



"I AM ENTHUSIASTIC!": EXPLORING STUDENTS' RESPONSES ON THE ROLE PLAY ASSIGNMENT

Puthut Ardianto¹⁾, Muhamat Ridho Yuliyanto²⁾
Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia
puthutardianto@umy.ac.id¹⁾, ridhoyuliyanto19@gmail.com²⁾

Received: August 5, 2020

Accepted: November 21, 2020

Published: November 30, 2020

Abstract

In communicative language teaching, role play has become one of the most well-known activities among language teachers. In fact, in higher educational context, role play is considered to be a good method to facilitate learners' oral proficiency. However, the researchers often found some teachers assign too demanding and unclear role play. In fact, some students complained about the implementation of role play at the department. This research aims at revealing students' responses when having role play as their group assignment in English classes. A descriptive qualitative design was employed to obtain the research objectives, namely how role play was implemented in the eyes of students and what responses they gave to its assignment. To gather the data, an interview was conducted to one male participant and two female participants taking the Literary Appreciation course at one English Department of a private Islamic university in Yogyakarta. Based on the interview, nine stages were implemented in assigning role play. They are announcing the assignment; distributing materials for role play; modelling the role play; grouping; distributing roles; giving time to prepare the play; creating a role play; having the performance; and giving feedback. Also, there were six responses from students towards the assignment namely happy; not bored; shocked; entertained; anxious; and enthusiastic.

Keywords: Role play, Students' responses, English teaching

INTRODUCTION

Teachers of English in Indonesia have long been implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking class to obtain communicative competence. Richard and Rodgers (2001) also affirm that the goal of CLT is to develop learners' communicative competence. Accordingly, one of CLT based activities that involves and encourages learners to apply the learned language is role play.

Role play is beneficial for students because it can boost their communication skills, speaking skills, and interests in learning. Rojas (2018) mentions that role play contributes to students' speaking skills development such as students' communication skill, learning environments, and speaking proficiency itself. According to Zhang (2010), the role play does allow students to improve their communication skills for example expressing arguments,

organizing ideas, understanding groups, interpreting, and concluding. It is then highlighted by Harmer (2007), who argues that role play technique allows the students to involve in language learning. These scholars believe that role play could facilitate learners to utilize the language they are learning and at the same time it gives advantages in terms of language mastery.

In one English Department, the researchers found English classrooms have frequently applied the role play-based activity especially when it comes to speaking learning goals because students need to perform or showcase their speaking ability. A research by Saiful and Widodo (2019) reveal that future Indonesian EFL teachers (English Department students) have extremely high intention to perform in the English language. Through role play, they are able to show their capability in language. Therefore, role play is used in the classrooms to enhance students' English speaking skills. However, there might be some challenges occurred in the implementation of role play itself. In fact, the researchers found several drawbacks in role play-based activity for example in terms of timing, teachers seem to provide less time for practicing the role-play. In addition, teachers tend to provide fewer feedbacks on the language used and instructions of doing it step-by-step is not well managed either. Lastly, some students sometimes show various responses when the lecturer informed the role play assignment. All of these challenges have actually been confirmed by a research conducted by Mardiningrum (2016), who draws a conclusion that "a careful and well-planned structure of applying role-plays in higher education setting is one of the keys that seems to support students' learning." (p.15). It is definitely required for teachers to have a settled plan before conducting a role play-based activity in the classroom. This research therefore aims to answer the following questions, namely: (1) how is the implementation of the role play-based activity in English classes from the students' point of view? And 2) what are the students' response on the implementation of role play in the classroom?

Role play can be defined in many ways. Krebt (2017) asserts that role play activities can be represented as how the students act in a certain situation and context. This is in line with Budden (2006), who mentions that role play is an activity of speaking in which someone puts him or herself into an imaginary situation. In addition, Asman (2016) mentions that the role play activity allows the students to behave like another person in a specific situation (Yen, Huei, & Kuo, 2013). Accordingly, Nunan (2003) mentioned that "role plays are also excellent activities for speaking in the relatively safe environment of the classroom." (p.57)

Another definition of role play is argued by Kusnierek (2015) who states that role playing as a comprehensive range of communication technique that encourages fluency on students' language skills and allow students to interact each other using English while the class runs, being the students' motivation encouragement, upgrading students' learning, yet the responsibility between teacher and student still divided equally. However, Jackson and Backs (2011) defines that role play is an activity that encourages the teacher's ability to employ a learning environment which is safe; serving constructive and objective-directed feedback; and maintaining the competence to interact with others.

