THE USE OF SIMULATION AND ROLE-PLAY IN ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS IN LEARNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

Simulation and role-play are among the activities that can promote speaking skills. This study shed light on both the relation of the use of simulation and role-play in enhancing the student's speaking skills and its benefits to the students. It is also focuses on the student's perception towards the use of simulation and role-play in the classroom in helping them increasing their speaking skills. For the achievements of these purposes, 40 students of Form 2A from Sekolah Agama Menengah (SAM) Muhammadiah, Sabak Bernam were involved in completing the performance test and questionnaires. To enhance the quality of the data collected, the observation was also used to help the researcher examine the natural behaviour of the students and provides more details to the findings. The result of this study shows many positive signs in the students because they enjoyed the simulation and role-play activities. This study support that through simulation and role-play, teachers can help their students improve their speaking skills and bring positive changes in the class as well. Students were exposed to communication practices the same as they face real-life situations. They also practiced new vocabulary which help in enhancing their fluency.

Keywords: Simulation, role-play, speaking skills, communication.

Introduction

This study is based on a class of Form 2A students in Sekolah Agama Menengah (SAM) Muhammadiah in Sabak Bernam, Selangor that has been selected for the study on the use of simulation and role-play as the speaking activities conducted in the classroom. The study is about to find out the relation of the use of simulation and role-play in enhancing the student's speaking skills while discussing its benefits to the students alongside with the student's perception towards the use of simulation and role-play in the classroom in helping them increasing their speaking abilities. In Malaysian Education System there are four major skills that are being taught in secondary school which are reading, writing, listening and speaking. This study focusing on ways to enhance the speaking skills among the students in secondary school. Teachers can use variety of activities in order to enhance the student's speaking skills. In this study, simulation and role-play are used as the speaking activities conducted in the classroom and it is match to the KBSM objectives in Form 2. The KBSM syllabus spells out the language requirement of the students in terms of areas of language use, themes and language content (Chitravelu, Sithamparam & Choon, 2005). The KBSM objectives that can be achieved through the use of simulation and role-play are:

Table 1: KBSM Objectives

1.0 Language for Interpersonal Use
1.1 Make friends and keep friendships by:
i. Talking about one's hobbies, pastimes, routines, ambitions and hopes, etc.
ii. Asking questions politely to get information.
iii. Responding appropriately to questions by stating, refuting and giving details.
1.2 Take part in social interaction by:
i. Expressing congratulations and responding appropriately.
ii. Giving compliments and responding appropriately.
iii. Offering help and responding appropriately.
iv. Giving oral instructions to do something.
3.0 Language for Aesthetic Use
3.2 Express themselves creatively and imaginatively by:
i. Acting out sections of a text.
ii. Changing the text to another form (genre).
iii. Composing dialogues at a level suitable to learners.

Source: Adapted from Curriculum Specifications for English Form 2 KBSM (2003)

Simulation and role-play can be used in learning English language to improve the student's speaking skills and the KBSM objectives will be achieved. Furthermore, the students of Form 2A in Sekolah Agama Menengah (SAM) Muhammadiah in Sabak

Bernam, Selangor were the subjects of the study to test the use of simulation and role-play in accomplishing the KBSM objectives for Form 2. The main reason for this study is that there were many students in Malaysia that were very weak in their speaking skills due to the lack of practice in communication using English, limited opportunities to use English outside of the classroom, lack of confidence and motivation to speak and negative attitude towards English language. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to dig out the relation of the use of simulation and role-play in helping the students in order to improve their speaking skills and explore all the benefits to the students. The study also will discuss about the student's perception with the use of simulation and role-play in the classroom as the speaking activities in learning English language.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
1. To investigate about the relation of the use of simulation and role-play in enhancing the student's speaking skills.
2. To investigate the benefits of using simulation and role-play to the students in improving their speaking skills.
3. To gain insight student's perception towards the use of simulation and role-play in the classroom in helping them increasing their speaking skills.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main questions of the study are:

1. What is the relation of the use of simulation and role-play in enhancing the student's speaking skills?
2. What are the benefits of using simulation and role-play to the students in improving their speaking skills?
3. What are the student's perception towards the use of simulation and role-play in the classroom for helping them increasing their speaking skills?

