Linguistics

Role Play for Fostering Young Learner's Soft Skill in Speaking English

Lukitaning Nur Jayanti

Universitas Negeri Surabaya

a b s t r a c t

This paper is about exploring what and how soft skills can be gained from using a role-playing game while teaching a speaking skill to children. This study is conducted by analyzing and observing data result from other studies related to this research objective. The subject of this research is a young learner average eight to ten years old student of elementary school. The role play referred to in this research is a simple role-play such as acting and playing to pretend that young learners can understand without complicated components. They performed a role play without set dialogue, only with a scenario idea as they used their ability to conduct the role play. This study was conducted because of the importance of a soft skill that impacts children's ability in using language.This study found that there are better communication skills, analytical and problem-solving skills, decision-making judgment, and boost learner self-confidence in using English as a second language. Communication skills and self-confidence are developing because there is an interaction between speakers in the context of role-play scenarios. Children tend to imprint a lesson that they experience themselves, consequently making them remember their mistake when they speak English in an attempt to have a conversation in communication. Thence, this makes students learn from past mistakes and become more fluent in speaking English as a second language that does not sound stiff as a robot, unlike when they only learn from the textbook. Roleplay is fostering children's analytical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skill because role-play gave them a context of how to apply language in a real-life situation. The student will try to think in a logical order and to speak what they want, consequently stimulating their thinking ability in a good way.

I. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the most basic skills of any language and so is English, as it is also the first ability that humans develop when they were babies. However, it is at the age of eight to ten years old that children develop a language with all of the basic elements in place. Skill such as reading, listening, and speaking are evolving as they can learn the logic to understanding abstracts, symbols in beginning with words and generalize and systemize a language (Feldman, 2019). This language development also happens in English as a second language (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990).

In Indonesia, English is one of the most sought out foreign languages and has been put into standard Indonesia's education curriculum. Many families teach their young's English as their second language as a form of communication and some family who want their children to learn English for its essential needed in nowadays society. Therefore, a teacher who specializes in teaching and teaching children English, or EYL (English for the young learner) is needed. They have their method and strategy to make children understand since how children learn things is different from an adult. It is not usual when ELY teachers or some other language teachers have many different varieties of how to teach their students' language based on their

circumstances and needs as it is included as current language pedagogy (Hall, 2016). One of those varieties is teaching a young learner a language skill using role-play games in developing their second language acquisition.

When children start learning English as their second language, they need to be given the language itself before they can produce the language (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). As the teacher speaks English, a student will listen to the language first as well as repeat the sound of the language. Hence, it is always important to teach a student a speaking ability first to understand the language. However, it will not be good if the children are passive and unwilling when the learning process is conducted.

Soft skills can help children in learning English, especially their speaking skills. This is because soft skills played a positive role mediate the influence of accomplishment motivation on learning achievement (Junita, Suarman, & Kartikowati, 2018). As they are still young and most have not developed their soft skill to make a student more active in their learning process. Therefore, it would be good if the teacher also fosters these soft skills within their study program.

Besides teaching a language, role play can also be used to develop a soft skill of children. These soft skills such as communication skills, decision making, monitoring skills, being enthusiastic, and problem-solving can be taught along with learning to speak in English by using a game of role-playing. Role-play is a game of pretending one's behavior to assume a role. It could be a character, person, or a scenario that someone tries to act on. The difference between playing role-play and drama is that dramas are often based on a story, for example, Shakespeare's plays, and tend to use a scrip base dialogue (Cremin & McDonald, 2013). There are usually props, stage directions, and different characters and speakers. On the other hand, role-playing is where learners can take on the roles of other people, objects, animals, and more. It is usually conducted with an idea of the scenario or background without a set dialogue or script.

For young learners, a process of learning needs to be adjusted in their way, such as using fun and enjoyable approaches by giving them a game to horn their senses. The world of children is all about play and games as they need stimulation to learn and experience something by playing around. When play and safe, stable, nurturing relationships are missing in a children's life, toxic stress can interrupt their development of executive function as well as their prosocial behavior learning, therefore in the presence of childhood adversity, play becomes even more important (Choudary, 2013). Furthermore, play activities are the most effective learning tool for children, including facilities that can train soft skills (Yogman, et al., 2018). For this reason, a game of role-playing is also one of the ways to teach young learners English while fostering their soft skills along.

