc university. To carry out this study, a quasi-experimental design was employed. Sixty-six students, divided into one experimental group and one control group, participated in the study. Role play technique was implemented with students in the experimental group while textbook-based method was used for the control group. The research data was analyzed using an independent samples test and then presented as quantitative data. The study results showed that teaching speaking skills through role-play technique could improve non-English-majored students' speaking skill. The results of post-tests of the experimental group showed a significant difference from the experimental group which means that role-playing is an effective technique to improve the students' speaking skills.*

Keywords: *Role play, speaking skill, non-English-majored students.*

1. Introduction

It is undeniable that speaking plays an important role in daily communication. When learning a language, among three other skills, speaking skill is the most frequently used by students in communication (Clarita et al., 2020). Therefore, students often use their perceived improvements in spoken language competency as a gauge for the success of an English language learning program and their own language acquisition (Togini & Jaafar, 2020). For many learners, developing their speaking proficiency is the main reason for learning English and there is a growing recognition among English language learners of the importance of enhancing their English speaking abilities (Qing, 2011). However, Handayani (2018) indicated that speaking problems arise from students' lack of practice in class and their lack of confidence. In addition, teachers' methods may also not be effective for all of their students. Since the teacher is the key to the learning process, they should use creativity while selecting instructional techniques that will help their students grasp the material better. According to Arifin (2021), in order to create a dynamic and captivating learning environment, teachers should consistently adapt their teaching methods based on the unique abilities of their students. In contrast to the goal of

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fostering an interactive learning environment, certain teachers persist in using outdated approaches that discourage students from voicing their thoughts openly (Namaziandost & Nasri, 2019). On the other hand, it is difficult for students to improve their speaking ability when learning English mainly in their textbook. The situation becomes worse when they had to meet their educational goal of communicating their thoughts in English well. Therefore, implementing an appropriate strategy and approach can develop students' speaking skills and competencies (Negara, 2021).

For non-English-majored students at Hong Duc university, English is a compulsory subject in their training curriculum. Many of them have been learning English for a long time from their elementary schools until now, but they cannot communicate in English fluently. In a study conducted by Du et al. (2024), the authors showed that a common problem that students at Hong Duc university often encounter is that it is difficult for them to find ideas to talk about the topic they are assigned in their English class. The reason given by the students is that the speaking topic is sometimes unrealistic to what they know. As a result, they have no motivation to participate in their speaking activity in their class. Therefore, it is important for teachers to motivate and encourage real communication using some teaching techniques in teaching English speaking. Using role play is one of useful techniques applied by many teachers of English in their teaching process. It is a technique for modeling how to behave with people in a hypothetical setting (Byrne, 1986), encouraging classroom interaction and boosting motivation (Ladousse, 1995). It is also proven to be one of the primary techniques to encourage interest and participation in the learning process. The role play appears to be the suitable technique for students to use their English creatively, based on the conversation in class. Its goal is to find conversation situations where students can engage in conversation, giving them a chance to practice and improve their communication skills. For these reasons, the authors are interested in examining how role-playing techniques affect speaking instruction to first-year non-English majors at Hong Duc univeristy. The research question is as follows:

Does using role-play technique have beneficial impact on first-year non-English-majored students' speaking ability at Hong Duc university?

2. Literature Review

2.1.1. Speaking skills

Chaney (1998) defined speaking as the process of making and conveying meaning in a range of contexts by using both verbal and nonverbal signals. Speaking, according to Gert and Hans (2008), is defined as speech or utterances made with the objective that the speaker's intents be understood by the listener, who then interprets the statements to determine the speaker's purposes.

Furthermore, speaking is the primary means by which children learn language, it is a daily activity for the majority of individuals, and it is the primary driver of linguistic change, according to Rebecca (1990). It also offers the primary information we need to comprehend bilingualism and linguistic interaction.

From the aforementioned definitions, it can be concluded that speaking abilities refer to the capacity to communicate ideas clearly and concisely through speech in a manner that is understandable to others. Speaking is the process of creating and conveying meaning in a range of situations by utilizing both verbal and nonverbal signals. Lack of speech prevents us from expressing what we want to say, hinders interpersonal communication, and ruins relationships. In other words, speaking is an interactive activity including the sharing of information, so successful communication involves both speaking and listening.