HYPOTHESIS

The hypotheses of the study are:

1. Simulation and role-play enhance the student's speaking skills by giving a lot of communication practices by simulating a real life encounter as in the real world and enable students to learn new vocabulary which can increase their fluency.
2. Through the use of simulation and role-play, students can derive benefit such as encourage oral fluency, as the activity to speak fluently and as a guided speaking activity to face a real life situation.
3. Students give positive perception towards the use of simulation and role-play in the classroom because they find it helpful in improving their vocabulary as well as shedding shyness, increase confident level to speak English and learn other enjoyable ways to learn English which leads to enhance their speaking skills.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is about to help the teachers in the school to use varieties of ways in enhancing students' speaking skills especially through the use of simulation and role-play. The benefits of simulation and role-play and the student's perception towards these activities will also be explored in this study so that teachers will know the effect of using it on their students. Therefore, teachers can use this study as a guidance or source of information to apply simulation and role-play as one of the speaking activity in the English language classroom in enhancing speaking skills among students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Simulation and role-play

Role-play and simulations are forms of experiential learning (Russell & Shepherd, 2010). Besides, simulation and role-play are among popular pedagogical activities in the teaching of speaking and students can derive many advantages from them. There are many researchers who have discussed the definition of simulation and role-play related to the teaching of speaking context. Harmer (2007) stated that all role-plays are simulation, but not all simulations are role-plays. A simulation is a highly developed role-play, almost a mini play, that it is not scripted. The key is to structure the roles and action around a problem or series of problems. He also viewed that in role-play, students get variety of social context and roles and teacher provides information for the particular situation while in simulations, students can bring items to create a realistic environment. There is a consideration that had been discussed by researcher about the use of simulation and role-play in the English language classroom. According to Chitravelu, Sithamparam & Choon (2005) simulation and role-play can be use in the current ELT practice as part of an integrated module, speaking activity and a grammar lesson. Therefore, the researcher comes out with the thought that simulation and role-playing are interrelated and both can be good speaking activities in the classroom that can enhance students speaking skills. Simulation and role-play will naturally go together as the students begin to understand about the activities and enjoy them as communicative games in learning English. This review will help to answer Research Question 1 which to investigate about the relation of simulation and role-play in enhancing the students speaking skills.

Advantages of using simulation and role-play

Through the use of simulation and role-play in the classroom, students can gain many benefits and the researcher had found the advantages stated by other researchers. For example, Ladousse (1987) stated that the advantages of using role-play are functions,

structures and vocabulary can be introduced that lead to new experience for the students, phatic forms of language can be enhance, give support to many shy students, fun and enjoyable way to learn English, increases fluency, as well as promotes interaction and motivation. David (1996) found that simulation gives many advantages as providing the opportunity for the students to carry out a task or solve a problem together, allows students to practice with new vocabulary and structures, gives students the freedom to make their own choices and decisions, allows students to base their choices and decisions on their own experience and also allows teachers to monitor progress and participation unobtrusively.

Harmer (2005) cited that the simulation and role-play can be used to encourage general oral fluency or to train students for specific situations. It has recently gone through a period of relative unpopularity, yet this is a pity since they have three distinct advantages. The advantages are simulations and role-play can be good fun and motivating, thus, allow hesitant students to be more forthright in their opinions and behavior without having to take responsibility for what they say in the way that they do when they are speaking for themselves. Its also allow students to use a much wider range of language than some more task-centred activities may do. All of the researchers had stated that the use of simulation and role-play as classroom activities can contribute to many aspects especially in improving the student's speaking skills. This study is about to find out whether all of the advantages are really exist by using this type of speaking activity. Besides, the result will answer Research Question 2 which is investigating the benefits to the students in improving their speaking skills.

Speaking skills

Speaking is "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts" (Chaney, 1998, p. 13). Speaking is a crucial part of second language learning and teaching. In addition, according to Geyser,

"Speaking is considered by learners as one of the most difficult skills as it involves real-time processing which means that learners don't have much time to formulate what they want to say and how to say it" - (2006, p.111).

For many years, teaching speaking component has been undervalued and English language teachers have continued to teach it just as a repetition of drills or memorization of dialogues. However, today's world believes that the goal of teaching speaking component should improve students' communicative skills, because, only in that way, students can express themselves and learn how to follow the appropriate social and cultural rules in each communicative circumstance. Speaking is a productive skill and one of the important part of second language learning. The ability to communicate in a second language clearly and efficiently contributes to the success of the students in school and later in every phase of their life.