Therefore, from the explanation above, this paper explores the benefits of implementing a role play in the process of teaching and learning speaking English and how it can be used for developing a child's soft skills along the way. The subject of this research is a young learner of eight to ten years old children in elementary school.

Even though many studies have been exploring the use of role-playing as an educational strategy for the young learner (Mavlonova, Abulova, & Kodirov, 2020; Akmal, 2018; Suryani, 2015; Inawati, 2014; Liu, & Ding, 2009; Huang, & Shan, 2008), there is no specific study that focuses on the development of the student soft skill. Therefore, this study explores what and how soft skills can be gained from using a role-play game while teaching a speaking skill of children.

II. METHOD

This paper uses a qualitative research method that explores the possibility of what and how soft skills can be gained from using a role-playing game while teaching a speaking skill of children, as well as concurrently attempted to contribute a study in understanding the use of role-playing efficiently. In this case, a problem-solving discussion was applied as a method to deal with the issue. It also uses a logical explanation of role play contributing a stimulation of fostering children a soft skill that helps the student learn the English language better. It was done by cross-checking and reviewing eclectically from dissimilar sources in the related field of study as well. Moreover, the discussion and result are affirmed and evaluated by utilizing the relevant existing studies and research.

The role-play scenario in this research is referring to the simple one that children average eight to eleven years old can understand. It is a role-play game such as acting of imitating the character and behavior of someone with no complicated background and scenario.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Fostering Communication Skill

Many soft skills can be developed using role-play while learning English as a second language too. It is efficient in form of a simple game. As it is efficient the explanation is not that simple. While a student acquires a language in learning through a textbook, role-play helps them to understand the application of a language in a context. Since there are gaps between the language of L1 and L2 (intercultural differences, tongue adjustment in pronunciations, a linguistic aspect between languages, etc.), role-play helps them to apply language into a tool to communicate without being stiff. Therefore the first soft skill that can be horn in implementing role play is children's development in communication skills.

The contribution of role-playing in developing children's better communication skills is that role-play gives them a context of how to use language. Children may speak English however communicating is another thing. In the setting of formal education case, most students are rarely given a chance to learn (speaking) the use of language in the right manner to acquire communicative English. For example, children may repeat words and sing in English, yet that does not mean that English is applied to communicate.

In communicating, they tend to speak textbook-base dialogue and rarely give some variable way to state what they want to interlocutors. The language will sound like a dialogue that students speak like a robot. This is because while students learn from a textbook only without real interaction, they will not know how to express the English language using nonverbal communication.

With role-play, children can experience and express their language. For example, two children play and do roles play as a student and a teacher at the beginning of class. In this case, children will speak and act to imitate a teacher and student interaction. Here, students will apply the language and vocabularies that they learn into a conversation, even when it is not perfect or using jumbler words.

A conversation such as exchanging greetings, introductions, and other general lessons are taught and children will experience how to use this textbook base dialogue in a real conversation by applying language directly. Consequently, for children, this will make the lesson more imprinted in their minds. Thus, when they make mistakes or errors when the role play happens they will remember and try to fix and make up for their mistake in the future.

Here, children can also use nonverbal gestures to make the conversation lively. A facial expression and body gesture are important when applying the language in conversation too. Children will likely have fun expressing these things and see it as a challenge. Therefore, by making mistake and experiencing it directly they will become better at communication and conversation using English.

Developing Analytical and Problem-solving Skill

Roleplay also contributes to developing analytical thinking. There are many different kinds of children that have different ways to think and understand something, and role-play is a game that can be a strategy to improve children's way of thinking to be more logical and analytical. Roleplay provides a constructive and cooperative setting in which to deal with behavior and feelings, as well as bringing to life descriptive subjects that occur in the student's surroundings. This can be used to stimulate children's logical thinking by applying a problem-based learning strategy.

Problem-based learning is a teaching method that uses real-world problems as a vehicle to promote student learning of concepts and principles as contradicting to direct presentation of facts and concepts (Baden & Major, 2004). In role-play, the teacher only gives a student an idea or concept with no fixed dialogue. Therefore student needs to think with logic what kind of conversation can express how it will lead to the result that they want. Furthermore, children will develop analytical thinking earlier because unconsciously they will think about how to get what they want in the conversation by evaluating background information in a concept scenario.