In short, role play provides various definitions. It depends on which point of views to define the role play itself. To sum up, role play generally can be defined as a learning activity that demonstrates individual or a group of individuals pretending to be other character of them or themselves by adopting the contexts and situations in the current played story.

Types of Role play

There are various types of role play. According to Krebt (2017), role play is categorized into three kinds, namely scripted role play, semi-scripted role play, and unscripted role play.

Firstly, Harper-Whalen and Morris explain that in a fully scripted role play, the students are provided with texts, however the students still have to memorize and understand their own role in the role play (as cited in Krebt, 2017). This is in line with Byrne (1986) who says that scripted role play can be defined as a role play activity that generates the interpretation of the written text of dialogue or reading into the form of speech.

The second type of role play is unscripted (non-scripted) role play. Krebt (2017) asserts that unscripted role play is the reverse of scripted role play. The circumstances of unscripted role play do not depend on written texts. Unscripted role play is well-known as a free role play or improvisation. The third is semi-scripted role play. Krebt (2017) explains that in semi-scripted role play, the students are given a handout that has missing words and then the students should fill up the blank parts using proper words and contexts (as cited in Livingstone, 1983). Therefore, the students can alter the main dialogues of conversation into another dialogue and develop their dialogue conversation.

There are several major stages in the implementation of role play. Huang (2008) suggests that in order to employ a role play, some following stages must be followed. First, teaching materials selection. First of all, teachers should choose what kind of teaching materials will be used in the implementation of role play. There are many teaching materials that can be used in role play, it can be taken from textbooks or non-textbook teaching materials. For example, picture books, play-scripts, storybooks, comic strips, readers, movies, cartoons, and pictures. Teachers should select the material in advance. In some situations, teachers can also create authentic teaching materials for role-play activities by themselves. The teaching materials must be chosen based on teaching goals, students' level and interests, and appropriateness for teaching.

Second, situation selection and dialogues creating. Second of all, teachers must select a situation to be implemented in the role play. In every situation of role plays, the dialogues must be created whether it be from the teaching materials, the teachers or the students themselves. Moreover, it might sound better if teachers let the students select the situations by themselves in order to make the role play interesting. The taken situation can be from the situation that students encountered in real life, reading books, or watching movies since those sources provide various role play situations (Kodotchigova, 2002). After the context is already chosen, students are required to plan how to develop the situation in the role play.

Third, role play dialogues teaching. This procedure is dealing with how the language use in the role play will be implemented. Therefore, the students should predict what language use is needed in the role play (Kodotchigova, 2002). Teachers are also needed to explain to the students about the vocabulary, sentences, and conversations in the dialogues of role play. This is because the teachers have to make sure that all students understand the language that they are using in the dialogues before the role play is practiced. In this situation, the students are allowed to ask how to say or pronounce the words that they use to their teacher. This has to be done to avoid misuse of using English, especially in difficult words or phrases. According to Magos and Politi (2008), grammatical, vocabulary, or syntactical structure have been the problems in employing a teaching technique to foreign language learning classes.

