Analysis on the Implementation of Role-playing in English for Tourism Services

Milawaty[1]
milawaty@polije.ac.id[1]

Affiliation: Language, Communication, and Tourism Department
Politeknik Negeri Jember[1]

Abstract

Communicating in English is crucial for tourism services, considering that the tourists who visit tourism destinations are not only originated from the country (domestic tourists), but also from the overseas (foreign tourists). For this reason, learning English for tourism services needs to be conducted especially by the students of Tourism Destination Study Program to improve their English speaking skill. To provide a maximum result in improving the students' English speaking skill, role-playing is an alternative activity to be conducted in the classroom. Therefore, the author implemented the role-playing activities for a period of time. To investigate how well the implementation went, an analysis was conducted. Unfortunately, from the analysis, it was realized that the implementation of role-playing still showed non-optimal results. By employing SWOT analysis, it could be concluded that the implementation of role-playing had some strengths, including the high student participation, the improvement of English communication skill, a deeper material comprehension through simulation, as well as the enrichment of English vocabulary. However, some weaknesses were also found, including the difficulty of the students in memorizing all the text, the grammatical errors, the pronunciation mistakes and the lack of fluency due to environmental factor. It was added with some threats preventing the optimal implementation, such as the lack of determination in conducting the activity in the class, the students' low motivation, the unprepared performance, as well as the lack of time to practice. Yet, role-playing still had the opportunity to be well implemented in English for tourism services since it provides a fun and interesting way of learning. Hence, those obstacles in implementing role-playing shall be overcome to increase the students' English speaking skill in the future.

Keywords: English speaking skill, role-playing, tourism destination, tourism services

Introduction

Mastering English skills is crucial and becomes one of the main requirements for students today (Rachman, 2021; Arifin, 2021). The increasingly globalized world due to the acceleration of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT/ IPTEK) makes students as younger generation have to adapt and adjust to the demand of a wider and borderless human connection. This demand gives no exception for the students from the Tourism Destination Study Program, of which as they graduate, their jobs will bring them to face and build business connections with various kinds of tourists, both domestic and international ones. Hence, the students of Tourism Destination Study

Program must have a good English speaking skill to be able to communicate orally in English well to establish their job career.

In general, there are four skills involved in learning English, including listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Among those four skills, Ur (1996 in Krisdiana et al, 2018) emphasizes that speaking skill becomes the most important one. Speaking refers the use of language to communicate with other (Fulcher, 2003, as cited in Laksana, 2016). According to Bailey (2000, as cited in Laksana, 2016), speaking is a process of interaction where speakers intend to build meaning through producing, receiving and processing information. In other words, it is a skill to use a language appropriately to express someone's idea, opinions, or feelings in order to give or get information and knowledge from other people who do communication. Thus, by mastering speaking skill, people can carry out conversations with others, convey the ideas and exchange the required information better.

In speaking, there are some aspects that must be fulfilled by the learners. It can be used as a measurement whether their communication/ speech is good or not. Those aspects include fluency, comprehension, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. According to Brown (2001: 406-407), there are five aspects in speaking skill including fluency, comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Fluency refers to someone's ability to speak the language smoothly and easily without any trouble such as thinking the word or being confused with the idea. Comprehension is related to a student's competence to comprehend all of the speakers say to them. Grammar refers to the way in organizing words into correct sentences. Vocabulary is about choosing words to be appropriately used in delivering messages based on the context of speaking. Pronunciation refers to the proper way in speaking the words of the language, making their speech to be understandable and the messages well conveyed.

Improving students' speaking skill means improving the aspects contained. In order to improve the aspects, speaking activities shall be conducted in the class. One type of speaking activities that can be conducted is role-playing. Role play is a popular activity conducted in educational institutions, especially in language classes. In doing a role play, students have to practice and try to carry out simulation or take the role of completely different character. They shall realize and express the thoughts and feelings of the played character as it is theirs. Role play is an excellent way to stimulate real communication that is relevant to the experiences outside the classroom. Moreover, role play can be used to encourage oral fluency or to train the students for specific situation (Laksana, 2016).

