ENHANCING STUDENTS' ACTIVE LEARNING THROUGH GROUP DISCUSSION ROLE-PLAYING

Research article

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Abstract

This research sets out to enhance students' active learning through group discussion role-playing. The research recorded the implementation of group discussion in order to find the revision in the teaching-learning process. Classroom action research involving students from a higher institution was used. The data was collected from observations and interviews. The findings proved that the implementation of group discussions role-playing could promote students' active learning, develop active participation, improve their higher-order thinking, and increase motivation. The activity provides more opportunities to display their thinking, which in turn increases their positive attitude towards language learning. This study also provided a teaching framework of group discussion role-playing as a novelty of the analysis. Furthermore, the result can be an applicable recommendation for the teacher to improve students' active learning.

Keywords: active learning; students' active participation; students' motivation

1. Introduction

Enhancing student autonomy is an important point in foreign language teaching methodology. The latest paradigm emergence where teaching is transformed into learning forces the students to actively participate during the learning process to build inquiry and improve the students' problem-solving and analytical skills (Emaliana, 2017). As a result of this transformation, students should take much responsibility for their learning (Lee & Hines, 2012). Moreover, they should be active in developing how they learn. Thus, teacher-student and student-student interaction must occur during the teaching-learning process (Achmad & Yusuf, 2014). There is an abundance of brainstorming activities to stimulate students' active learning, such as pair work and small-group work (Namaziandost et al., 2019). In this case, the teacher's role should be more like an advisor and a facilitator than a lecturer (Boyd, 2014). In sum, those points must be encouraged in the second language classroom.

A critical factor in L2 development is the opportunity given to learners to speak through interaction (Jones, 2014). Teachers must stimulate learners' willingness to communicate. A practical way of stimulating learners to speak is to provide them with extensive exposure and opportunities to use the language in the classroom (Abdullah et al., 2012). Thus, teacher talk time should be less while student talk time should be more. This kind of stimulation is vital since L2 learners are considered successful in learning a language by being able to speak in the target language (Leong et al., 2017), in this case, in English. However, from the pre-observation

results, it is found that the students were hesitant to speak in the learning process. They were afraid of giving opinions and reluctant to participate. Most of the students barely showed enthusiasm in the speaking activity during the discussion. Nevertheless, they tend to be passive observers. They seemed afraid to get involved in the learning process and communicate comfortably with their classmates. The leading cause underlying this situation was the students' competence in speaking English. Their lack of ability in speaking prevented them from enjoying any speaking activities that made them challenging to achieve communicative competence as English learners. Therefore, to help students cope with the problem, an appropriate teaching strategy promotes active learning theory and practice to stimulate them in the speaking class.

Considering the idea of active learning theory and practice, collaborative learning in group work has become an essential element (Burke, 2011). Group work or group discussion, which emphasizes problem-solving with decision-making exercises, requires students' active participation (Jones, 2014). Students' engagement in the discussion is essential in developing their communicative competences (Ampatuan & Jose, 2016). By definition, group work is a teaching strategy that encourages intellectual accomplishment and socialization (Gillies, 2003). It is a popular strategy teachers use when conducting classroom activities, especially in speaking class. Group work has been researched as a carrier of a cheerful ambiance (Bennett, 2015). It becomes powerful if conducted and organized appropriately to promote students' activeness, collaboration, cognitive restructuring, and formative assessment and feedback to shape the learning (Wilson et al., 2018).

Recent researches have discussed and highlighted the effectiveness of group work as a strategy in improving students' participation in the classroom. According to Debele & Kelbisa (Debele & Kelbisa, 2017), group work can increase learners' time to speak in the target language during the lesson. Group work also provides an opportunity for learners to learn from peers, making them active learners (Hadimani, 2014). The students are given opportunities to interact and practice the language with other students (Tanner, 2013). They can also make progress by talking in the target language that builds their conversations and creates meaning that they understand (Lee & Hines, 2012). Through group work strategy in large classes, the students will become active learners as they engage in hands-on activities, interact, investigate and interpret (Paolini, 2015). In addition, group discussion also promotes learning and socialization among students, which further helps them attain higher academic outcomes and motivation (Gillies, 2003). Moreover, conducting group discussions is essential to help students become more engaged in their learning (Pollock et al., 2011) .