Principles of teaching speaking

Brown (2001) classifieds that there are principles for designing speaking techniques such as using techniques that cover the spectrum of learner needs, from language-based focus on accuracy to message-based focus on interaction, meaning, and fluency. Furthermore, provide intrinsically motivating techniques and encourage the use of authentic language in meaningful contexts is also the principles of teaching speaking. Finally, provide appropriate feedback and correction, capitalize on the natural link between speaking and listening, give students opportunities to initiate oral communication and encourage the development of speaking strategies are also considered as principles of teaching speaking. Thus, all of the principles of teaching speaking contribute to the type of activities use in the classroom such as simulation and role-play.

The components of speaking skills

There are three components of speaking that is important to enhance the speaking skills. Those components are accuracy, fluency and comprehensibility. If a student speaks accurately, he or she is capable of constructing sentences and longer stretches of language that follows acceptable rules of usage. Parrot (2002) described accuracy as the ability of learners in using appropriate grammar, vocabularies and phonology in their speaking. In general, accuracy related to the way of students in mastering word order and omission, pronouns and relative clauses, tenses, prepositions, produces correct sentences in pronunciation, and other grammar rules that commonly occurred when they are speaking among them, so their speaking can be understood by others.

One of the goals of teaching speaking is to develop fluency in language use. Fluency is natural language use occurring when a speaker engages in meaningful interaction and maintains comprehensible and on going communication despite limitations in his or her communicative competence. Richards, Platt, and Weber (1985) stated that fluency is the features which give speech the qualities of being natural and normal, including native-like use of pausing, rhythm, intonation, stress, rate of speaking, and use of interjections and interruptions. Fluency can be developed by creating classroom activities in which students must negotiate meaning, use communication strategies, correct misunderstandings and work to avoid communication breakdowns.

Comprehensibility is the process of understanding of the utterances sent by the speaker done by the listener. Comprehensibility in speaking means that the people can understand what we say and we can understand what they say. Harmer (2005) stated that if two people want to have communication, they have to be speaking because of different information they have. Bad communication occurs when people still confuse with the information received. Therefore, simulation and role-play activities can strengthen these three components to increase speaking skills because it provides a lot of communication practices to the students.

Types of speaking activities that can enhance speaking skills

Harmer (2005) stated that many of classroom speaking activities which are currently in use fall at or near the communicative end of the communication continuum. There are a number of widely-used categories of speaking skills such as acting from a script, communication games, discussion, prepared talks, questionnaires and simulation and role-play**.** Applebaum (2007) designed communicative activities in promoting the students' speaking skill such as simulation and role-play, language games and scramble sentences. In addition, McDonough and Shaw (2003) stated that some types of communicative activities to promote speaking skills are communication games, problem solving and simulation and role-play**.** All of the researchers state the communication activities that can enhance speaking skills and the common activity is simulation and role-play. Therefore, this study is to explore whether simulation and role-play can be used to enhance the speaking skills among students in school and support to answer Research Question 1 which is the relation of the use of simulation and role-play in enhancing the student's speaking skills.

METHODOLOGY

The process of collecting data began with a pre-test given to the subjects to measure their speaking skills. After that, the subjects go through the treatment ten times before the post-test were assigned. Then, calculation made to see the differences of the subject's speaking skills between the pre-test and post-test in this study. An observation also was conducted by the researcher during the treatment process to analyze the benefits of using simulation and role-play in enhancing the speaking skills. Finally, the subjects answered questionnaires based on the treatment that they had gone through to gain insight their perception towards the treatment. For data collection, the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches had been applied. Based on the quantitative approach, the instruments are performance test and questionnaire where the data have been recorded to be analyzed and gathered in order to answer the research questions. Meanwhile, the qualitative approach was represented by the observation based on the natural setting of the classroom situation. The researcher observed the natural behaviour and the activities in the setting. All the feedback collected were for the purpose to gather information from the respondents of study.

