PRAGMATIC ASPECTS IN ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITY IN TEACHING SPEAKING

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ABSTRACT

To accommodate meaningful students' speaking activity with the situation that can create communicative atmosphere, include pragmatic features, and arise motivation, role play is highly proposed due to its salient features. This paper aims to explain what kinds of pragmatic aspects that can be found in role-play activity and how pragmatic insight can be inserted in classroom activities in the context of TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), particularly in developing students' speaking skill. This study is limited in the context of TEFL for Senior High School students. The findings show that the pragmatic aspects which can be found in role-play activities include maxim of quantity (be as informative as needed), maxim of quality (give true contribution), maxim of relevance (be relevant), and maxim of manner (avoid ambiguity and be orderly), turn-taking, and adjacency pairs. The ways how to teach role-play based on the pragmatic aspects are also presented in this study.

Keywords: pragmatics, role-play, teaching speaking

INTRODUCTION

English language teaching (ELT), nowadays, has focused on teach English language rather than teach about English language. The emphasis is not only on linguistic competence of the language learners, but also on the development of their communicative ability. In order to develop the learners' communicative ability, the teacher needs to create a scenario to teach the target language in a vibrant, active and interesting manner.

Particularly for teaching speaking, communicative function is really needed since in the process of uttering something, it is expected that there should be sound communication that can avoid misunderstanding between speaker and hearer (student and teacher or student and student). To know the intended meaning of the speaker of the hearer, the students need to be introduced to pragmatic knowledge at least the aspects related to their material. Moreover, one important thing that needs to be considered in teaching speaking is motivating strategy that can enhance the students' interest in participating the classroom activities. In relation to teaching speaking, to make the classroom activities more meaningful, Celce-Murcia & Olshtain (2000: 176) states that the most important feature of a classroom activity is by providing an authentic opportunity to get individual meaning across and utilize every area of knowledge they have in the second and foreign language.

In Oxford Advanced Dictionary the definition of speaking is to express or communicate opinions, feelings, ideas, etc, by or as talking and it involves the activities in the part of the speaker as psychological, physiological (articulator) and physical (acoustic)

stages. According to Chaney (1998), speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts. While another expert, Huebner (1960) said language is essentially speech, and speech is basically communication by sounds. And according to him, speaking is a skill used by someone in daily life communication whether at school or outside. The skill is acquired by much repetition; it primarily a neuromuscular and not an intellectual process. It consists of competence in sending and receiving messages. From the above definition, it can be inferred that speaking is expressing ideas, opinions, or feelings to others by using words or sounds of articulation in order to inform, to persuade, and to entertain that can be learnt by using some teaching learning methodologies.

To accommodate the meaningful students' speaking activity with the situation that can create communicative atmosphere, include pragmatic features, and can arise motivation, role play is highly proposed due to its salient features. Through role play, communicative conversation can be achieved when the students try to convey their message to the hearer. The students will try to communicate as effective as possible. Meanwhile, dealing with pragmatics knowledge, the students can learn that what they have said explicitly has implicit meaning that is very various depend on the context, such as speech acts showing directive, the implementation of turn taking that should be balanced, politeness that can be shown from their face, and so forth. The last, role play is also beneficial in enhancing the students' motivation since they will work in group and try to cooperate with friends in distinctive background knowledge and speaking ability. This condition will be helpful for the students who are shy, passive, and not confident because this kind of activity will facilitate them joyful learning situation, not threatening. They can learn each other although the class condition is heterogeneous since the success of the role play is determined by all of the members. For the teacher, this technique is also one of good solutions in teaching speaking class with a large number of students.

What is meant by teaching speaking is described by Nunan (2003), namely the activity to teach English language learners to:

1) Produce the English speech sounds and sounds patterns.
2) Use words and sentence stress, intonation patterns and the rhythm of the second language.
3) Select appropriate words and sentences according to the proper social setting, audience, situation and subject matter.
4) Organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence.
5) Use language as a means of expressing values and judgments.
6) Use the language confidently with few unnatural pauses, which is called fluency.

Dealing with the teaching of speaking in Senior High School grade X (semester 2) that will be discussed in this paper, the components stated above, of course, should be fitted with the content of the curriculum, *KTSP*, whose content of standard covers several types of speaking performance, namely transactional, interpersonal, and monologue. In this case, the topic is focused on monologue in the form of descriptive text (describing person). The activity that will be done is in the form of conversation consisting of asking and giving information related to the physical characteristics of a person. Therefore, the definition of teaching speaking here is limited to the process of delivering knowledge of

English in order to enable the learners express ideas through spoken language accurately, fluently, and appropriately related to the topic of describing person.

