

Enhancement of English Speaking Skills Through Role Play Technique

Shiva Bahadur Khulimuli¹

Abstract

This study aims to investigate about how students' English speaking skills can be enhanced through the employment of role play technique. The sample population of the study was taken from the grade XI students of Bagiswori Secondary School. The experimental group was taught through role play technique while the control class was taught through the traditional grammar based techniques. The total population of this study was 30 students who were enrolled in the academic year 2020/2021. It was experimental study. The tools applied in this research were observation sheet and speaking test. After 15 lessons of the teaching, the post-test of speaking was conducted in which the students in both groups were asked to answer. The results revealed that the experimental group's motivation has been enhanced and has improved English speaking skill significantly.

Keywords: Role play, Speaking skills, Technique, Conversation, Communicate

I. Introduction

A person, at first, learns to speak in native language to convey a message and then gradually uses other methods like reading and writing to communicate with others. Similarly, when a person targets to acquire a second language, the speaking method is very effective for acquisition. In Nepal, the other methods are given more priority for second language acquisition and for that reason students find it difficult to speak and communicate in the target language.

In private as well as public/ community schools of our country Nepal, the medium of language in class room interaction is English. However, most of the students are from various mother tongues. As a result, when students are given a task in classroom, they find it difficult to express their feelings in the target language as their native language stands as a barrier. The students usually do not get exposure to the right environment to practice speaking in English as it is not practiced nationwide. As a result, in the classroom, when they are asked to give a speech they do not feel at ease. To overcome this problem, role play can be used as an effective tool to help the students regain confidence. In an English speaking class, it is important for the students to comprehend the situation to communicate effectively outside of the classroom. Role play is the medium which enables the students to get an idea about different situations through various activities taken from the scenario of real life. It is found that the students who are able to write an essay on a given topic fail to communicate a simple idea fluently. Therefore, it is very significant to teach students some skills that they can use in the everyday interaction and role play can be an effective technique for this.

¹ Shiva Bahadur Khulimuli is the teaching assistant of Bagisowri College. He can be reached at sbkhulimuli35@gmail.com

Richard (1985) defines role play as a drama-like classroom activities in which students take the roles of different participants in a situation, and, act out what might typically happen in that situation. For example, to practice how to express complains and apologies in a foreign language, students might have to role-play a situation in which a customer in a shop returns a faulty article to a salesperson. Doff (1992) states that in a role play, students imagine a role (e.g. a police officer, a shop assistant), a situation (e.g. buying food, planning a party) or both. Role play should be improvised; students decide exactly what to say as they go along. Situation, roles and useful expressions are the three parts in a role play.

When students were assigned a situation to role play in, they had put in the effort to think of the appropriate language that could be used to express their views and thoughts for communication. It also helped them to acquire speaking skill and oral fluency, which also helped to boost their confidence level. As speaking skill requires more 'practice and exposure', role play can play an effective role. A clear observation of the similarly assigned situation helped the students to adapt to the moods and vocal expression of the given situation, which they could then perform. For example, when they were assigned to play the roles of a salesman and a customer, they were introduced to a 'different social context' which was new, interesting, and challenging for them. It gave them an opportunity to show their creativity because the life style, language, emotion, environment, expression and body language would be different. As they took preparation for the play, it not only helped them to gain back their confidence but also helped in acquiring fluency in the target language.

In a classroom, besides other oral activities like picture description, storytelling and quizzing, we have also given them role play. Communication was not confined in one situation and role play gave them the scope to play a series of different situational interactions. Another reason was that it helped them to practice English in a controlled situation so that they could gain confidence to perform in a 'real life situation'. However, role play took up a lot of time it became difficult for the teacher to accommodate the activity for all students within the allocated class time. Moreover, for lack of proper logistic support, the teacher could not record their performance all the time to evaluate afterwards. Although the time limitation for each play was allocated, most of the time, they exceeded the time by two, three minutes as it was left to the team members to divide the allocated time among them-selves.

II. Literature Review

Liu and Ding (2009) used role-play technique to see how the students performed in groups when they were given a familiar situation to role play in. They also observed their language potency and how the errors can be corrected as well as how to give feedback to the learners for further improvement. Their observation was that if the teacher gave a familiar situation than the result would be positive and rather giving instant feedback they should be shown the video tapes with oral feedback for 'self or peer correction.' The researcher followed the similar pattern for feedback and noticed that students performed well as they acted in a familiar situation and they improved accordingly.