For instance, one child is given a role of a tourist who lost and did not know the direction to go to a museum and one is an unknown passerby. In this scenario, the first child will think of how to get information from the other child by asking some questions. However, the first child needs to form a logical conversation that suits the background scenario. First, they will need to ask the other child's attention politely before asking how to get into the museum. The other child also needs to form an ordered direction of how to go to a museum, such as which way to go, what or when the other need to turn or go straight, and so on. Moreover, students also need to form a correct sentence by

being mindful of the grammar and vocabularies structure in the conversation.

A teacher can also give a student a scenario that has a problem with it. Such as the scenario of finding a missing pet or pretending to be police looking for a hiding thief by looking for clues at the setting and some additional information that the student can get from the surrounding. This problematic scenario that children need to solve is an excellent way to foster children's Analytical and problem-solving skills.

Horn Children's Decision–making Skills

Another soft skill that can be fostered by using role-play games is decision-making skill in children's development. The reason this happens is that allows them to act as an independent individual. As children, their actions are usually limited by an adult supervisor. However, in role-play, it was not a problem as they can act and do something as long as they stay in their role character idea.

Roleplay is a method for learners to enhance insight into a variety of situations by engaging in a variety of activities based on real-life experiences. And the teacher can implement a problem that needs an act of problem-solving from children's role character.

Give an example from the previous scenario where children act as police who looking for a thief. In this scenario, the children who act as police will need to decide how to catch a hiding thief in the good, most peaceful way possible. And on the other hand, the student who played as a thief will need to decide whether to keep hiding in the same place or move to the safest place without getting caught by the police. Therefore by giving children stimulation and experience they will develop an excellent judgment of decision making based on the situation context.

Building a Confidence in Children

Children tend to be attached and motivated by a game of role-playing. This is because it challenges their creativity, ability, and analytical thinking skills as stated above. Therefore it makes them speak more logically and confidently in English as a second language.

A study was conducted with the theme of effective techniques to enhance speaking in less confident young learners when acquiring a second language (Reis, 2021). The result of the study revealed that role-playing could be a very positive tool to use in developing several characteristics in children. A study found that children were developing self-confidence, self-esteem, participation, interaction, initiative, creativity, socialization skill at the end.

Therefore, in the case of young learners with low self-confidence, a game of role-playing helps them to build confidence in oral communication ability as they become more confident to initiate conversations using English as a second language.

Moreover, using a game of role-play help young learner bring the gap between academic learning and real-life situations. Roleplay is a method for learners to enhance insight into a variety of situations by engaging in a variety of activities based on real-life experiences. Hence, this strategy can reach students in a more personal way. It was feasible to read the students' traits and apply them in a way that helped them overcome their anxieties and insecurities with this level of awareness.

Furthermore, using role-play student learns how to speak English more fluently by practicing their communication skill in role-play dialogue. A barrier such as a stiff tongue can be overcome by practicing oral and not by reading a textbook only. Overcoming this barrier means that students can be proud of their achievement, thus they will feel more confident in speaking English.

Therefore student tends to be more enthusiastic when learning English using a game of role-playing because it boosts their confidence in speaking ability.

IV. CONCLUSION

Roleplay bridges the gap between academic learning and real-life situations. Roleplay is a method for learners to enhance insight into a variety of situations by engaging in a variety of activities based on real-life experiences. Not only can it be for learning a language in oral speaking, but role play also is used to develop a soft skill in a young learner.

From what we have been exploring above, this study concludes that soft skills that can be gained from using a role-playing game while teaching a speaking skill of children are better communication skills, analytical and problem-solving skills, decision-making judgment, and boosting self-confidence. Communication skills and self-confidence are developing because there is an interaction between speakers in the context of role-play scenarios. Children tend to imprint a lesson

that they experience themselves, consequently making them remember their mistake when they speak English in an attempt to have a conversation in communication. Thence this makes students learn from past mistakes and become more fluent in speaking English as a second language that does not sound stiff as a robot, unlike when they only learn from the textbook. When children are better at what they do they tend to be proud therefore it will boost their self-esteem and confidence in speaking English.

Roleplay also fosters children's analytical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skill because role-play gave them a context of how to apply language in a real-life situation, even when it just playing pretend. The student will try to think in logical order how to speak what they want. Moreover, they can also gather information from nonverbal gestures, background, and conversations from interlocutors, consequently stimulating their thinking ability in a good way.

However, seeing this limited scope of study that explores what and how soft skills can be gained from using a role-play game while teaching a speaking skill of children, further research outside this scope or more specific detail focus aspect of soft skill will be welcomed.

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