This article focuses on the implementation of role-play for speaking activity. According to Cambridge International Dictionary of English, *role* is defined as the person whom an actor represents in a film or play, while *role-play* is a method of acting out particular ways of behaving or pretending to be other people who deal with new situations.

Another definition is proposed by Joanna Budden (in Susanti, 2007). According to her, *role-play* is defined as any speaking activity when you either put yourself into somebody else's shoes, or when you stay in your own shoes but put yourself into an imaginary situation. From the definition above, role play can be considered as a technique which involves fantasy or imagination to be someone else or to be ourselves in a specific situation for a while. It encourages the students' thought and creativity. It also helps students practice new language and behavioral skills in a relatively non-threatening setting.

Furthermore, in relation to the teaching of speaking, r*ole-play* can be defined as a teaching technique in which the students act and pretend as someone else in the actual life situation that is brought into the classroom (Richards and Rogers, 2002). In other words, role play is drama-like classroom activities in which students take the roles of different participants in a creative situation and act out what might typically happen in that situation.

Regarding this, the purposes of this article are then two-fold. First, this article aims to explain what kinds of pragmatic aspects which can be found in role-play activity as the proposed teaching technique in teaching speaking. In addition, procedure dealing with how role-play activity can be implemented in classroom setting in the context of teaching speaking for Senior High School students in Indonesian context is also presented. Practically, the findings of this study are essential for ELT teachers to maximize the implementation of role-play for their teaching practices since they are able to know the pragmatic aspects in the role-play which can make the students develop their speaking skill more meaningfully. Then theoretically the findings of the present study can contribute to the body of knowledge dealing with kinds of teaching technique for teaching speaking as well as knowledge about pragmatics in the context of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs library research which is done by reviewing a number of studies dealing with the implementation of role-play for teaching speaking. Moreover, in order to answer the focus of the study dealing with kinds of pragmatic features in role-play activity, an analysis is done by comparing details of role-play activity with the theory of pragmatics. Then the second focus of the study related to how to implement role-play in the classroom setting is done by reviewing previous studies with the same focus to find the weaknesses/difficulties in implementing it and then coming up with better ways of how to implement it to contribute more to the body of knowledge dealing with TEFL.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Pragmatic Aspects in Role-Play

In role play, there are several pragmatic aspects that work. Since role-play is a group activity, it is, of course, greatly related to the proportion of the dialogue for each

member of the group. Therefore, the so-called *cooperation* between speakers and hearers is essential. Cooperation is the condition in which the speakers and the hearers cooperate each other to make the conversation goes smoothly. Thus, Yule (1996: 37) states that to achieve the cooperation, there should be cooperative principle which include *maxim of quantity* (be as informative as needed), *maxim of quality* (give true contribution), *maxim of relevance* (be relevant), and *maxim of manner* (avoid ambiguity and be orderly).

Another pragmatic aspect that work through role play is the concept *of turn-taking*. According to Yule (1996: 72), *turn-taking* refers to the change of speaker during the conversation. Still, because role play is a group work activity, each member of the group should get equal turn to speak up. With the good division of the utterance for each role, the *overlap* (more than one speaker talking at the same tine) can be avoided.

Furthermore, *adjacency pairs* happen in the role-play as well . Yule (1996: 127) defines adjacency pairs as a sequence of two utterances by different speakers in conversation. The second is a response to the first, e.g. question-answer, request-acceptance/refusal. The listeners are supposed to give responses in relation to the speaker's statements or questions .The responses can be in the forms of answering the questions, giving decision, arising another question, etc. Giving responses is the nature of conversation. That's why, adjacency pair cannot be separated from the flow of conversation.

Considering the importance of the aspects above during the conversation , the teacher should insert that to the speaking activity in the classroom setting. However, the teachers should not explicitly mention those terms for fear that the students might get confused. Therefore, the most practical way to insert pragmatic aspects in teaching speaking is by giving clear instruction and a model as the example to the students. Giving clear instruction in relation to what to do and how to do it is essential in conducting role-play in class. Then the clear instruction is supported with the provision of the model. Therefore, the students are able to prepare and perform their role-play based on the given instruction well.