However, if it is seen deeper, the past studies are only related to one particular group work. There has been no comprehensive study to investigate how group work, in this case, group discussion role-playing, influences students' active learning on a different level of English learners. The more specific topic is researched, the better and the more contribute the research. This is the gap to bridge by presenting more specific and detailed information from research looking into using this teaching approach.

Considering those background, this research is intended to improve students' participation by implementing group discussion as the teaching instruction. The study recorded the implementation of group discussion to find enhancement during teaching-learning in the classroom. Moreover, the researcher highly expects that the study results could provide the teacher, educators, and other instructors practical suggestions to improve students' classroom participation.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

The study involved 40 students of the English Litterature Study Program in Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing Pontianak Indonesia, consisting of 25 female and 15 male students as the subject of research. The students have a different level of English. Only 25% of the participants are in the upper intermediate level, while the rest are in the intermediate level and below the intermediate level.

2.2 Instruments

Through observation and interviews, the data was gathered. The researcher prepared the lesson plan, video and audio recorder, observation sheet, students' scoring sheet (speaking rubric), student's worksheets, and interview sheet.

2.3 Data Analysis Procedures

In conducting the research, a classroom action research procedure was employed. Through a set of activities, the researchers identified the problems, planned the solution, reflected on what was happening, and tried a new method to solve the issue (Robson, 2016). The implementation of group discussion as the teaching strategy was recorded through an observation sheet and video recorder. Then interviews with ten participants were conducted after the group discussion was implemented, followed by scoring the students' achievement in speaking. The participants for the interview section were selected from the criteria of (1) showing enthusiasm, (2) lack of interest, (3) being active and (4) being passive during the implementation of group discussion. The researchers had also prepared a teaching framework for implementing group discussion role-playing, as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Group Discussion Role-Playing Teaching Framework

Stage One	The teacher explained the role in the discussion as an initiator, opinion seeker, opinion giver, devils' advocate, clarifier, harmonizer, and evaluator.
Stage Two	The teacher asked students to be in a group of 5 and come in front of the class to discuss. The teacher gave the topic/ problem in the beginning, yet later, the given topic will be on the spot.
Stage Three	The teacher asked the rest of the students to score their friend performance (the scoring rubric provided by the teacher) and gave feedback. The teacher also gave feedback to the group. The teacher used the worksheet for the review and used the group recording.

4. Findings and Discussion

The study's main goal was to find out the use of group discussion strategy in influencing classroom practices and students' performances in speaking class. The focus was on applying the group discussion to improve the teaching-learning process. The data gathered from classroom observations and interviews. The analysis sought to determine how group discussion improved students' active learning.

The previous problems found out that (in pre-research) the students were unenthusiastic and passive to speak in English; they were not interested in participating and anxious or were afraid of making mistakes when speaking. However, through implementing the group

discussion in the teaching-learning process, all the students were actively engaged in the discussion. Furthermore, they provided positive feedback on the technique.

The results also indicated that their number of classroom participation throughout the four weeks of observation classified the active and passive students. Each group consists of five students. Each of the discussions lasted for between 20 to 30 minutes. Different topics were given each meeting. The researcher recorded the discussions. Even though the improvement slowly evolved, it revealed that the students participated actively throughout the process. They had tried their best to make use of all the opportunities they were offered. In sum, the findings showed that using group discussion role-playing promoted students' active learning.