Cornett (1999) presented that students improved fluency in language and oral interaction skills, beside the use of language of the body during face-to-face communication, when they were participated in role play techniques. Those techniques were especially fundamental for students learning a foreign language, who did not often speak English at home because those students were eager to use English language, and then improved their fluency and speaking with the chance to participate in role play. Role-play is simply required to play the other roles in the same way they think about how other roles may behave. As a result, role play can be clearly understood of many aspects like reactions, values, feelings, and attitudes of the person in the same.

Ments (1999) mentioned, “The most obvious uses of role-play are in those areas which deal primarily with aspects of communication” (p. 19). In our speaking class the objective was to see how well the students communicate through language. Since role play is communication based technique, we applied it to see its effectiveness through various situations in controlled environment. Role-playing gives ‘students the opportunity to practice interacting with others in certain roles’ and regarding purpose of role playing he said, “their aim is to feel, react and behave as closely as possible to the way someone placed that particular situation would do” (p. 9). Since role-play deals ‘primarily with aspects of communication’ Ments expressed, “it is therefore ideally suited to those subjects that deal with linguistic ability, namely languages, literacy and social skills training” (p. 19). Ments mentioned a lot of areas where role play could be used. For testing linguistic ability, he said it could be done “by devising scenes of everyday life, in particular those situations which make use of the vocabulary to be learnt, the students can be encouraged to use language in a free and interesting way” (p. 19). He also noticed that ‘one is using language and other ways of communicating’ and for that reason learning became ‘an integral part of the task.’ About role-play Ments said that “it expresses hidden feelings, student can discuss private issues and problems, enables students to empathize with others and understand their motivation” (p. 13). Ments mentioned that role play is “motivational and effective because it involves activity” (p. 13).

Qing (2011) experimented role-play in the intermediate level and noticed that role play could ace students’ intercultural awareness and develop overall communicative competence (p. 36). The author stated, “Adopting another’s cultural role creates freedom for experimentation while it also creates a significant learning situation for the participants and for the audience” (p. 38). The author also stated, “Content based role plays give 224 students the unique opportunity to explore another culture in detail from a variety of perspectives. Speakers of English should be able to express themselves properly and understand the grammatical discourse, strategic, and sociolinguistic factors for any given situation based on a higher level of communicative competence” (p. 38). In addition, Davies (1990) mentioned that dramatic activities, if the teachers know how to use them effectively, they will help reinforce the individuals to develop their communicative skill though the dramatic activities are only the role plays. Likewise, Singh (2000) who studied English teaching by using dramatic activities found that the dramatic activities were partially used with the students who studied Malay as their mother tongues. The students were more interested in joining activities than the conventional teaching and they had fun in doing the activities. In the study, the researcher observed similar communicative

development but as the learners were frequent user of mother tongues they had little difficulty in expressing themselves properly using English language.

Role play is considered as a place that makes it easy for students to learn the basics of English conversation (Stocker, 2006 cited in Rayhan, 2014). By applying role play in teaching speaking, students get the opportunity to practice in terms of communication and roles in different social, as well as create and place themselves (Fadilah, 2016, p.210). Furthermore, Rahayu (2015) argued that role play helps students who are shy, who have difficulty in conversation by providing a mask, so they can improve their ability to speak and interact in any situation. Based on the exposure above, it is clear that role play technique is a method applied in teaching speaking, to improve students' confidence and fluency in speaking, active learning, as well as dialogue and interaction with others.

III. Methodology

Objective of the Study

The principal aims of the current investigation can be listed as the followings:

- a. To analyze the effectiveness of using role play techniques in enhancing speaking skills of the students in English as a second language class.
- b. To evaluate the advantage of role-play techniques in students' real life situation.

Research Questions

The research questions of this study are as follows.

- a. Is there any positive impact of using role play techniques in enhancing speaking skills of the students in English as a second language class?
- b. What are the advantages of using role-play as a medium to enhance speaking skills to interact accurately in a class?

Participants of Role-play

Thirty students of Bagiswori Secondary School of section G took part in the investigation process. Out of them, 15 students were in the experiment group whereas the same number of students was in the control. The participants were grouped according to their class role number, i.e., odd in one group and even in other.

Duration

The duration of the research was from March 2021 to May 2021.