By looking at the positivity of role-playing in improving students' speaking skill, the author in writing the Student Workbook (BKPM) of 'English for Services' course in the Tourism Destination Program of Politeknik Negeri Jember selected role-playing as one of the learning methods that should be implemented in the class, especially in carrying speaking activities. It was arranged to be conducted in the 4th until 10th week of the practice class meetings. This arrangement was based on the importance of the topics delivered in the targeted weeks. During the 4th-10th week, the materials given in the class covered Travel Services, Hotel & Restaurant Services, as well as Tour Guiding. Those materials were significant for tourism service activities, thus it needed a high participation from the students to make them understand the

materials comprehensively. Therefore, learning method such role-playing was applied and expected to train their speaking skill as well as improve it to a better level.

However, the intended implementation was not without any obstacles that made the execution not run as expected in the class. Hence, this study was aimed to examine the implementation of role-playing conducted in English class by the students of 3rd semester in the Tourism Destination Study Program, Politeknik Negeri Jember. As they had their importance in mastering English speaking skill for tourism services, observing this implementation was necessary. Through this study, it was expected that the significance of role-playing as a learning method in the class could be indicated and any change or improvement made could be identified. This study became the initial step in arranging more interactive learning methods for students to master English skills, thus increasing their interest as well as competency in English.

Research Method

This study was a qualitative-descriptive type of study with observational design. Morris (1973, as cited in Hasana, 2016) defines observation as the activity of recording a sign/ attitude with the help of instruments and recording it for scientific or other purposes. To gather the data, the author conducted an observation to realize the speaking activity practiced by the students through role-playing. The observation was conducted during the learning process. The focus of observation covered the accuracy (grammar, words' selection) and fluency (pronunciation, the delivering) of the students in using English.

The observation was supported by documentation as the data collection technique. The data was collected through documentation in the form of video and photos taken during the implementation of role-playing by the students. The population of this study was the students of 3rd semester in the Tourism Destination Study Program, Politeknik Negeri Jember, with a total of 38 students. The sampling method used was total sampling, of which all the population become the samples. Thus, all the students were selected as the samples of this study. This sampling method was chosen to obtain a comprehensive data and results.

The collected data then was examined through the SWOT analysis. SWOT analysis refered to the analysis of internal and external factors into strategic steps in optimizing the work of an organization. In the analysis of internal and external factors, the aspects that became strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of an organization were determined. In this way, various possible alternative strategies could be determined (Rangkuti, 2013, as cited in Fadjarajani et al, 2021). The SWOT analysis was conducted in this study to evaluate the implementation of role-playing, whether it brought more advantages or disadvantages, as well as to determine the next step in improving the quality of students' English speaking skill in the Tourism Destination Study Program.

Results and Discussion

The implementation of role-playing for tourism services

The implementation of role-playing for tourism services was conducted in the Tourism Destination Study Program for the students of 3rd semester. The main reason why they were chosen was due to the fact that they hgad a course called as Bahasa Inggris untuk Pelayanan Jasa (English for Services). In the Student Workbook of the course, role-playing was selected as one of the methods in learning English for tourism services. Thus, the method was applied and practiced in the class.

Based on the BKPM, role-playing was implemented in the practicum class from the 4th until 10th week. The implementation of role-playing in those weeks was important since all the materials in the 4th-10th week were significant for tourism services, such as Travel Services, Hotel and Restaurant Services as well as Tour Guiding. All of those materials required a good communication skill in its practice, as the tourists would start their traveling by booking their travel tickets, then looking for accommodation by booking hotel for staying, then having some breakfast/lunch/dinner in restaurants and enjoying their traveling to the tourism destinations assisted by a tour guide. Considering the important of the three materials for tourism services, implementing role-playing was valued as crucial in helping the students to improve their English communication skill through simulation. As stated by Hattings (1993:165), based on his observation in the class, role-playing was supposed to be an ideal activity for the students to use English in a creative way and gave them an opportunity to practice and develop their communication skill.

