

Thai High School Students' Reflections on Role-Play Activity in Thai EFL Speaking Class

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Abstracts

The objective of this research was to examine the use of role play in the context of English speaking activities. Mathayomsuksa 4 students took part in this study, which included 75 of them. There were a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview used in this study as the research instruments. The data was examined and interpreted using the mean (x), and standard deviation (SD.) as well as content analysis from the interview interpretation. Using surveys and interviews, the researchers discovered that role-playing activity can benefit participants in terms of English speaking skills, vocabulary development. They also discovered that it can increase confidence and provide an opportunity to practice in everyday situations. The participants also expressed favorable feeling regarding the use of role play in the context of English speaking classes.

Keywords: Thai High School Students' Reflections; Role-Play Activity, Thai EFL Speaking Class

Introduction

Role-playing is a classroom teaching style that encourages students to actively participate in the learning process in a context related to real-life situations, thereby eliminating shyness and stress (Tompkins, 2001 : 4). Wilkins' research and theories resulted in empirical findings that confirmed the effectiveness of role-play in energizing the learning and teaching environment, sparking the learners' interest, and increasing the impressiveness of language acquisition (Feng Liu & Yun Ding, 2009 : 45). Furthermore, role-play benefits language learning from four perspectives: motivation enhancement, whole-task practice, natural learning, and creativity (Littlewood, 1991 : 6).

According to Kowalska (1991 : 63), role-play improves learners' speaking fluency and fosters the development of their imagination because the roles require learners to think creatively, and the ability to think creatively may be a useful skill in the future. It also emphasizes meaning communication over proper language usage among students. As a result, by allowing students to role-play, teachers can help students improve their public speaking skills in a variety of social situations. It means that students are put in situations where they must use socially appropriate speech rather than the curriculum-required language (Porter-Ladousse, 1987 : 5). Another advantage of role-playing is that it allows students to put themselves in the shoes of others. This could assist shy students in overcoming their fear of speaking in front of a group. Students who are hesitant to talk about their experiences or express themselves are frequently afraid to do so, but they believe that because they are playing a

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different character in the role-play, there is no threat to their own personality (Porter-Ladousse, 1987 : 5). Role-play in foreign language lessons creates an exciting environment in which students can have fun while also participating in language creation .

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According to Al-Senaidi (2009 : 11), role play is an effective strategy for improving learners' speaking competence because learners receive feedback on their performance at each activity and work on it to ensure improvement, demonstrating that learners' self-esteem plays a role in their success. Moreover, several studies (Astuti, 2017 : 29-32 ; Bojeeswari, 2013 : 65 ; Krebt 2017 : 863 ; Nguyen & Do 2017 : 62 ; Naksevee & Sinwongsuwat, 2014 : 80-91.; Paradedwari, 2015 : 34) have found that role play has several benefits, including a positive attitude and motivation, which influence behavior. Furthermore, Gibson, Ivanovich, and Donnely (1985:66) highlighted that perception, which relates to stimulus receiving, organizing, and interpreting the organized stimulus, is one of the factors that influence attitude.

Many studies have revealed that students have a positive attitude toward role play, which plays a significant role in their speaking performance, according to Elyildirim and Ashton (2006 : 2-11). Thus, most teachers realized that when their students' attitudes were positive and their motivation was high, their students' learning potential increased. Furthermore, Saetan (1991 : 34) asserted that when students are less anxious, they learn faster and acquire language more effectively. However, if students have a negative attitude toward learning, it can lead to learning difficulties (Aik & Tway, 2006 : 28-32). Therefore, this research primarily aims to investigate the reflections of students on role-play activities used in EFL speaking classes.

Research Objectives

This study aims to examine the use of role play in the context of English speaking activities.

Research Methodology

Sample

Seventy-five tenth-grade students studying in a Thai public school during the first semester of the academic year 2021 were chosen from the whole population. These 75 participants were chosen using a simple random sampling method.

Research Instrument

The open-ended questionnaire was divided into two main parts. The first part of the questionnaire was to ask the participants' attitudes towards the use of role play in speaking classes. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of two open-ended questions for participants' comments on the use of role-playing activities in speaking classes. Semi structure interview was used in this study.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using percentage, Mean, and Standard Deviations (S.D.).

Results

No.	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1.	Role-playing activities allow me to have more opportunities to practice speaking English.	4.52	0.644	Strongly agree
2.	I believe that I can apply the role-playing scenarios to communicate in my daily life.	4.27	0.684	Strongly agree
3.	I think role-playing activities help me to understand the situation in the conversation.	4.27	0.600	Strongly agree
4.	I think role-playing activities assist me in improving English vocabulary.	4.21	0.684	Strongly agree
5.	Learning speaking English through role play activities is really great.	4.21	0.643	Strongly agree
6.	Role-playing activities encourage me to work both independently and in groups.	4.20	0.697	Strongly agree
7.	I think that role-playing activities help me improve my English pronunciation.	4.16	0.736	Agree
8.	I enjoy role-playing activities because they allow me to show my expression in speaking English	4.09	0.791	Agree
9.	I think role-playing activities help me improve my English intonation.	4.07	0.759	Agree
10.	I think role-playing activities help me in improving English grammar.	4.07	0.684	Agree
11.	In my opinion, role play activities make reading comprehension more interesting and appealing.	4.05	0.804	Agree
12	Role-playing activities foster a positive and active environment in the classroom.	4.04	0.796	Agree