Forth, students' role plays practices. This procedure is to make sure that students have practiced before they do their performance. According to Kodotchigova (2002), students must be given an opportunity to practice what they learned after the teacher selects the role play situation. As a result, the students can perform all roles that are in the script. In addition, Magos and Politi (2018) mention that the teacher must make students confident in small

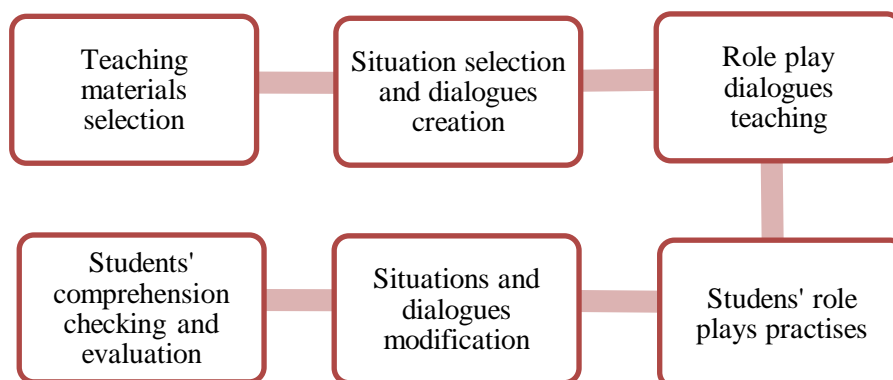
groups. That way, whenever students are ready and confident enough to perform their roles, the teacher can ask them to do so in front of the other students.

Fifth, situations and dialogues modification. The fifth procedure is to encourage students to change the situations and dialogues. The teacher must make sure that students have been familiar with the original situation in the role play. By the time the students are familiar with the original one, the teacher can encourage the students to modify the original role play with another variation of dialogues and/or situations.

Sixth, students' comprehension checking and evaluation. The sixth stage is to review the activities carried out by students. According to Kodotchigova (2002), teacher and students spend some time on discussing after the role play is finished. The teachers should evaluate the implementation of role play and make sure that students have understood the language used in the role play. However, the teachers should not analyze every error because it can cause the students to lose the feeling of satisfaction after the performance (Kodotchigova, 2002). In this part, the teachers are obliged to check whether the students have understood the meanings of the vocabulary use, sentences, and dialogues comprehensively. This step aims to evaluate what students have learned from the role play (Kodotchigova, 2002).

In essence, the success of the teaching technique is determined by the teachers' preparation to implement the role play, especially in applying the role play. Therefore, to make the role play is effective, teachers need to have procedures that can lead the students to the objectives of teaching technique.

Figure 1. Procedure in Implementing the Role play



Response is a feeling or action as a form to answer a stimulus. As mentioned by Thinkmap (2019), he stated that responses is a reaction form a given question, experience, or any kind of stimulus. According to Treglia, response is an action or act of responding (as by an answer), a responsive or corresponding act or feeling, or a responding act to a motivation force or situation (2008). This is in line with Treglia (2008) who mentioned that responses in the action of giving a reponse, reply, or an answer. However, in this study, the term of response is dealing with students' experiences and feeling about the role play-based activity assigned by their teacher in the Literary Appreciation course.

There are several types of response. According to Borich (2000), students' responses in the classroom are divided in two kinds such as desired or undesired responses. Besides, Thurston mentioned that in terms of the type, responses are divided into non-verbal and verbal responses (as cited in Borich, 2000). In this study the researcher need to evoke students' responses since responses are essential in teaching and learning process. Also, the responses that will be taken into account is the verbal responses.

METHOD

Three students, one male and two females, were taken as the participants for this study. They took the Literary Appreciation course. This course is an elective course offered in every semester at an English Language Education Department of a private Islamic university in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The 2-credit course provides a space for students to perform a role play as part of the assessment. The role play that is applied in this course is based on a reading material. Students were asked to read a piece of short stories prepared by the teacher. They were then grouped and assigned to read the story. After that the group wrote a scenario based on the story then performed it in the class. The three students were selected using these criteria namely highly motivated, average, and low motivated students. The names of the participants were pseudonymous and were recommended by the teacher. They are Ujang, Marwa, and Rahmi. Ujang was 20 years old male who was classified into high motivated student. Marwa was 21 years old female who was put in the low motivated category, and finally Rahmi was 21 years old female who was considered as average motivated student. All participants come from the 2017 academic year. However, the three participants had a different local language since they are originally not from the same islands.