Figure 1. The role-playing simulation

In travel services, the students were provided with two kinds of speaking texts in the Student Workbook. Those were simple conversations between two people, the employee of tourism travel agent and a customer, respectively. The students practiced it in partner and performed it in front of the class. What expected to be obtained by the students through this initial role play was the attitude that must be shown when dealing with customers, the awareness on some customers that had to undergo a special treatment in travel services and the things that had to be avoided in giving travel services. During the role-playing performance, they were allowed to do any text improvement and other supporting acts that made them more comfortable in delivering their roles or characters.

Meanwhile, in the implementation of role-playing on tour guiding, it was compulsory for the students to make their own conversation (script) during the tourism activity. It was for the reason that they have to put their own sense on the text they wanted to deliver and to improve their creativity in performing their roles. Further, it might increase their English vocabulary on tourism field as well. After arranging their script, they spent a little time to exercise with their group friends. The roles they performed were including the role as a tour guide and the tourists (see figure 2). During the performance, they could use any tools that help them in performing their respective roles. By this way, each of the students had to force themselves to, at least, speak up more in order to deliver their own role as created during their performance. As stated by Nunan (2003), "to help develop fluency, we must generate a need to speak, to make learners want to speak." This urge to speak makes the implementation of role-playing become essential in improving the students' speaking skill.

Figure 2. The implementation of role-playing on tour guiding in the class

Aside from performing role-playing in front of the class, the students also performed an original play script written by the lecturer (see figure 3) and made it into a short film. The play script contained several characters or roles associated with restaurant business that had to be played by the students, including the roles of waiter, waitress, restaurant manager, chef and customers. In practicing the play script, the students were divided into two groups based on their respective class, Group A for class A and Group B for class B. Meanwhile, the distribution of characters per student was based on mutual agreement in each group. As it was performed outside the class, they had much time to exercise even to memorize the script. Thus, this was supposed to be most improved version of role-playing practiced by the students. It was also for the reason that this activity could develop the initiative, communication, problem-solving, self-awareness, and working cooperatively in teams (Purnamawati, 2015).
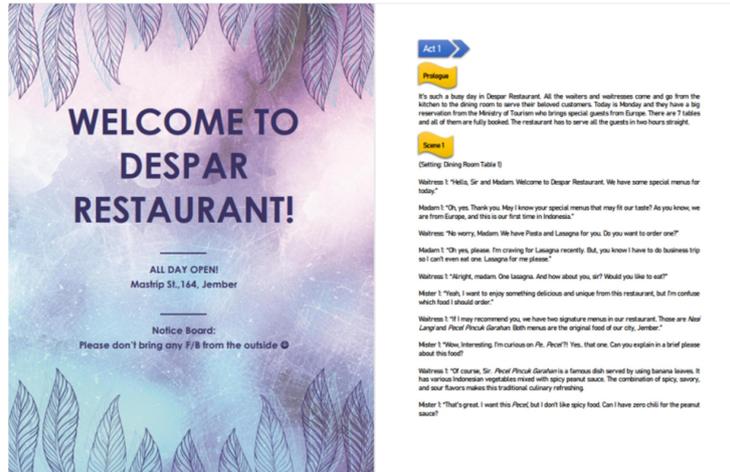
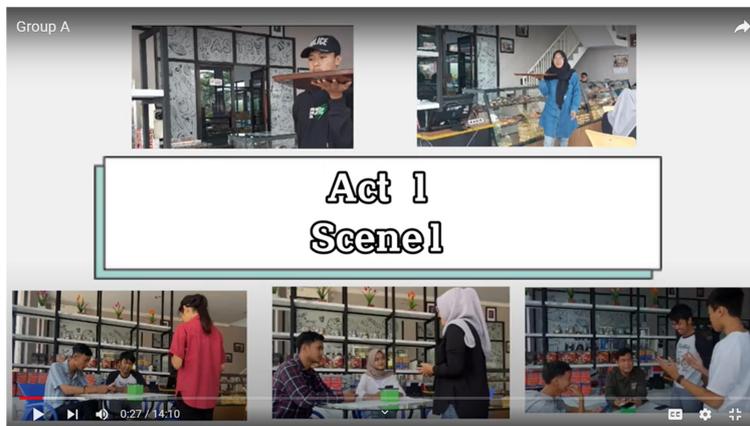*Figure 3. The excerpt of original play script on restaurant services*