Role-play Technique Procedure in Learning

Role play is a technique used in language teaching. There have been many studies that discuss the implementation of role play in learning, which is more predominantly carried out in language learning to improve students' speaking skills. Huda (2015) states that there are three reasons this method created, which refers to the assumption on authentic comparison to the problems in real life; and involves several psychological aspects that include attitudes, values, and beliefs. In terms of the type, the implementation of role play divided into two forms, include 1) scripted, which is a script that comes from a dialogue book or text in the form of a speech,

with this text script functioning as a means of conveying language meaning in a way that is easy to remember; 2) unscripted, in this case, the implementation of role play does not depend on a script or textbook. In this, students improvise. Therefore, it requires preparation from both teachers and students.

There are several studies that explain the procedures for implementing role-playing, including those described by Susan House (cited in Fadilah, 2016), she mentions there are 4 procedures for implementing role play. The procedures include 1) students are accustomed to reading examples of dialogue; 2) dividing pairs A and B, giving dialogue and roles A and B; 3) give students play their role; 4) the teacher makes corrections and checks the students by changing roles, and repeats them. Added, according to Huang (cited in Rahayu, 2015) there are 6 main procedures in implementing role play, including: 1) the teacher must determine the teaching material in role play activities. Teachers can take teaching materials from various sources and select materials, as well as create their own authentic teaching materials. Interests of students, teaching objectives, and in determining the suitability of teaching materials; 2) choose the situation and make the dialogue, every situation created by the students themselves based on materials from the teacher; 3) before doing role play, the teacher teaches dialogue in role playing, the teacher needs to teach and ensure students use vocabulary, sentences, and dialogue, and provide opportunities for students to ask questions; 4) ask students to practice role play in pairs or small groups, then after they mastered their respective roles, ask them to exchange roles, and finally ask students to do a role play in front of the class; 5) ask students to modify the situation and dialogue from the original; 6) evaluate students' understanding related to vocabulary, sentences, and dialogues.

From the description above, it can be concluded that in implementing the role play technique, it is necessary to consider procedures. Based on that, the writer tries to make a large outline of the procedures for implementing role play techniques are 1) the teacher must know the goals and objectives of implementing role play; 2) the teacher designs the implementation of role play learning; 3) the teacher prepares his authentic teaching materials to be adapted to the learning objectives, talents, interests and abilities of students; 4) the teacher designs a conversation concept in the form of dialogue by determining the situation; 5) The teacher conveys the conversation dialogue that has been made beforehand, then asks students to say it in the context of habituation and practicing the students' pronunciation skills, as well as correcting and informing the accuracy of the pronunciation of vocabulary, sentences, and dialogue as a whole, in this case, the teacher must be able to ensure that students have mastered the aspects that must be mastered; 6) teachers divide students in groups or pairs, adapted to the learning design and the situation has been made before; 7) the teacher starts the role play activity by asking students to play their role correctly; 8) the teacher asks the students to switch roles if it is felt the students have mastered the previous roles, 9) students practice their role-play in front of the class, and 10) the teacher conducting the evaluation.

Data Analysis

First of all, the researcher distributed survey questionnaire among the students. Fifty percent students found it to be an easy method to communicate as they had complete freedom to select

the vocabulary. The researcher selected them as the experimental group and rest as the control group. Before implementing role play technique to the experimental group, the pre-test was conducted on 1st March 2021. The pre-test was administered on the sample of the study for two groups. The researcher himself tested the sample of the study and he recorded the answers for scoring. The time needed for answering the question was between 10-15 minutes. The aim behind carrying out the pre-test is to compare the students' achievement scores in the pre-test with that of the same students in the post-test.

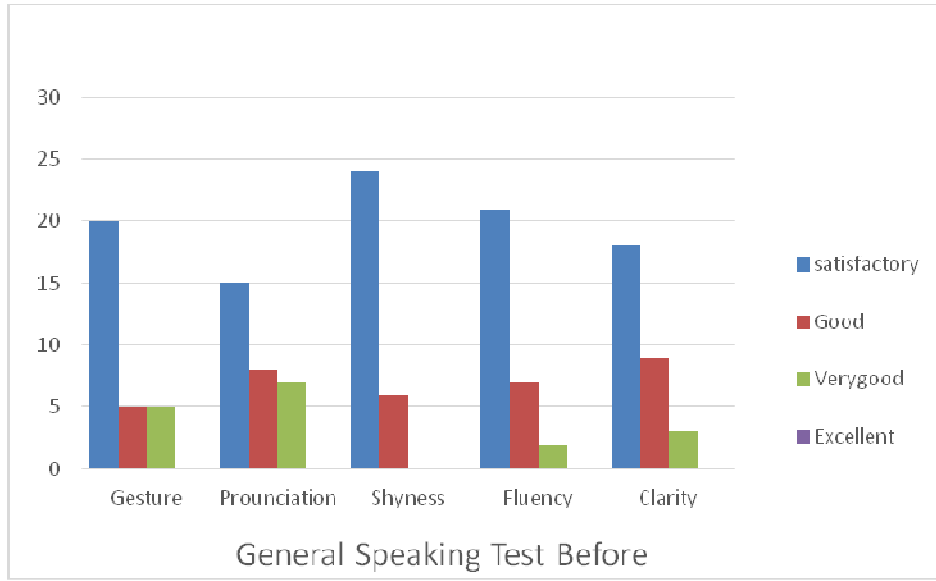
Then the researcher divided the work into groups, the experimental group felt less burdened and, it created a scope to show the talent of each individual. Eight students said that as they were confronted with a different situation, they experienced something new and interesting even though the characters in role play were familiar to them. Seven students believed that, at times, it was difficult for them to fully manage the task within the allocated time.