Data Collection Method

This study aimed at revealing how role play was implemented at the department. Therefore, the researcher used interview to gather the data because by doing so, the researchers can construct and predict the statements or experiences explained by the participants (Creswell, 2012). In addition, the interview was conducted to participants who had experienced of an action, interaction and process of teaching and learning using the role play technique in Indonesian context. Before the interview was executed, an interview guideline was prepared by the researchers. Moreover, the interview guideline must be general question so that the participants can be freely talking about whatever in their minds without any boundaries as long as it still relates to the research question.

The type of interview that was used in this study was standardized open-ended interview. According to Cohen et al. (2011), open ended question can allow the researcher to obtain the detail information in every aspect of the issue to avoid misunderstanding. Cohen et al. (2011) also added that there are no restraints of the content and manner of how the participants response the questions. The researchers also required the participants to be spontaneous in answering the question so that the collected data was pure and free from the researchers' interventions.

The researchers implemented the unstructured response as response mode of the study. This mode was chosen in order to ease the participants to share what they know about the issues in the questions. According to Cohen et al. (2011), unstructured response gives little control to the interviewer, so that the participants can answer the question based on their own words with no distraction or boundaries of the question itself. During the interview, Indonesian Language was used since both the researchers and the interviewee are Indonesian native speakers. Speaking in Indonesian language was meant to avoid misunderstanding while communicating with the participants. The interview was done around 20 minutes for each participant.

Data Collection Procedures

To begin the study, the researcher contacted the teacher of Literary Appreciation course. After that, the researchers asked the teacher to give recommendation of the participants. The names of participants given was divided into three categories namely highly motivated,

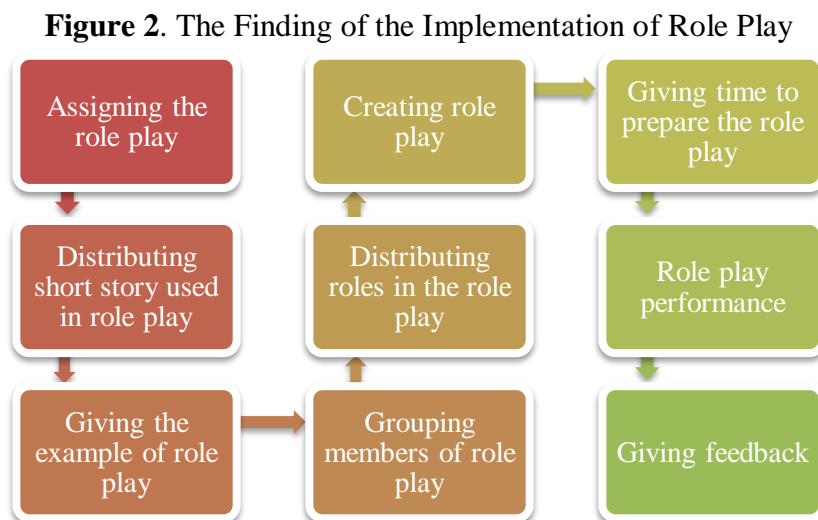
average, and low motivated student. Those categories were given by the lecturer's perspectives. Then, the researcher began to approach the participants by sending them short message via phone and via social media application such as *WhatsApp* application. The interview was then conducted after the researchers got an agreement from the participants to be interviewed. Interview was conducted one by one to make the interviewees relaxed so that the responses can be elaborated more.

Once the researchers had done the interview session, the researchers transcribed the collected data. In transcribing the data, the whole words were said by the participants from the recorder was transformed into written text. Cohen et al. (2011) mentioned that due to the potential of losing massive data, bias, and the dwindling of complexity, transcribing becomes an important step in interviewing.

After transcribing the data, the next step was to check the validity of the transcription. Member checking was done in order to check the validity of the data. In checking the validity of the data, the researcher returned the collected data to the participants to be clarified. There were no changes on the result of the member checking. Therefore, the researchers proceeded to the next data analysis step, namely coding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To answer the first research question, the researchers provide a figure to describe the implementation of role play in the department.



