
Role Play to Improve Students' Participation in Learning English: A Report from A High School in East Java

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Abstract

The study aims to examine to what extent a role-play method can increase students' participation in English learning. Classroom Action Research (CAR) is conducted to achieve the purpose. Research data are collected through observation to look at students' participation and questionnaires that are distributed throughout 3 cycles of role-play implementation. The study shows that the role-play method can be enacted to improve students' participation in learning English. There is also an increase in students' participation during the three cycles of role-play enactment which proves that this method has a prominent potential in enhancing students' English learning engagement.

INTRODUCTION

In an attempt to provide active learning and facilitate students' participation in learning activities, this study aims to explore the use of role-play methods to increase such learning participation in an English subject at the high school level. O'Brien (2007) defines participation as being engaged in the learning process and showing respect to the teacher and other students in the class. Role-play is chosen to mediate students' participation as it gives a role to one or more members of a group and assigns an objective that needs to be achieved by the learners (Brown, 2001). With this condition, each member group has to accomplish a certain learning purpose and thus gives students the responsibility to keep participating in the learning processes.

According to the preliminary observation at a private high school in East Java, the observation result demonstrates that students' English learning participation was still relatively low. The teacher actually had attempted several ways that required students to participate in a discussion, for instance, but most of them showed no excitement to engage in the discussion. Students tended to be more passive, even though some of them tried to be active in responding to the teacher's prompts for participation.

Based on the observation, the study investigates how role-play helps learners to have increased English learning participation. Basma (2014), Mudarin (2003), Khudriyah (2010), Rahayu (2017) demonstrated how role-play can help increase students' participation in English learning at diverse level of schooling particularly to hone students' speaking skills. This encourages the researcher to carry out the research to see to what extent does role-play enhance English learners' participation in high school level.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study applied the principles of Classroom Action Research (CAR). CAR is a type of classroom research that teachers do to solve pedagogical and learning problems according to context-specific problems (Wallace, 1998). Lewin's (1964) model of Action Research is adopted which consists of three cycles of preliminary study, planning of the action, implementing the action, observing, and reflecting. This research is carried out at a private high school in East Java Province. The data is collected through observation throughout the planning, acting, observing, and reflecting in every cycle and also by distributing questionnaires to investigate to what extent students' participation increases after the enactment of role-play in English learning. The questionnaire items are designed to gain students' responses using the criteria of

Strongly agree	= 4
Agree	= 3
Disagree	= 2
Strongly disagree	= 1

The responses are then tabulated and then the researcher calculates the percentage of the strength of the response by using Sudijono's (2008) formula:

$$P = \frac{\text{total of agree and strongly agree responses}}{\text{total of ideal scores}} \times 100\%$$

Criterion of interpretation score is adopted from Ridwan (2006):

0% - 25%	= very low
26%-50%	= low
51%-75%	= strong
76%-100%	= very strong

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Pre-Observation Findings

The pre-observation was done to observe the process of teaching-learning in English learning before enacting the proposed teaching method. The pre-observation showed that the majority of students still hesitated to participate in English learning. Even though most of them looked more passive, several others tried their best to be able to engage in the discussion sessions facilitated by the English teacher. Students' unconfidence was visible to practice their English skills, particularly speaking when they need to present a group discussion result or to take part in discussions.

Findings of the First Cycle

a. Planning

In this phase, the researcher designed a plan for action based on the issues discovered during the pre-observation phase. The author then attempted to structure a lesson plan and prepared an observation checklist to monitor students' performance during the teaching-learning activities.

b. Acting

In this phase, the researcher asked the teacher to enact the lesson plan. The teacher then facilitated the scripted role-play. The enactment of the lesson plan was divided into several steps, namely vocabulary building, material explanation, pronunciation drills, and group work to perform the scripted role-play prepared at the initial stage. Students were then given space to practice the role-play and memorize the script while the teacher went around the class and gave directions and demonstrated examples of how to actually enact the role-play to the groups. The teacher also acted as a language feedback constructor after each group's performance. Towards the end of the phase, the teacher gave general conclusions about the materials they discussed in the role-play.

c. Observing

In this phase, the observer noted all activities during the learning process. The focus was on students' participation in performing the second assignment of making their own role-play script.

According to the observation, some of the students had not shown interest in the teacher's explanation and refused to practice with their group members. Even so, some of the students seemed enthusiastic when they perform the role-play. Besides, after the pronunciation drills, they demonstrated a slight increase in confidence to speak in English and slowly showed less hesitance in participation during script-making and role-play performing.

d. Reflecting

The reflecting phase enabled the researcher and the teacher to discuss and look back to see how the role-play method could be used to increase students' learning participation. There was a consensus achieved that role-play held the potential to enhance students' level of engagement in the learning process since it provided them to cultivate their creativity in making a script and learning how to perform in English. They showed a learning authority because they felt that they had a certain amount of contribution to achieve their groups' learning goals.