RESEARCH FINDING AND ANALYSIS

Analysis of performance test (Pre-test)

The pre-test was completed before the treatment and the purpose is to measure the respondent's speaking skills in English language. It was achieved through an oral test that all of the respondent undergo with the researcher during the English class. Based on the column chart in Figure 1, the marks are divided into four parts; marks in the range of 1 to 3 (weak), marks in the range of 4 to 7 (satisfactory), marks in the range of 8 to 11 (good) and marks in the range of 12 to 15 (excellent). In general, 32.5% (13) of the respondents achieved weak result because of the minimal use of sentence structure and many grammatical errors. They also very poor in pronunciation, lack of fluency and show no interest and enthusiasm towards the test. 50% of the respondents achieved satisfactory marks because they use adequate use of language with some of grammatical errors, fair fluent with frequent pauses and respond to the questions given by the teacher with satisfactory mannerism. Meanwhile, 12.5% of the respondents' attained good result due to the correct sentence structures being used, clear articulation and word stress and also fluent speech with occasional pauses. Another 5% of the respondents attained excellent marks because they were able to use excellent sentence structures, accurate use of grammatical structures and fluent in their communication. The highest percentage of the respondent's result in the pre-test is satisfactory while the lowest percentage is excellent. In conclusion, half of the respondents attained satisfactory result in the pre-test because they did not have good speaking skills and lack of knowledge in English communication.
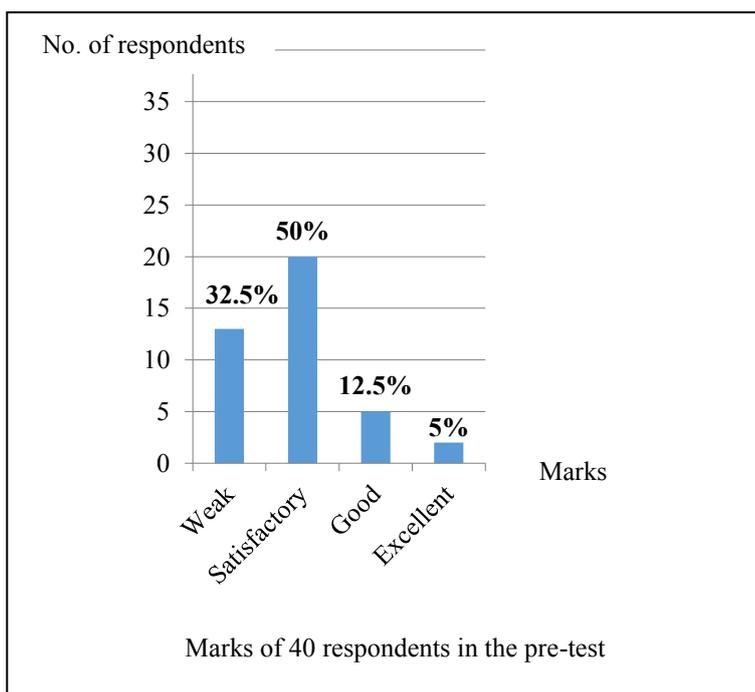

Marks of 40 respondents in the pre-test

Figure 1: Result of pre-test

Analysis of performance test (Post-test)

The post-test was given after the respondents have engaged in the treatment given by the researcher in order to investigate the effect of using simulation and role-play after 10 weeks of treatments. The analysis of the post-test is presented as below:
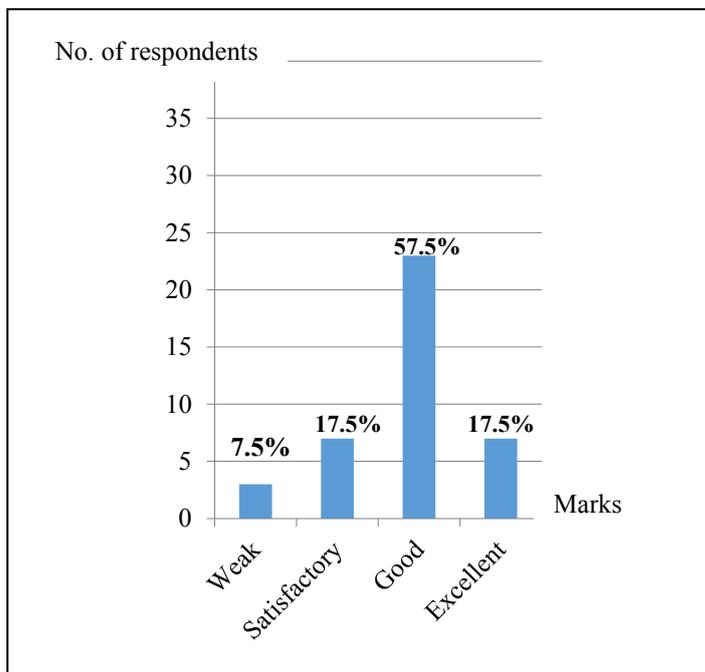