The flow chart above shows the highlighted activities that were done in the implementation of role play in the classroom based on the students' perspective. At the first, the teacher informed the students that they would conduct a role play in the classroom. As mentioned by Rahmi, she said that the teacher gave an announcement about the role play-based activity to the students. In this case, the teacher gave an announcement a week before the day of the performance. After announcing the role play assignment, the teacher distributed a short story as the material to read by students before doing the role play. Ujang said that "(the) teacher distributed a short story as the material." The materials were given to be understood by students so that they can memorize it and make some dialogues on their own. Marwa mentioned that we were provided with some texts (short stories) to read. Ujang and Marwa also added his statement that the short stories were distributed a week before the

performance day to prepare the role play. According to Huang (2008), the teacher should select the teaching material earlier before the role play activity. In this case, the short story was given so that the students have a visualization about what kind of story that they will perform the following week. Moreover, Huang (2008) also mentioned that the teaching materials are various and it can be taken from textbooks or non-textbooks. Accordingly, Huang (2008) stated that the teaching material can be chosen based on many aspects such as the teaching goals, level and interests of students, and the teaching appropriateness. Hence, selecting the teaching material needs to be considered as an essential part of role-play to optimize the benefits of role play itself.

After the teaching materials were distributed, the teacher began to explain about the role play. Rahmi asserted that the teacher explained how to conduct the role play. The teacher also explained how roles in role play were played. In addition, Ujang said that the teacher told about how the characters in role play are run in the role play activity. Additionally, the students were also given a theory about how to do the role play activity. As mentioned by Marwa, she added that the teacher gave a theory about role play. Moreover, the teacher not only explained but also showed a video of role play activity. Therefore, the students can understand more about how to conduct a role play. Marwa mentioned that the teacher gave an example of role play from the beginning until the end of role play through playing a video. That way, the students know what to do in their role play performance well. Hence, the teacher is needed to explain about role play activity clearly so that the student could understand what they have to do in role play.

The following week, after giving the announcement, a brief explanation, and teaching material used in role play activity, the teacher showed the students an example of role play. Rahmi mentioned that the teacher gave an example. The teacher gave an example of how to do the role play. Also, the sample was presented, such as what are common phrases used in a role play, how the intonation is sounded for certain language expressions, as well as gimmick used in role play. Moreover, she added that the example was about several aspects in doing the role play. She said “the teacher gave an example of expression, an intonation, a facial expression that existed in drama. In this context, the notion of drama is similar to role-play activity.”

After knowing what to do in the role play, the teacher began to divide the students into several groups of role play. Ujang, Marwa, and Rahmi said that the students were asked to make their group of role play. Besides, Ujang also stated, “the students were divided into several groups based on who attended in that class at that time.” According to Magos and Politi (2018), small groups are better to make the students feel confident. On the other hand, Rahmi explained, “After the students assembled with their groups, the groups decided their roles in the story of role play.” Hence, considering the number of members in a group is quite crucial to create an active role play. Accordingly, the next stage, after deciding the group members was distributing the characters in the role play. Ujang, Marwa, and Rahmi mentioned that the students chose their roles in role play. In this situation, the characters were determined based on consensus. As indicated by Rahmi, she said “in Literary Appreciation course, the teacher distributed the script, and then the roles were determined randomly based on the result of group discussion.” Thus, the groups started to discuss what they need to do in their upcoming role play performance.

Then, each group began to create a role play. Rahmi said that we were asked to create a role play. It means that the students are free to explore their imagination into their role play activity. According to Huang (2008), the dialogues and situations in role play can be

arranged by the teaching material, the teacher, or the students themselves. Moreover, Huang (2008) also added that to make an interesting role-play, the situation of the story is better to be chosen by the students themselves. To sum up, the students need to be allowed to explore their imagination by making their dialogues.

Furthermore, the teacher should provide the students with time to prepare. As mentioned by Ujang, he said "Teacher gave time to prepare the role play." The statement is in line with Kodotchigova (2002), who mentioned that after the teacher chooses the role play situations, students should have an opportunity to practice what they learned. Anyway, the preparation itself is not that simple. There were several things to do while preparing the role play. As mentioned by Ujang, he stated that the preparation in role play includes grouping the members, deciding the roles of role play, and preparing the properties and equipment for role play. However, all the text and properties to do the role play have been provided by the teacher. Marwa stated that "we were provided with texts to read and memorize." She also mentioned that "we were given several properties such as flowers, crowns, and trees imitation."