2.1.2. Role play

According to Brown (2021), role play is a well-liked educational practice in communicative language-teaching classes. Role play is a teaching technique where participants act out real-world situations and problems and then examine their actions with the assistance of other role players. Putri and Hariyati (2016) also states that role-playing activities are crucial in speaking instruction because they allow students to practice speaking in a variety of social contexts and in the target language. According to Aini et al. (2020), role playing is an active learning strategy used by teachers while the learning process is taking place and students are asked to act out their individual scenarios and roles at random.

2.1.3. Role play in teaching speaking

There have been myriads of studies on the employment of Role play to teach English. Krebt (2017) investigated the effectiveness of role play techniques on Iraqi EFL college students. The research used a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test evaluations. The finding revealed significant improvements in the students' speaking skills. The role play activities helped students to engage more actively in speaking, boosting their confidence and ability to use English in practical situations.

The study of Pinatih (2021) found out that role-play techniques significantly improve students' speaking skills by providing realistic, engaging scenarios so that students could enhance language fluency and confidence. It highlighted the benefits of incorporating role play in modern education, noting that it fosters active learning, critical thinking, and effective communication. The research found that students participating in role play showed marked improvements in their ability to articulate thoughts, use appropriate vocabulary, and engage in meaningful conversations, making it a valuable tool for 21st-century language education. The case study of Altun (2015) examined the impact of role-play activities on improving speaking skills in an ESL classroom. Conducted with nine undergraduate students of low English proficiency, the study utilized observation checklists and questionnaires. Results showed significant improvements in fluency, comprehension, and interactive communication. Students reported positive effects on their speaking abilities and greater confidence in using English. The author highlighted role-play as an effective, innovative approach to enhancing speaking skills in language learning environments.

These studies underline the effectiveness of role play as a technique to enhance speaking skills, making it a valuable tool in language education for students. There have been a number of studies of Role play; however, there has been limited research conducted at Hong Duc University. The researcher eagerly to delve into the effectiveness of this technique to foster students' speaking skill.

3. Methods

3.1. Research design

A quasi-experimental design including with a quantitative approach was employed to conduct this research. Regular instruction was given to both sample groups by the researcher. Role play was applied with the experimental group while the control group was taught with teacher's materials.

3.2. Participants

The simple random sampling technique by Akpan and Bassey (2015) which enables the researcher to draw a representative sample, where the relevant population characteristic is estimated more precisely was employed to select samples for the study under discussion. The following table represents the information of the participants

Table 1. Participants' characteristics

Group	Number	Age	Gender			
			Male		Female	
Control group	33	21-22	5	16,5%	28	83,5%
Experimental group	33	21-22	4	13,2%	29	86,8%

Non English majored students at Hong Duc University are required to fulfil three general English courses namely English 1, English 2 and English 3 during their first three semesters. After the accomplishment, they must pass the final exam for graduation. The course the students participated in was English 2. All students passed English 1 and their level of English after passing the first course is A1 according to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The participants were 66 first-year students majoring in Banking and Finance at Hong Duc university. There were 33 students in the experimental group and 33 students in the control group. The study was conducted from February to May 2023.

3.3. Instruments

In this study, tests were used as an instrument to collect data for this study. Part 1 of the tests required students to answer four or five questions about common topics such as their daily routines, hobbies, sports... while part 2 of the tests asked students to deal with a situation in relation to real life world. The tests were given to the students in order to evaluate a skill, intelligence, or ability. Pre-test and post-test were divided into the two separated categories and organized in the form of oral exam. The pre-test was designed to

find out the level of the students' speaking abilities before the treatment. The post-test was designed to determine the extent to which the students' speaking ability had been improved by the treatment. The data from the students' pre- and post-test results are gathered by the researchers.