The speaking class met thrice a week. To make the situation conducive, the teacher played YOU TUBE version of a one act play 'Refund' twice and then read the dialogue aloud and then pointed a couple of students to read it in front of the whole class. Then, the teacher pointed out to the students if they faced any difficult words or expressions in order to analyze and explain them. Students were asked to be the characters of the play and performed as them. Then, they were called up randomly to practice. This step conducted to encourage students; meanwhile the teacher should grade their performance on a rating scale of 1 to 20. In addition, a peer observation was conducted by asking students to grade their colleagues in similar scale. Member of each group were scrambled with each time of practicing the dialogues to avoid of feeling bored.

The students of the experimental group and controlled group were tested every last day of the months i.e. March, April and May respectively. The same testing procedures were used for pre-test and post-test of both groups. The students' oral performance in the post-test was scored under the same conditions as that of the pre-test. The time require for answering the questions was 10-15 minutes for each students. The researcher conducted the pre-test and the post-test under the same conditions.

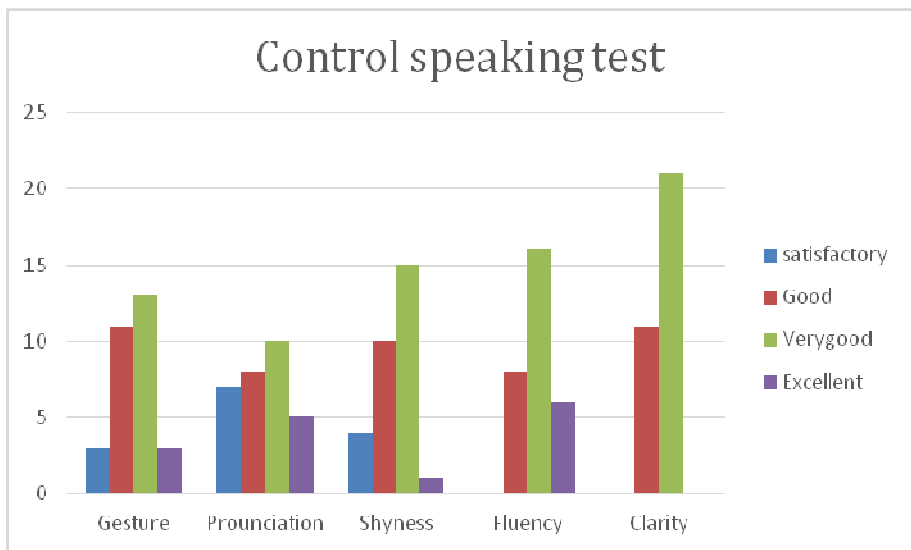
The following table and multifaceted bar diagram show the scoring of the controlled group and the experimental group; and is found almost same in the pre-test.

	Gesture	Pronunciation	Shyness	Fluency	Clarity
Satisfactory	20	15	24	21	18
Good	5	8	6	7	9
Very good	5	7	0	2	3
Excellent	0	0	0	0	0



The following table and multifaceted bar diagram present the difference in scoring that is found a bit bigger in the post-test of the control and experimental group.