Moreover, Marwa mentioned that the students should memorize the given story. Therefore, Rahmi argued that the teacher provided the students with a script and then the students were asked to improvise when performing the role play. Thus, it can be concluded that the type of role play implemented was unscripted role play. It is because the students were still given a chance to improvise, and when the time they perform the role play, they were not provided with a script. According to Krebt (2017), the circumstances of unscripted role play do not depend on written texts. Accordingly, unscripted role play is well-known as a free role play or improvisation (Krebt, 2017).

After the preparation was done as well as the group members were ready to perform, the students started to perform the role play in front of the class. The students can show the maximum level of their role play performance when they are ready and confident to perform (Huang, 2008). In this part, every student should be involved in role play activity. Ujang mentioned that students did the role play. The role play was done in front of the classroom. As mentioned by Rahmi, she said "we did the role play in front of the classroom." Moreover, Rahmi explained that each role play performance spent approximately 3-5 minutes for each group. In the end, after a particular group was done with the role play, then the role play go with the next group. Marwa stated that students take turns the role play with another group.

Lastly, after all the stages were done, the teacher began to provide feedback or evaluation of students' performances. As mentioned by Marwa, she said that the teacher gave feedback concerning the plot of the role play story. According to Kodotchigova (2002), there is a need to set some time for teacher and students to talk about the carried performance. At first, teacher asked the students to retell what story was being played by the students. It is also mentioned by Ujang, who stated that "teacher asked students to retell about story being played." Huang (2008) supported that the teacher is necessary to check students understanding about the role play such as dialogues conversation, language used, and any other aspects. After knowing some missing part of the story, the teacher began to fix it so the students knew their mistakes while running the role play. Marwa and Rahmi mentioned that teacher gave reflection from the group performances of role play. In this context, the notion of reflection is similar to feedback. Marwa also added "the students were informed about the story that they should play." Overall, as mentioned by Rahmi, she stated that teacher gave some comments, advices, and review about students' role play performances in the classroom.

On the other hand, the teacher should also consider the students' aspect after giving the feedback. According to Huang (2008), the teacher needs to keep students' feeling of losing the satisfaction after conducting a performance. Therefore the teacher should not analyze every error they made. Marwa stated that the feedback was in terms of praises or telling what they have to do. Accordingly, the given feedback were various to evaluate the students' performances; in this case, giving compliments is one of them. In brief, the students need to be given brief notes of their role-play performance so that it can be a reflection in their learning process.

In conclusion, there were nine activities found in the implementation of role play in the classroom. Meanwhile, there were six activities in the implementation of role play mentioned in the literature review. All the six activities listed in the literature review were done by the teacher in the classroom. However, there were three more activities that were not mentioned in the literature review, such as announcing the role play activities, giving time to prepare role play, and showing example of the role play. Thus, it can be said that all of the activities done in the classroom were in accordance with the literature review mentioned in this study.

Students' Responses on the Implementation of Role Play

The participants shared their responses to role play differently. There are four positive responses to the implementation of role-play. Those responses are:

Students are happy to do the role play. The three participants mentioned that the implementation of role play makes them feel happy in various terms. According to Ujang, "Students feel happy when they work together with friends in role play activity." Moreover, Ujang added, "Students will feel happy if they are in the same group with some close friends." In addition, Ujang feels happy because the learning process in the classroom varies. Besides, Marwa also stated her response about role play. She said, "Students feel happy because they can express themselves." On the other hand, Rahmi was happy and afraid at the same time. She mentioned that I feel happy and also afraid when teacher implemented role play in the classroom. However, they also said that she was happy when the learning in the classroom was not monotonous so that the learning became more attractive and interesting. Happy is a feeling of joy and pleasure. Inal et al. (2012) also stated that in the learning process, students' feeling and behaviour could change because of their attitudes. Overall, the participants emphasized that they were happy with the role play assignment.