3.4. Procedures

The researcher administered pre-test to both control and experimental groups. The test included two parts which lasted from 8-10 minutes. After the pre-test, the researcher used role-play technique to guide students in the experimental group to learn speaking skill based on the speaking topics in their textbooks. While the control group followed the procedure of the course without the application of role play technique. The treatment was conducted within ten weeks during their study semester. In each treatment, the researcher provided students with cards containing the situation that students need to role-play a specific topic. At the end of the semester, a post-test was delivered to students to compare the results.

3.5. Data collection and analysis

The data was collected through the score of tests, in which the researchers assessed the score by using independent samples test and paired-t test. This specific research design was employed for the purpose of ascertaining the students' grades, converting the scores into written text, and presenting the statistical analysis to the readers. By conducting a comparison between the experimental and control groups, the researchers derived the findings. By utilizing the computer application SPSS 26, the researchers obtained the results for the distribution of pre-test and post-test.

4. Findings and Discussion

The main aim of the research is to examine whether role-play technique contribute to improving students' English speaking ability or not. Both the experimental and control groups took the tests before and after the intervention.

Pre-test results

Table 1. The pre-test results of the control and experimental group

		Group Statistics				
		Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
PrePronunciation	Control group		33	5,242	,6139	,1069
	Experimental group		33	5,167	,6693	,1165
PreGrammar	Control group		33	5,727	,6135	,1068
	Experimental group		33	5,712	,6618	,1152
PreVocabulary	Control group		33	5,788	,6499	,1131
	Experimental group		33	5,803	,5145	,0896
PreFluency	Control group		33	5,409	,5653	,0984
	Experimental group		33	5,242	,5321	,0926

PreOrganisation	Control group	33	5,470	,5855	,1019
	Experimental group	33	5,424	,5019	,0874
PreAverage	Control group	33	5,527	,4453	,0775
	Experimental group	33	5,470	,4377	,0762

As can be seen in Table 1, the mean score of the control group's pre-test results was 5,527 and that of the experimental group's was 5,470. Among five criteria, knowledge of grammar and vocabulary used by students to perform their speaking were assessed better than the others. However, pronunciation and organization were two features that students needed to pay attention more as they were evaluated with the lower scores.

Table 2. Independent sample test of two groups

		Group Statistics								
		Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean				
PreAverage	Control group		33	5,527	,4453	,0775				
	Experimental group		33	5,470	,4377	,0762				
		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
PreAverage	Equal variances assumed	,241	,625	,530	64	,598	,0576	,1087	-,1596	,2747
	Equal variances not assumed			,530	63,981	,598	,0576	,1087	-,1596	,2747

Table 2 shows that both groups' pre-test results were much greater than 0,005 (Sig. 2-tailed =0,598). It can be concluded that the level of speaking ability of students in both groups were the same. In other words, there was no difference in English speaking level among students in two groups.

Post-test results

Table 3. Paired sample t-test of the control group

		Paired Samples Statistics			
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PrePronunciation	5,242	33	,6139	,1069
	PostPronunciation	5,697	33	,5294	,0922
Pair 2	PreGrammar	5,727	33	,6135	,1068
	PostGrammar	6,182	33	,6100	,1062
Pair 3	PreVocabulary	5,788	33	,6499	,1131
	PostVocabulary	6,273	33	,5603	,0975
Pair 4	PreFluency	5,409	33	,5653	,0984
	PostFluency	5,924	33	,4861	,0846
Pair 5	PreOrganisation	5,470	33	,5855	,1019
	PostOrganisation	5,955	33	,3825	,0666
Pair 6	PreAverage	5,527	33	,4453	,0775
	PostAverage	6,006	33	,3758	,0654

Based on the result of post-test in Table 3, the control group saw a rise in the average score. However, the difference of pre-and post-test results was insignificant, with only 0,479. Especially, grammar and vocabulary were still the aspects improved much better than the others. Whereas, there was no obvious improvement in the level of pronunciation, fluency and organization when performing speaking tasks.