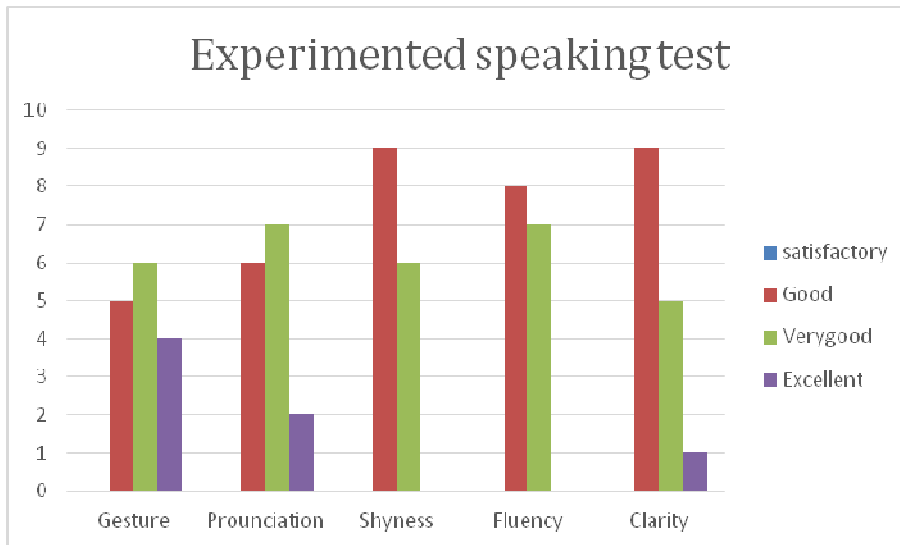
	Gesture	Pronunciation	Shyness	Fluency	Clarity
Satisfactory	3	7	4	0	0
Good	11	8	10	8	11
Very good	13	10	15	16	21
Excellent	3	5	1	6	0



The following Table and Multifaceted Bar Diagram 3 show that students' accents improved with experimental group more than controlled group. It may be common fact to obtain this result because role play technique asks students to practice speaking and listening more than reading and writing. Students also should practice the repetition of the same words or expressions many times to comprehend their conversation. They were asked to focus consciously on their accent

and pronunciation in particular. As a result, students might have paid more attention to accent or pronunciation while speaking. This indicates that there is a significant difference in the total scores of post-test between the experimental and control groups in a favor of the experimental group. This confirms that the experimental group is better than the controlled group.

	Gesture	Pronunciation	Shyness	Fluency	Clarity
Satisfactory	0	0	0	0	0
Good	5	6	9	8	9
Very good	6	7	6	7	5
Excellent	4	2	0	0	1



The performance of the experimental group was observed by the researcher with the observation checklist. The researcher as the teacher decided the teaching materials, selected the situations and created the dialogues, created the activity that required the students to work together to achieve a purpose. The teacher also taught dialogue for role play, asked the students to practice the dialogue, gave the students a desire to communicate, gave the students opportunity to express personal feeling, ideas and opinion, provided supportive and dynamic classroom that made the students feel confident in using the language. The observation checklists for the students, found that the students had worked together to achieve purpose. The students felt more confidence in using the language and the students remained active in teaching and learning process.

IV. Outcomes and Discussion

The reasons why the sample group was able to speak English for communication by using role play technique which emphasize the students' practice in speaking, students are confident and brave to act out and also they can use English in communication. They can apply the conversations into their daily use. In addition, they work in group and they can prepare the role play before hand enabling them to act out according to their assigned roles which was consistent with Maley and Duff (2001) stating that drama can stimulate the students to learn in other subjects, they want to communicate in different situations with natural communication and

meaningful context. They know themselves better and can evaluate their own abilities. This can result in the students' self confidence in using a second language. They can feel more relaxed and minimize their tension. Each time they present their role plays, they are interested in the roles given to them; they experience their emotion and their friends' as well because they try their best to play the roles as given and they can transfer their emotions and meet with the role plays.

The result of the present study showed that the students who were taught through role play got better result than the students who were taught through traditional grammar based method. It is caused by the strategy that is used. Role play gives the opportunity to the students to explore their ability to be more active in teaching and learning process. The students have the opportunities for stimulating their speaking skills and they can easily perform in the front of the class. So, based on the obtained results, certain justifications concerning the effectiveness of using role play techniques on Nepali English as a Foreign Language students' speaking skill can be made.

When students were assigned a situation to role play in, they had put in the effort to think of the appropriate language that could be used to express their views and thoughts for communication. It also helped them to acquire speaking skill and oral fluency, which also helped to boost their confidence level. As speaking skill requires more 'practice and exposure', role play can play an effective role. A clear observation of the similarly assigned situation helped the students to adapt to the moods and vocal expression of the given situation, which they could then perform. For example, when they were assigned to play the roles of a leader and a traveler, they were introduced to a 'different context' which was new, interesting, and challenging for them. It gave them an opportunity to show their creativity because the life style, language, emotion, environment, expression and body language would be different. As they took preparation for the play, it not only helped them to gain back their confidence but also helped in acquiring fluency in the target language.