Students are interested in doing a role play. The two participants, Ujang and Rahmi, mentioned that they do not feel bored whenever the teacher assigned role play in the classroom. As Ujang mentioned in his statement, he said that we were not bored because the teacher implemented role play. Besides, Rahmi also had different arguments about why she did not get bored when the role play was implemented. Rahmi said "students did not get bored because the activity becomes more joyful and attractive when role play is used". She also added that when role play was being applied, the learning activity became not monotonous, so that the students do not feel bored. Accordingly, Montano and Kasprzyk (2008) supported that someone's attitude or behavior toward something can be changed and become difference influenced by their beliefs towards it. Thus, even if for the first time, students felt bored about teaching material in the classroom, but role play can change their attitudes.

Students are entertained through role play assignment. In this case, the notion of entertained is not similar to happy because happiness came from inside and entertained comes from outside. In this study, the researcher found that some students felt to enjoy the

role play since they can express themselves. In spite of the first time, some students felt shy since they have to perform in front of audiences. However, the students felt enjoy eventually. Marwa asserted "some students felt to enjoy afterwards." Marwa also added that the students keep enjoying the role play activity. The students were enjoying the role play because some students looked weird and told some blurry words. As mentioned by Marwa, she said that some students felt enjoy because some students could not memorize the script of drama so that the performance looked funny. Some students looked funny because they performed inappropriate plot story of the role play. According to Brown (2000), students behaviours or attitudes can be changed by a particular action since it deals with any feelings and emotions. Hence, it showed that role play could make a fun learning environment for students in the classroom.

Students are enthusiastic to welcome the role play assignment. The findings showed that some students shared a positive response, such as feeling enthusiastic about the role play itself. Some students felt enthusiastic because there were a lot of activities in the role play. Rahmi mentioned "I felt enthusiastic with role play since it varied." The previous statement made the researcher curious about is role play has various activity. Then, the participant explained that in that course, role play was done in various activities such as reading the poem and doing drama. Besides, Marwa also mentioned that some students felt enthusiast of role play because they wanted to know how the feeling when involved and played in role play performance. According to Montano and Kasprzyk (2008), someone would perform positive attitudes since they hold a strong and positive belief. Rahmi's response at the first time when the role play was announced was curious. Moreover, Rahmi also stated that students curious and enthusiast with role play activity. Eshghinejad (2016) mentioned that in learning, attitudes have a vital role in affecting someone's behavior toward the language. Some students were curious about the upcoming performance that they would face. No need a long time after her previous statement, Rahmi added that she was curious about what they were going to do in the role play and how the role play would be.

There were also negative responses shared by the participants on the implementation of role play assignment. The researchers found two negative responses namely:

Students are shocked when role play assignment was announced. At the first time role play was announced, some students were shocked. As mentioned by Marwa, she said "we all were shocked." Without giving more statements, that was the only statement when she was asked about her response if the teacher would conduct the role play. After several conversations, she finally shared why some students felt shocked. Marwa stated that students shocked when the role play activity was announced because they have no preparation for it. This because the participant was not motivated with the course so that she did not pay attention to the announcement at the first time.

Students are anxious in doing role play. Rahmi stated that some students were afraid when they were given a task to make role play performance because there were a lot of preparation and practices to do it. In this case, the participant thought that there were many aspects to consider in doing role play, therefore, they need to prepare in order to make a good role play. Rahmi also mentioned that she was worried if the role play performance is not good enough to please the audiences. Thus, role play, at the same time, could make some students afraid of it.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the implementation of role play in the English Language Education Department at one Islamic private university in Yogyakarta was well implemented since it follows the procedure proposed by scholar. Not only that, the implementation was also adjusted with the condition of the department, so it is suitable with their context. Besides, the students were mostly giving positive responses on the implementation of role play since four out of six responses were positive. This implied that the application of role play in language learning to facilitate students' speaking skill is still one of the most appropriate method in EFL context.

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