Figure 4. Role-playing on restaurant services based on a play script

Figure 4 above was one example of the role-playing delivered by the students based on the play script. As can be seen from the setting of the place, they cooperated with one of the internal edu-businesses (Teaching Factory/TEFA), Coffee and Bakery, to conduct the role-playing. This made them have the access to the facility and equipment needed during their performance. This kind of creativity was an added value in the implementation of role-playing, to improve their communication as well as social relationship with others. By this way, they could also feel and sensed their respective roles as the real ones. Moreover, every student had the chance to show their self by performing at least one character. Thus, this implementation was also expected to dig the inner self of the students to express themselves more, as well as to speak up and practice English more. Indeed, role-playing was supposed to help them to do so in a more creative and enjoyable way. As stated by Tompkins (1998), role-playing/simulation encourages thinking and creativity, as well as lets the students to develop and practice new language and behavioral skills in a relatively non-threatening setting and can create the motivation for learning. This is also emphasized by Ladousse (1995:4) who said that role-playing method uses different communicative techniques and develops fluency in the language, promotes interaction in the classroom and increases motivation.

The SWOT analysis on the implementation of role-playing for tourism services

From the observation conducted in the class during the implementation of role-playing as well as from the documentation recorded through videos and photos, the SWOT analysis on the implementation of role-playing can be explained as follows:

a.   Strength

The biggest advantage of implementing role-playing as a learning method is the high participation of the students. This high participation is needed for the students to motivate them in learning the materials better. As said by Nation and Thomas (1988:21), role-playing can add interest to an activity and by assigning roles can ensure participation in an activity. Learning in a classroom is often associated with conventional methods, such as lecturing, discussion and presentation. Those methods are frequently applied in a class, especially for college students. Yet, role-playing offers a different vibe for learning activity in the class. The method can be used to inspire the imagination and creativity of learners in the learning process, thus improve the students' skills (Waenawae & Suyata, 2015). Students are not only focused on the textbook materials, but also with the mirrored reality of its practice through simulation. For example, in learning the tourism service for tour guiding, the students need to conduct a practice to know the attitude, the gesture, the knowledge needed, the control of situation and any problems may occurred during the traveling or in the midst of the tourism activities performed. They also need to master the basic conversation in tour guiding, thus practicing a role-play act based on their own texts is supposed to help them to understand and feel more on their field duty.

The implementation of role-playing also leads the students to have a better English communication skill and a deeper comprehension on the materials through simulation, as well as enrich their English vocabulary. The implementation of role-playing gives the students an improvement on their speaking skill (Purnamawati, 2015). It is for the reason that role-playing encourages and motivates the students to speak more (Dwiana et al., 2015). Compared to conventional methods, role-playing shows a more fun and interesting way in learning English. It gives the students an opportunity to practice communication in different social contexts and in different social roles (Larsen-Freeman, 2000: 68). Thus, the students experience the characters that are beyond their daily life. By this way, the students are engaged more to the materials as they shall active in its practice.

To be known, based on the last semester evaluation through an online survey, the students of Tourism Destination Study Program preferred to have their materials delivered in an interactive way, whether through games, field practices, or other 'moving' methods. As role-playing always obligates its participant to 'move' or be active in performing their character, it was one of the possible ways in delivering the materials to the students as requested. Hopefully, with a proper and comfortable way of learning, the students would gain a better understanding on the materials given. Further, role-playing may enrich the English vocabulary of the students during its practice, as the students shall create, speak and even memorize the texts of their play. For example,

in the tour guiding practice where the students had to compose their own conversation, they will force their selves to look for the required English words to create the arranged sentences, while emphasizing it later during their performance. Moreover, the situations and the roles were made as a real life situation, thus the students know the functions of English in real life (Amalia R, 2020).

b.   *Weakness*

As can be seen from several pictures above, the students performed the role play by still having the texts on their hands. This was one of the weaknesses in the implementation of role-playing in the class, that there might be no enough time for the students to memorize their scripts. Memorizing the text of conversation was an ideal way in performing a role play, thus they could deliver their character perfectly without focusing on the text as it is scripted. Yet, the things got better when they were given enough time to exercise, just like in the short film performed (see figure 5-8). They tried to memorize the text of their own, even though some of them were still holding their phones, just in case they forgot the texts, while performing.