Teaching Procedure for Implementing Role-Play

MEETING I (90')

Pre-teaching:

1. Reviewing the previous materials related to the description of someone's physical appearance
2. Assigning the students to make a group of 4
3. Informing the students that they are going to have a role play activity under the topic of "Describing someone's physical appearance"

Whist-teaching:

4. Explaining what role-play is and giving a model of the role play through a teacher-made video
5. Discussing the model (the relevance of the dialogue with the topic and turn-taking)
6. Assigning each group to take 1envelope out of 10 envelopes provided by the teacher. Each envelop contains the instruction of the role play which include the situation and the roles of each group member (see Appendix 1)
7. Explaining the points as the guidance for the students to prepare the role play (content: the relevance with the situation and the clarity of

the information related to the description; the balance of the turn-taking; the language use)

8. Assigning the groups to discuss and prepare the written dialogues for ten-minute role play to be presented in the next meeting
9. Giving help as needed
10. Deciding the order of the group performance for the next meeting

Post-teaching

11. Closing the lesson

MEETING 2 (90')

Pre-speaking

1. Assigning the students to sit with their groups and to prepare for the performance
2. Reminding the groups to perform in 10 minutes
3. Motivating the students to be confident and be relaxed

Whilst speaking

4. Assigning group 1 up to group 5 to perform (each group has around 10' to perform)

Post-speaking

5. Giving feedback for each group in relation to the content, the balance of turn-taking, the language use
6. Reminding group 6 -10 to be ready for the performance next meeting
7. Closing the lesson

MEETING 3 (90')

Pre-speaking

1. Assigning the students to sit with their groups and to prepare for the performance
2. Reminding the groups to perform in 10 minutes
3. Motivating the students to be confident and be relaxed

Whilst speaking

4. Assigning group 6 up to group 10 to perform (each group has around 10' to perform)

Post-speaking

5. Giving feedback for each group in relation to the content, the balance of turn-taking, the language use
6. Reminding group 6 -10 to be ready for the performance next meeting
7. Closing the lesson

DISCUSSION

It has been mentioned before in the above discussion that role play is one of the activities to promote speaking. Through role play activities the students learn how to express ideas, opinions, or feeling to others by using words or sounds of articulation. Furthermore, role play can help the English teachers in developing communicative approach because they give learners an opportunity to practice communicating in different social contexts and different social roles. Celce-Murcia & Olshtain (2000: 177) adds that implementing role play in speaking class can enhance the students to use their knowledge of vocabulary, of narration, and of pragmatic (such as speech acts, discourse fillers, turn taking, pauses).

A role play is a highly flexible learning activity which has a wide scope for variation and imagination. According to Ladousse, role play uses differentcommunicative techniques and develops fluency in the language, promotes interaction in the classroom and increases motivation. Here peer learning is encouraged and sharing of responsibility between teacher and the learner in the learning process takes place.

Role play can improve learners' speaking skills in any situation, and helps

learners to interact. As for the shy learners, role play helps by providing a mask, where learners with difficulty in conversation are liberated. In addition, it is fun and most learners will agree that enjoyment leads to better learning.

The effectiveness of role play in teaching speaking is shown by research conducted by Susanti (2007). Having conducted her research in Islamic Junior High School Soebono Mantofani Jombang-Ciputat., she found out that the use of role play in teaching speaking was quite effective to improve students' speaking ability. Also, she found out that the use of role play made the speaking and learning activity more enjoyable and interesting because it helped the shy students by providing a mask, where students with difficulty in conversation are liberated. In addition, it was considered fun and most students agreed that enjoyment led to better learning.

In addition, Nizar (2006) conducted a Classroom Action Research at SMAN 1 Tumpang Malang in relation to the use of role play to improve students' speaking ability. He found out that the students were actively involved during teaching and learning process, able to express their ideas, opinions and feeling well. Moreover, they performed their performance without worrying of making mistakes, not being shy and inferior anymore. They were also able to improve the use of the language function and to work in groups or in teams cooperatively

To sum up, with regard to the previous studies concerning the implementation of role play for speaking activity, it can be said that role play is practical to be applied in the teaching of speaking to make the students more active and to help them practice the language function they have learnt in the non-threatening atmosphere.

CONCLUSION

The pragmatic aspects which can be found in role-play activities include maxim of quantity (be as informative as needed), maxim of quality (give true contribution), maxim of relevance (be relevant), and maxim of manner (avoid ambiguity and be orderly), turn-taking, and adjacency pairs.. Role-play is an interesting activity to give the students more opportunities to apply the knowledge they have got into the practice. Through contextual features of spoken interaction in role-play, the students will get more chances not only to use the target language as a means of communication but also to cooperate with the participants (speakers-hearers) well so that the conversation will go smoothly. The students will also learn how to deal with turn-taking and giving appropriate responses towards particular statements or questions as well. Studies dealing with pragmatic features in relation to TEFL are still needed. Thus, future researchers are suggested to uncover other kinds of pragmatic aspects in other kinds of teaching techniques in teaching speaking or other language skills.

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