13	I enjoy speaking English in role-playing situations.	4.01	0.726	Agree
Average		4.166	0.672	Agree

According to the table1, the results revealed that the participants though that role-playing activities allow them to have more opportunities to practice speaking English (\bar{x} =4.52, S.D.= 0.644) at a high level. The results also revealed that the use of role play , helps them to be able to understand the situation in the conversation” (\bar{x} =4.27, S.D.= 0.600). Furthermore, it was found that role-playing activities assist in improving English vocabulary (\bar{x} =4.21, S.D.= 0.684).Lastly, the participants reported that the using a role-play encourage them to work both independently and in groups. (\bar{x} =3.53, S.D.=0.86) . Surprisingly these findings revealed that participants have a positive perception toward role play activity, as indicated by the mean score of each statement in the range of agree and strongly agree. Aside from that, the average mean score of all statements is 4.136, with a standard deviation of 0.675, falling within the interpretation range of agree, confirming that the participants' perception of role play activities is favorable.

In addition, The participants show that role play can stimulate positive attitudes and motivation to learn English or practice speaking skill. the following are some examples of additional opinions expressed by participants.

Students 14, 16, 22: “Great activities”

Students 18: “Role play activities make me feel like to speak English in daily life”

Student 23: “It is good to practice speaking so that we can speak more fluently”

Student 44: “It is very good and enjoyable”

Student 32: “I wish there were more role-playing activities; it would be a lot of fun.”

Discussion

According to the findings, participants perceived role play to be beneficial in three ways, which are as follows:

1.Enhancing students' ability to develop language competence

Participants agreed that role-play activities give them more opportunities to practice speaking English, improve their English vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, intonation, and understanding of the situation in the conversation (statements 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 14). In addition to that, participant 25 stated, "My English proficiency is quite low, so I was not at ease during the role play, but it did help me understand the situation and vocabulary better," and participant 39 added, "These activities help me pronounce some words more clearly." These findings indicated that they saw role play activity as a useful tool in assisting them to develop their language competency.

Furthermore, the findings of this study are consistent with Rahayu's (2019) results that role play can improve students' ability to build language competence, as well as Naksevee and Sinwongsuwat's (2014: 80-91.) study, which investigated the impact of using non-scripted role-play and discovered that role-play can improve conversation skills in both high- and low-proficiency students. Moreover, Krebt (2017:863) revealed that students who are taught speaking using a role-play technique significantly improve their speaking ability when compared to students who are taught speaking in a traditional manner. Not only in English, but role-play has been shown to be an effective tool for improving other languages' proficiency, such as Arabic (Mat et al.,2019: 334-346)

2. Boosting students' motivation and attitude

As shown in the results, participants agreed with statements 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 12, 13, 15, indicating a positive attitude and motivation to learn to speak English through role-play. Statement 4 "Role-playing activities inspire me to study English more than before," as well as additional opinions from participant 18 "Role play activities make me feel like to speak English in daily life", participant 44 "It is very good and enjoyable," and participant 48 "I wish there were more role-playing activities in the classroom," are some examples to support this discussion.

Additionally, the findings of this study are in line with previous studies conducted by Astuti (2017: 29-32.), Nguyen and Do (2017:62), and Rahayu (2019:64), which concluded that role-play activity promotes a positive attitude and increases students' motivation to learn a language. Furthermore, it is consistent with the findings of Bojeeswari (2013:67), who investigated the effects of role-playing activities on students' attitudes and motivation to speak and interact in the ESL classroom and revealed that students perceived role-playing activities to improve their speaking ability and interaction in class, which had a significant impact on motivating students to speak and interact.

3. Increasing students' confidence in speaking English and enthusiasm to learn

78.5 percent of participants agreed with statement 6 "Role-playing activities boost my confidence in speaking English." In addition to that, the mean of the responses is 3.96, with a standard deviation of 0.725 which fallen in the interpretation range of agree, as well as some examples of participants' opinions such as participant 40 "It provided me with more opportunities and increased my confidence in speaking English," participant 49 "Role-playing activities make me feel more confident in acting in the role that I was assigned, and make studying more enjoyable," indicating that they agreed that role play activity made them feel more confident to speak English.

These results are supported with Lara and Diaz's (2019: 71-86.) study of seventh-grade students' willingness to speak English through scripted role-play. The findings indicated that students were willing to participate in speaking activities, which linked to students' perceptions on role-play activity.

Research suggestion

Future studies could be aware of the factors that influence students' perceptions. Another recommendation is to use more instruments, such as questionnaires, interviews, observations, and so on, to investigate students' perceptions. This could provide researchers with in-depth data analysis in order to gather more information to support pedagogical language teaching in speaking. Finally, based on the findings, teachers are recommended to consider using role-playing activities combined with other teaching techniques in language classrooms to improve students' competence, attitude, and motivation as well as boost their confidence in speaking and interacting in English.

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