To illustrate the most typical changes that occurred, Figure 2 below shows several main findings throughout the research.
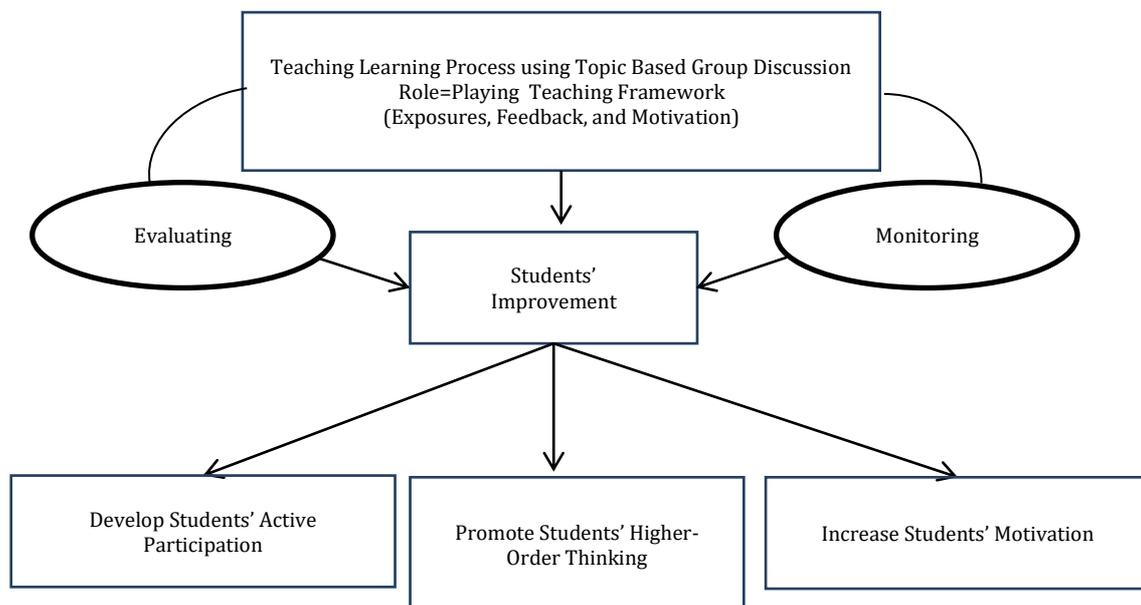

Figure 1. Schema of Students' Active Participation Using Group Discussion Role-Playing

The figure indicated that applying group discussion role-playing as the teaching instruction had positively affected students' performances during the teaching-learning process. The collaborative work, guided discussion, feedback, review, and motivation provided within the process helped the teacher to maximize opportunities for students to make a noticeable improvement in their language learning. The following section reports under the themes of students' behaviour as the results of using the group discussion technique.

4.1 Developing Students Active Participation

In the first meeting, the student's participation was still low. Some of the students only listened to their friends talking without commenting or giving feedback, while the rest were busy preparing their statements. During the teaching and learning process, the confidence students were eager to participate in every opportunity given. They wanted to enhance their speaking skills, especially in conveying their ideas, growing questions, and answering the teacher or students' questions. Meanwhile, the other students acted more as listeners during the discussion. It was the opposite with the students who actively participated during the lesson, these students preferred taking notes only. It could be seen when the teacher asked them to give

feedback to the group who performed; only a few students responded well; the rest just sat in silent or asked their peers in Bahasa Indonesia. In sum, there were still some problems regarding their participation in the discussion. Those reasons required a second meeting to be conducted.

The observation data in the second and third meetings showed that the students' involvement increased. Most of the students were able to participate due to the encouragement from the teacher. The teacher provided essential phrases to use during the discussion for the students who found it difficult to act out the role. The teacher invited others to participate during the performance of each group. By giving them the scoring rubric of group discussion performance as a guideline, the students seemed more willing to analyse and evaluate their peers' performances. There were also some questions and feedback from the teacher to make the students more focused and active.

Additionally, the majority of the students enjoyed their talk. They organized and discussed together with the given topics. They were already familiar with the stage of the discussion; hence most of them actively participated in the process of learning. The teacher was satisfied enough with the student's improvement in the third meeting. However, to provide variety of exposure for students to use the target language and explore their confidence to express themselves more fluently; thus, the researcher decided to go on with the fourth meeting.

In the fourth meeting, the students increased their pace on the discussion. The students initiated and motivated their peers during the discussion based on the observation notes. They also enjoyed asking a question and giving opinions during the discussion. They got a lot of opportunities to use the language and interacted more during the discussion. Thus, all their active participation increased dramatically compared to the first meeting. In sum, using group discussion techniques facilitated the students to participate in the classroom.

Student engagement happens within a supportive environment (Dary, T., Pickeral, T., Shumer, R., Williams, 2016). For instance, asking questions, giving opinions, or answering the teacher questions or their peers are examples of active classroom participation (Indriani, 2020). In addition, from the findings, the students' engagement happens when they can pay attention, show their interest in the discussion, and are given opportunities to work collaboratively to have meaningful interactions. It implicates reviewing to see if they have comprehended what someone has said, explaining their understanding, and ensuring that someone has understood their intention (Mafuraga & Moremi, 2017). By asking for clarification, duplication, or explanations during discussions, students learn from their peers to handle them with language at a level they can learn from and understand (Rutter et al., 2016). Those things also enhanced their motivation to learn and advance in their education. Therefore, being involved in the discussion make the students discover more and facilitate their active learning.