Figure 5-8. The students try their best to perform their characters/ roles

Other weaknesses were in the speaking aspects such as grammar, pronunciation and fluency. Grammar weakness could be seen through the conversations written by the students in tour guiding. In creating an English sentence, they still made some errors such as a sentence without a proper tense, that resulting in broken written English. Meanwhile, in pronunciation, some of them still found difficulty in pronouncing some words in English properly. This could be due to the less speaking practice performed by them individually, while the class practices gave them insufficient 'English exposure'. This condition was called as the environmental factor (Kurniati et al., 2015). This also affected their fluency in speaking English, as bad pronunciation would bring no good fluency. Hence, the more the practice, the better the pronunciation, and the better the speaking skill. As stated by Rahmat et al. (2018), it requires a lot of time to launch the ability to speak English, since pronunciation must often be trained more actively.

c.   Opportunity

Role play can help the students to achieve maximum communication since it covers a wide range of possibilities and many different situations in its practice (Amalia R, 2020). It is a fun and interesting way of learning English (Purnamawati, 2015), thus its implementation in the class shall be maintained. The current implementation of role playing was limited in some places. Most of it was in the classroom, even though in one meeting, the students practiced role-playing outside the class through short video filming. Nevertheless in the future, as the medium of role-playing practice can be broaden and varied, it is expected that the implementation of role-playing can be conducted in a more suitable place for each tourism services. For example, when it comes to travel services, then the setting of the place can be at travel agency or transportation facilities. Or when it comes to tour guiding, the students can practice it directly at in the bus or in the tourism site. As well as when it comes to hotel & restaurant services, the students can conduct role-playing in some restaurants or hotels. Indeed, cooperation needs to be made with some tourism business in its field realization.

d.   Threat

The threats in implementing the role-playing were including the low determination from the lecturer to apply it, the low motivation of the students due to internal factors, unprepared performances, as well as the limit of the time available. These threats seemed to be the classic obstacles in delivering any interactive learning method, as it usually needed more energy and time to realize it. These threats could affect the practice of role-playing by the students, making it to be less fun, uninteresting and imperfect. Thus, the results of the implementation were not optimal and the targeted purpose could not be achieved. The role of the lecturer was important in this matter, since in role-playing, the language instructor held one of the keys in the success of its implementation (Purnamawati, 2015). It is expected that by looking at these threats, any strategic planning can be arranged to overcome the obstacles that possibly occurred in the implementation of role-playing.

Conclusion

From the results of the analysis, it was found that the implementation of role-playing for tourism services still had to be evaluated. Role-playing had the advantages to increase the students' participation in learning activities, gave more understanding regarding the given materials through simulation and emerged their self-competence in speaking. However, in its practice, there were some factors that made the implementation lacking in some way, such as the weakness of the students to memorize all the text, the grammar errors, the pronunciation mistakes and the lack of fluency due to the environmental factor. There were also some threats preventing its optimal implementation, such as the lack of lecturer determination in applying the activity in the class, the students' low motivation, the unprepared performance, as well as the lack of

time to practice. Yet, role-playing still had the opportunity to be well implemented in English for tourism services since it provided a fun and interesting way of learning. Hence, by realizing this analysis results, a future strategy to overcome the obstacles in implementing role-playing shall be arranged.

By implementing role-playing better in learning activities, it is expected that the students can improve further some aspects in speaking skills, including comprehension, grammar, pronunciation, fluency and vocabulary. Thus in the future, the Tourism Destinations Study Program can produce not only competent graduates in the field of tourism, but also the graduates with a good English communication skill.

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