Findings of the Second Cycle

a. Planning

Considering students' limited speaking in the last phase, the teacher as the collaborator rearrange the lesson plan with several modifications. The scripted role-play in the

previous phase was equipped with visual cues and information. Students were expected to engage more in the learning discussions. The researcher, meanwhile, prepared the observation sheet to take note of relevant findings of the observation to be done in the second cycle. Besides, the questionnaires are prepared to be distributed to collect the students' responses on the learning activities they underwent together during the CAR.

- b. Acting
- c. In this phase, the students were asked to tell their feeling on preparing and performing a role-play. During this phase, the teacher aided students with visual properties to stimulate students' interest. The teacher then divided role cards to each group and the students needed to make a script from the visual prompts given. As usual, after each group's performance, the teacher gave constructive feedback for future performance betterment.

- d. Observing

In this phase, the observer noted all learning happenings. Students' responses and activities were recorded in written form. The observation showed that students demonstrated an increased participation level. The visual aids also made students more eager to listen to the teacher's materials explanation. The pronunciation drill was also beneficial in preparing students' verbal role-play performance, they seemed to be even more used to performing in front of the class.

- e. Reflecting

The use of visual prompts proved to be an appropriate learning facility for students to learn to perform the role-play in the second stage. Most of the students showed interest in taking part in the learning discourses and this made the teacher excited. The questionnaire result also showed an improvement in students' English learning participation throughout the two cycles conducted.

Findings of the Third Cycle

- a. Planning

The result of the previous reflection showed that pictures played an important role in increasing learners' eagerness to at least demonstrate a willingness to listen to the teacher's explanation, hence in this phase, the teacher made use of multimodal text as prompts. One role-play sample video was taken to set an example of how a role-play performance needed to be enacted. This also involved the teacher's pedagogical skills to make visible, learning objectives students needed to fulfill besides vocabulary, pronunciation, and speaking fluency. The researcher also prepared another questionnaire to be distributed to the students at the end of the cycle.

- b. Acting

In this session, the teacher explained what it took for a well-done performance was. A good role-play performance involved not only vocabulary, pronunciation, and speaking fluency, but also intonation, gestures, and facial expressions. In this phase, students were given more time to prepare and practice the performance based on the multimodal text presented at the initial of the phase. The teacher also asked the better English performers to provide assistance for their peers who needed support in English.

- c. Observing

In this phase, the observer noted all learning happenings. Students' responses and activities were recorded in written form. The observation showed that students demonstrated an increased participation level. The multimodal aids provided a threshold for students to achieve so that they had the illustration towards their learning goals. The pronunciation drill was there in the video so that the teacher did not have to allocate more time to pronunciation drills. The sample performance in the video also provided

students with the way toward the learning goals. Besides, students also showed more interest in preparing their performance in front of the class.

d. Reflecting

The use of multimodal prompts proved to be an appropriate learning medium for students to learn to perform the role-play in the last stage. Most of the students showed interest in taking part in the learning discourses and this made the teacher more joyous. The questionnaire result also showed a rise in students' English learning participation throughout the three cycles conducted.

The Result of the Questionnaire

Based on the questionnaire that was given to the students after accomplishing the third cycle, it was gained the students' response toward the learning process using role play technique in speaking.

Indicator	Statement Value	Percentage	Conclusion
Students' interest toward the material by using role play technique	4	50.25 %	Positive
	3	42.23 %	
	2	4.54 %	
	1	2.96 %	

Table 1. Questionnaire result

The calculation of students' responses to the questionnaire showed that students' participation was improved after the implementation of the three cycles in the CAR conducted. Students also found the role-play implementation a good thing for them because they can learn how to actually speak and get involved in a conversation. In addition, students showed that they found script-making a little bit confusing because they had to check the dictionary in order to make sure their conversation script had been according to the natural English communicative uses.

The Interpretation of the Observation for the Students

According to the observations conducted, students' participation increased gradually throughout the cycles of CAR. Not only did students better in pronunciation and build a diverse vocabulary, they could also learn how to demonstrate the right intonation, and appropriate facial expressions, and made use of gestures to help clarify their performance.

CONCLUSION

The research findings in this context provide a space for reflecting on how role-play can be done to help increase students' participation. It does not mean that role-play will pop as the messiah that solves all students' low participation issues. The teacher and researcher's collaboration in all the phases of the cycles determines how the learning can be facilitated through role-plays and what actions the teacher needs to take to maximize the scaffolding toward the communicative goal set in the initial phase of the lesson-planning. This then opens up more spacious space for further research to examine the why and how of the role-play enactment to increase not only students' participation but also learning autonomy.

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