4.2 Promoting Students Higher Order Thinking

After coping with problems during the speaking activity, the students' critical thinking or higher-order thinking can be seen within the process. The students were assigned in a group to prepare the discussion. The teacher also ensured that all students understood what to do and the role-play. The students were split into groups and were permitted to brainstorm and recall answers to a particular problem based on the subject given. After involving and being familiar with the role, the students knew what they should do. They prepared in advance, and they were given time to report their work. Thus, those processes led them to experiment with the language with support from their peers, teacher, dictionaries, and books. They learned not solely from experts and teachers but also from their friends. They shared ideas and helped each other. They composed what they wanted to say in real-time, tried out whatever language they knew, responded to questions, and provided corrective feedback to each other. It helped them share

their perspective, analyse and identify the problem, look for solutions, and practice critical thinking. In sum, they had participated in higher-order thinking.

The findings above enable learners to be aware of their potencies and challenges regarding higher-order thinking (Chinedu et al., 2015). The teacher also ensured that students understood a particular concept and how it differed from other concepts. The students developed their analytical ability, a significant component of higher-order thinking (Gossett & Fischer, 2005). When brainstorming, the students were available to a more profound level of thinking; as one student developed a view, the other students also accepted the challenge to consider and create better ideas, likewise engaging in higher thinking (Jones, 2014). The feedback from the teacher was also important as it enabled students to acquire the capability to make analytical conclusions upon reading the given data, proof, or fact during the discussion (Fung & Howe, 2014). Dealing with authentic problems, encouraging class discussions, and fostering inquiry-oriented experiments are good chances of developing critical thinking capabilities (Schulz & FitzPatrick, 2016). In sum, the discussion can conduct students' higher-order thinking by maximizing students' role in the learning process.

4.3 Increasing Students Motivation

During the implementation of group discussion role-playing, the teacher gave students feedback as quickly as possible, returned task reports and papers promptly, and appreciate success directly. The teacher tended to do those things to help students aware that schoolwork is noteworthy, useful, and deserving of their efforts. Moreover, the teacher also set topics that helped to encourage them. Those activities promoted interest and their involvement. However, some students were still reluctant to speak up using English due to their self-motivation, which makes them afraid of making mistakes. Therefore, the teacher offered them more time to perform in a small group where they could rehearse with their group members, then slowly became more convinced to convey their thoughts within the whole lesson. In sum, the teacher made more room where exchange arises to boost student motivation and foster student participation.

Based on the interview results, most students liked and were interested in the implemented strategy because they had many opportunities to speak a lot during the class. They were able to check and assess their speaking after listening to their group recordings. Some students also responded that using this technique motivated them to practice because it helped build confidence during the learning process. The other students answered that this learning was challenging yet convenient since they could listen to the recording many times later and monitor it, which helped improve their speaking. However, there were also view students who felt a bit pressured because of their role; they found it difficult to act as the role given, which caused them to not participate well in the discussion. Nevertheless, the students responded that participating in the group discussion encouraged self-reflection and increased their motivation to improve their communicative competence.

The teacher gave the students appraisal, comments, or feedback that influenced motivation and built self-confidence, competence, and self-esteem (Hewitt, 2016). Moreover, besides encouraging them to participate in oral performance, the teacher gave the students a self-evaluation worksheet and the recorded performance in each meeting. Some students said they could reflect on and evaluate their learning processes through self-evaluation worksheets and historical performance. It means the students depended on their teachers to support them in learning the language (Phip, 2017). In addition, during the discussion, students played a role that stimulated their interests and involvement. Thus, the teachers' creativity in designing various activities for learning is one of the essential aspects to support students' motivation.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that: (1) The framework helped the teacher to drive classroom exchange and to maximize exposure for students to utilize the target language and to construct a more effective learning atmosphere; (2) All students enjoyed their experiences of Group Discussion Role-Playing and most produced prominent improvement in their active learning and earned the enthusiasm to define themselves better fluently in speaking; (3) Group Discussion Role-Playing stimulated students active participation with more possibilities to show their thought through an effort which in turn raised their communicative competence; (4) However, this study had several weaknesses. First, the number of participants cannot be generalized. Second, even though the students were pleased with the framework, combining some assignments could have been permitted. Therefore, it is recommended for the lecturer to encourage students to look for chances to use the target language beyond the classroom.

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