Figure 2: Result of post-test

Based on the column chart above, the marks are divided into four parts; marks in the range of 1 to 3 (weak), 4 to 7 (satisfactory), 8 to 11 (good) and 12 to 15 (excellent). In general, 7.5% of the respondents attained weak result, 17.5% of the respondents get satisfactory result, and 57.5% get a good result while another 17.5% of the respondents attained excellent result in the post-test. The result of differences between pre-test and post-test was very useful to strengthen the effect of using simulation and role-play in enhancing the speaking skills because it helps to support the first research question as mentioned earlier. Based on the findings above, the result in the post-test is better than the pre-test because the percentage of the respondents that achieved weak result in the pre-test decreased from 32.5% to 7.5%. The respondents were weak in their speaking skills due to the lack of communication practices and very shy to speak in English. This is because the school was too much focusing on the grammar rather than the other four skills; reading, writing, speaking and listening. Students were given grammar books but the important four skills had been neglected. They also had the fear of making mistakes when speaking in English. The percentage of the respondents who get satisfactory result dropped rapidly from 50% to 17.5% in the post-test. This showed that more respondents do better performance in the post-test by getting higher marks. Meanwhile, the percentage of the respondents that attained good result increased sharply from 12.5% to 57.5% in the post-test. Furthermore, the percentage of respondent who get excellent result showed the positive changes from 5% to 17.5%. The post-test shown that the respondents enhanced their speaking skills when undergone a lot of communication practice. They expressed themselves freely rather than in the pre-test. In conclusion, the result in the post-test shown an improvement from the respondents after the 10 weeks of treatments.

Analysis of observations

There were three observations conducted in this study to observe the changes on the respondents in 10 weeks towards the use of simulation and role-play activities in the classroom in enhancing their speaking skills. In the first observation, the students were not very familiar with the use of simulation and role-play in their class. Therefore, they were still shy to participate and did not give full cooperation in the activities. They also made many grammar mistakes while communicate using English and did not seem to enjoy the activities. Then, in the second observation there were changes in the students where they started to like the simulation and role-play activities. They easily interact with their group members using English and did not feel shy when speaking in English. It was a positive changes because once the students gave full cooperation in the activities, they realised on the benefits that they can get through those activities. They even make less grammar mistakes compared to the first observation. Finally, in the third observation the students became eager to perform in the simulation and role-play activities because they felt comfortable with the activity. The students looked confident and did not feel shy to participate and enjoyed the task given by the teacher. They could easily interact with their friends using English and did not shy of making mistakes because they knew that they can improve themselves as well as enhancing their speaking skills. In conclusion, the students attained many benefits from the use of simulation and role-play due to the positive changes from the first until the third observation during the treatment process.

Analysis of questionnaires

This section present the findings gathered from the questionnaires given to the 40 respondents of the study. The questionnaires consist of 10 questions and it is to find out the student's perception towards the use of simulation and role-play in the classroom. The analysis of questionnaires were discussed about beneits from simulation and role-play activities which can increase learning motivation, shedding shyness, stimulate interest in speaking, improve confidence, increase new vocabulary and promote interactions.

Summary of findings

Based on the analysis done, the respondents and researcher agreed that simulation and role-play help in enhancing speaking skills in learning English language. Its also give many benefits to the students and the respondents give a positive perception towards the use of simulation and role-play in the classroom. Thus, one of the findings that can be revealed from the performance test which are pre-test and post-test is that the treatments did help the students increase their speaking skills and its support Research Question 1 and its hypothesis in this study. Simulation and role-play enhance the student's speaking skills by giving a lot of communication practices by simulating a real life encounter as in the real world and enable students to learn new vocabulary that increase fluency. The differences between the result of pre-test and post-test indicated that the student's speaking skills increases after the treatment process.