Accordingly, the students under experimental group seemed to succeed because of getting involved and practice in role play technique such as group work and peer work. It can be inferred that if the class is framed as a community to work together supporting each other, it will have the opportunity to work for the same aims. This builds their ability to interact with and understand each other, the best basis for all learning. Moreover, the results of the present study confirm that role play techniques provide a kind of interesting environment for the students which lead to better attention in learning and stimulate them to participate in role-play techniques. In role-play techniques, students take a new identity and learn to use for every day interaction.

The eleventh grade learners from the sample group were very satisfied with the English Communication by using role play activities as well as the dramatic activities and at the same time they also practiced listening skill. These could result in the students' confidence in using English for their speaking skills since it allowed students to join in every activity prior to their performance; they had to write the scripts, set the situation, the characters. They could work in

pair or in group which resulted in group work atmosphere with such cooperation and they could rehearse their roles and learned how to solve the problems in different situations. Furthermore, students' vocabulary improved in experimental group more than control group. In role play, although as teachers gave them selected topics, they selected the words and phrases of their own, which helped them to choose suitable words that suited the situation and also helped them to increase their vocabulary. They had fun in doing the role plays under the teacher's facilitation.

V. Conclusion

- 1). The ability of English speaking skill of a sample group by using role play technique after attending the course was higher than the prior to attending the course significantly.
- 2). Role play technique supported learners to gain self confidence in using English language as well as enhanced the emotional and imaginative domain including the intellectual and rational sphere.

Moreover, based on the finding of the research it can be concluded that role play is an effective technique to develop speaking skill of the students. It can be generalized that role play technique enhanced the learners speaking skill. By giving them a special role, learners, especially shyest ones, feel encouraged and tend to abandon their embarrassment and shyness. It is because the positive aspect of the role play technique is it develops confidence and creativity on students as they are motivated to take part in speaking skills. The regular practice of role play makes the students fluent in English. Similarly, it develops vocabularies which help to choose suitable words that suit in the situation. Finally, the study proves that role play has an important pedagogical implication in EFL classroom to bridge the gap between the carefully controlled classroom work and the complexity of language in the outside world.

References

- Cornett, C.E. (1999). *Whole Language, Whole Learning*: Phil Delt Kappa Educational Foundation.
- Davies, P. (1990). *The Use of Drama in English Language Teaching*. *TESL Canada Journal*, 8(1), 87-98.
- Doff, A. (1992). *Teach English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fadilah. (2016). Teaching Speaking By Role-Play Activity. *OKARA: Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra*, 10(2), 209. <https://doi.org/10.19105/ojbs.v10i2.980>.
- Huda, K. (2015). PENINGKATAN KETERAMPILAN BERBICARA BAHASA INGGRIS MELALUI METODE ROLE PLAYING. *Didaktikum: Jurnal Penelitian Tindakan Kelas*, 16(3), 17–22.
- Liu, F. and Ding, Y. (2009). Role- play in English Language Teaching. *Asian Social Science*, 5 (10), 140-143. Retrieved July 11, 2012, from <http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ass/article/download/3988/3534>.
- Malay, A. & Duff, A. (2001). *Drama Techniques in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Ments, V.M. (1999). *The effective use of role-play: practical technique for improving learning* (2nd ed.). Retrieved May 12, 2012, from <http://books.google.com.bd/books/about/The-Effective-Use-of-Role-Play.html?id=GbXOYf8aTIC&credir-esc=y>

- Qing, X. (2011). *Role-play an effective approach to developing overall communicative competence. Cross-Cultural Communication*, 7(4), 36-39. DOI: 10. 3968/jccc.1923670020//0704.317.
- Rahayu, P. (2015). Role Play Strategy in Teaching Speaking. *Jurnal Ilmiah Edu Research*, 4(1), 61–70.
- Rayhan, J. M. (2014). The Impact of Using Role Play Techniques on Improving Pupils ' Speaking Skill for Primary School Ass . prof . Dr . Jassim Mohammed Rayhan Babylon University \ College of Basic Education. *Journal of Basic Education*, 15, 516–530.
- Richards, J. (1985). *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics*: London, Longman.
- Singh, G. (2000). Using Drama in the English Classroom. *The English Teacher*. Lim; & Lynne: 72-75. Senate, 2012.