Table 4. Paired sample t-test of the experimental group

		Paired Samples Statistics			
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PrePronunciation	5,167	33	,6693	,1165
	PostPronunciation	7,152	33	,5658	,0985
Pair 2	PreGrammar	5,712	33	,6618	,1152
	PostGrammar	6,939	33	,5556	,0967
Pair 3	PreVocabulary	5,803	33	,5145	,0896
	PostVocabulary	6,970	33	,5294	,0922
Pair 4	PreFluency	5,242	33	,5321	,0926
	PostFluency	7,258	33	,6389	,1112
Pair 5	PreOrganisation	5,424	33	,5019	,0874
	PostOrganisation	7,152	33	,6310	,1098
Pair 6	PreAverage	5,470	33	,4377	,0762
	PostAverage	7,094	33	,4301	,0749

Looking at Table 4, in contrast to post-test results of the control group, the experimental group witnessed a significant increase in the results of post-test. To be specific, the average score of post-test was 7,094 which was 1,624 points higher than the mean score of the pre-test. When analyzing each criterion, it can be clearly seen that the mean scores of pronunciation, fluency and organization significantly increased in comparison with those of pre-test.

Table 5. Independent Sample Test

		Group Statistics				
Group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
PostAverage	Control group	33	6,006	,3758	,0654	
	Experimental group	33	7,094	,4301	,0749	

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
PostAverage	Equal variances assumed	,595	,443	-10,942	64	,000	-1,0879	,0994	-1,2865	-,8893
	Equal variances not assumed			-10,942	62,869	,000	-1,0879	,0994	-1,2866	-,8892

The result shown in Table 5 indicates that there was a significant difference of the experimental and control groups' post test (sig. 2-tailed = 0.000 > 0.05). It can be inferred that implementing role-play technique has better influence on first year non-English-majored students than using traditional methods.

Discussion

The results of this study answered the research question “Does using role-play technique have beneficial impact on first-year non-English-majored students' speaking ability?”. The research findings revealed that there was a significant difference between the average score of pre-test result and post-test result of the experimental group. In addition, the post test scores of experimental group is much higher than the control group. The increase in value indicates that using role-play technique better influences students' speaking abilities.

The table and explanation make it clear that using the role play technique improved the score both before and after compared to using the standard technique. Yoniswan (2020) states that based on the outcomes of using the role play technique, teachers should incorporate it into their lessons and activities, especially when teaching speaking skills. This is because the role play technique is more efficient and effective than traditional methods, which are still frequently used in speaking instruction. The importance of speaking skills cannot be overstated, and students must commit their entire focus to mastering the art of communication in order to become proficient speakers. In order to optimize the outcomes, students were allowed to work in groups by utilizing the role play technique, which included both role play and discussion.

The results of this study, according to Aini et al. (2020), demonstrated that role play can assist students in increasing their motivation, enhancing their critical thinking, and organizing their resources. It can be considered a successful method for improving students' speaking abilities since it involves them in the learning process. Students can also improve their speaking fluency and inventiveness. Both their motivation and level of engagement in their studies increase.

It is clear from this research, after examining the means of the pre- and post-test activities, that role play has a significant impact on students' overall speaking abilities, particularly with regard to organization, pronunciation, and fluency. Through role-playing, students can freely express their emotions, grow in motivation and creativity, hone their social skills, and examine the emotions of the roles they have already played. Additionally, it demonstrates that while speaking abilities cannot be developed quickly, they may be developed in an engaging manner for students with the right guidance and experiences. This result validated the work of Krebt (2017).

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates the importance of role play technique and conventional technique in helping students become more fluent English speakers. However, it may be concluded that the role play technique, as opposed to conventional technique, has a greater effect on the speaking abilities of first-year non-English major students. The study results indicate that students' level of speaking skill in the experimental group on the post-test scores is much higher than the scores of pre-test. As a result, the role play technique can be used in the teaching-learning process of EFL students.

This study's findings suggest that teachers will be better equipped to design teaching activities that benefit students, and that future researchers will be able to conduct more thorough research and provide answers to common questions about education that arise in both the academic and real-world contexts. In order to ensure that the role-playing method is a highly effective tool for enhancing students' speaking abilities in the future, the researcher has recognized that there is still room for significant development in this study.

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