Next, the observation sessions conducted shown positive changes in the students as they started to like the simulation and role-play activities. There are many benefits can be derived from the activities such as shed the student's shyness by providing a mask to them, serve as communication practices in the class and also fun and enjoyable ways to attract the student's interest to learn English because it is their second language. The researcher also found out that the students slowly changed and started to speak in English as much as possible. They also did not afraid of making mistakes because they understood that they learnt from mistakes. Therefore, the result from observation indicates the Research Question 2 and also supports its' hypothesis.

Finally, the feedback gathered from the questionnaires helps the researcher a lot in investigating the student's perception towards the use of simulation and role-play in helping them increase their speaking skills. Besides, it contributed to Research Question 3 and the hypothesis that the students gave positive perception towards the use of simulation and role-play in the classroom because they found those activities were helpful in improving their vocabulary and shedding shyness, increasing their confident level to speak English and enjoying new ways to learn English as well as led to enhance their speaking skills. The respondents agreed that simulation and role-play increased their learning motivation because they feel more comfortable to speak in English and did not felt shy anymore to perform in front of their classmates. They also found out that role-play and simulation are fun and enjoyable ways to learn English due to a lot of characters that they get during the activities. It also had help them increased their confident level and they were free to make their own decisions about the role-play and simulation activities each time they had to perform. Many new words were used in communication are learnt and contribute to enlarge the students' vocabularies. Furthermore, the respondents agreed that they had fun doing a group work presentation and had the chance to carry out a task or solve a problem together with their group mates. In conclusion, the use of simulation and role-play had enhance the student's speaking skills by improving their vocabulary and shedding shyness, increasing their confident level to speak English and providing enjoyable ways to learn English.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The implication of the study is that teachers in the school can use simulation and role-play as activities that can enhance student's speaking skills. Teachers can improve the activities applied in the classroom and bring changes to go beyond the normal routines. The students will enjoy learning English through the use of simulation and role-play. The findings of this study can become one of the useful references to other researchers as well. A clear and brief summary about the relation between simulation and role-play, the advantages and student's perception towards it has been elaborated to equip teachers and other researchers concerned if the interest of broaden knowledge in this topic arises.

Although careful measures were taken to ensure a strong study, there were still some limitations due to the nature of the sample. The reliability of the data collected from the questionnaires was uncertain because of the truthfulness of respondents when completing the questionnaires. Moreover, the subjects are fourteen years old students and they never participate in any study before. Secondly, in regard to the treatment process, it was another restriction when the subjects were always interfered with the school's activities during the process was running. Therefore, some of the subjects were not fully involved in this study due to their own pack schedule. However, the researcher managed to collect the data for performance test, observation and questionnaires from all of the subjects in this study. The limitation of the study also occurred in the samples itself when there were a few of students that were reluctant to speak because of the shyness to participate in the simulation and role-play activities. They were worried of speaking badly using English in front of their teachers and classmates. They also did not want to express themselves especially when it comes to giving their personal opinions or response about something. Time constraint was also one of the limitations in this study because the treatments need a lot of time to be applied to the samples before they were ready for the post-test. Furthermore, the treatment of the study which is the simulation and role-play activities can only be done in a double period class because its required a lot of time. The simulation and role-play activities were difficult to be monitored because both physical and verbal activities are going on. Besides, the students had too much fun and made so much noise that have disturbed other classes nearby.

As this study has remained some limitations, hence suggestions for further studies are necessarily mentioned. It is recommended that future studies use subjects that can contribute to the reliability of the data collected. Longer time is also needed so that the treatment process will run smoothly without any interference. This study has been able to reach some conclusions about the use of simulation and role-play in enhancing speaking skills in learning English language. However, it also raises some issues that could be explored further in subsequent research. One issue is the differences between simulation and role-play and other speaking activities in order to increase speaking skills. Since simulation and role-play derive many advantages for the students, the advantages of using those activities can also be explored in other researches. As for conclusion, the result of this study support the hypothesis stated that simulation and role-play enhance the students speaking skills, provide many advantages and the students enjoy the activity in the classroom. Through simulation and role-play, teachers can help their students improve their speaking skills and bring changes in the class as well. Students will expose to communication practices the same as they face in the real-life situations. They also practice new vocabulary and help to increase their fluency.

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