

## A Case Study on Students' Perception of Drama Activities in Teaching Speaking

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### *Abstract*

*Students' perceptions of the language learning have been a fascinating topic for researchers as they can be as reflection for the improvement of the teaching and learning of English especially speaking. The present study aims to investigate the students' perception of the drama activity in speaking class. It was designed in qualitative research method. The research subject was the fourth semester students of English Department at University of Riau Kepulauan. The data was collected through the content analysis by means of rubric and reflection sheet. With the help of these instruments, the results and the analysis of reflection sheets and rubric reveals the students had positive perception of drama activity in speaking class in terms of building self-confidence, fun, emerging acting skill, improving vocabulary, and building teamwork.*

**Key words:** *Students' perception, Drama, Speaking*

## INTRODUCTION

Achieving proficiency in foreign language speaking has been known as one of the most difficult task. The complexity occurs due to many aspects such as lack of practices, inappropriate teaching and learning method, and students' background. Aleksandrak (2011) states that the difficulty results basically from the character and inadequate frequency of speaking opportunities in the classroom in comparison to the abundance of natural varieties and genres or oral communication. In addition, the internal aspects such as fear of committing mistakes, lack of vocabulary, inadequate grammar mastery are also contribute in acquiring foreign language speaking.

Speaking is not simply transferring the native language into the foreign language but it involves complex process of conceptualizing, formulating, and articulating the utterances. According to Chaney (1998:13) as cited in Kayi (2006), speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of context. Therefore, teaching speaking skill should help the students to promote their productive skill through various ways of teaching methods.

In English Department of University of Riau Kepulauan, speaking is conducted for four semester. For many years, teachers had tried various efforts in prompting the students speaking skill. However, teachers mostly focused on conducting speaking activities that depends on individual performance but rarely involve the students in corporate activities that require them

to work together. After conducting some teaching methods, teachers also are rarely discussed regarding the teaching methods used in class from the perspective of students. Through the investigation on students' perspective of the teaching method, teachers would be able to see the appropriateness of the method from the students' point of view as they involved in the whole learning activities. Therefore, this present research is to investigate the students' perception of the use of drama activities in teaching speaking.

### **Drama in Language Learning**

The use of drama in education is not a new issue and not only suitable for elementary level but for adults as well. Davis (1990) mentioned drama activities could probably be used in any or all stages of the lesson (as cited in Saygili, 2015). The implementation of drama activity in language learning give advantages both for students and teachers. Heathcote (1985b) who was thought as a mother of drama in education stated drama as one of the most effective ways to help students to learn and that the teachers are the creators of learning situations for others (as cited in Ranzau, 2016). In line with Heathcote, Desialova (2009) also presents a list of reason why the use of drama in the language classroom could be viewed as a powerful tool namely (1) drama is an ideal way to encourage learners to communicate for real purposes, (2) To make language learning an active motivating experience, (3) to help learners gain the confidence and self-esteem needed to use the language spontaneously, (4) to bring the real world into the classroom, (5) to make language learning memorable thorough direct experience, (6) to stimulate the learner's intellect imagination, and creativity, (7) to develop students' ability to empathize with others and thus become better communicators (as cited in Alvarado, 2017). In brief, conducting drama in language learning activity especially in speaking contributes to both students' soft skill and hard skill. Moreover, the use of drama activities in speaking provides more opportunity for students to practice and build interaction with their peers.

### **Perception**

According to Passer&Smith, perception means making sense of what our sense tells us- is the active process of organizing this stimulus input and giving it meaning (Passer&Smith, 2007). In other words, perception can be interpreted as our point of view towards our past experience. The current study discusses the students' ideas about their learning experience in drama activity.

## METHODOLOGY

The research designed in the present study is a descriptive qualitative study. The participants of the study were the fourth semester students of English Department at University of Riau Kepulauan who had participated in speaking class. The object of the research is to look into the students' perception of drama activity in speaking class. The data was collected through questionnaires. The students were given two types of questionnaires; Reflection Sheet and Speaking Rubric. Reflection sheet and Speaking Rubric were administered to students to check out their ideas about their own speaking and their perception of the application of drama activity in speaking class. Content analysis was used in analyzing the data.

## RESULTS

The results discussed the findings in correlation with the perceptions of students of the use of drama in speaking class at University of Riau Kepulauan. The findings are categorized into two categories namely (1) Description of Students' self-assessment of their speaking, and (2) students' perception of the use of drama activity in speaking class.

### **The analysis of students' self-assessment of their speaking after applying drama activity in speaking class**

This section reveals the students' self-assessment of their speaking after the implementation of drama in speaking class activity. There are 5 aspects of questions including vocabulary/grammar, fluency, anxiety, motivation, and making mistakes. The first table shows the students' self-assessment of their speaking in the aspect of vocabulary and grammar after performing drama in range of accomplished, proficient, practiced, developing, and beginning.

*Table 1. Students' Vocabulary/grammar in Drama Activity*

<b>Statements from aspect of vocabulary/grammar</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Respon- ses</b>
Have a great deal of vocabulary knowledge. Uses variety of grammar structures with less errors	accomplished	1
Have a good vocabulary knowledge. Uses variety of grammar structures but making some errors	proficient	6
Have an average vocabulary knowledge. Uses the grammar structures which contains little inaccuracy	practiced	6

Have a limited vocabulary knowledge. Uses some grammar structures with occasional errors	developing	5
Have a few vocabulary. Uses basic structures and makes lots of errors	beginning	1

The table above shows that most of the students think they had enough vocabulary. They are in category of practiced, proficient, and accomplished. Therefore, applying drama in speaking class helped them to promote their vocabulary.

*Table 2. Student's fluency during their performance in drama activity*

<b>Statements from aspect of fluency</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Speak smoothly with a little hesitation	accomplished	2
Speaks with some hesitation but it does not interfere with the communication	proficient	7
Speak with some hesitation which interfere with the communication	practiced	6
Hesitates too often when speaking	developing	2
Hesitates at all time with the frequent long and short breaks	beginning	2

The table above reveals students' perception on their fluency is high. It is proven from the data that shows 2 of students are in accomplished category, 7 students in proficient category, and 6 students were in practiced category. The data obtained reveals that drama activity had helped them to promote their speaking fluency. Higher level of fluency could be obtained since they had practiced the drama more frequently in a pleasant atmosphere. Edge (1993:106) in Songsiri (2007:25) supported the idea, "the more students use their language skills for enjoyment, the more language ability they are likely to acquire."

*Table 3. Students' anxiety in drama activity*

<b>Statements from aspect of anxiety</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Feel no anxious at all	accomplished	1
Feels little anxious to speak	proficient	11
Feels anxious to speak most of the time	practiced	3
Does not feel comfortable enough to speak	developing	3
Feels extremely anxious to speak	beginning	1

The table above reveals that student had less anxiety during the implementation of drama activity. There were 11 students who felt little anxious to speak and 1 student who felt no anxious at all during drama activity. From the data obtained, it can be concluded drama activity help them to reduce their anxiety in speaking.

*Table 4. Students' motivation in drama activity*

<b>Statements from aspect of motivation</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Feels totally motivated to speak or communicate	accomplished	6
Feels motivated to speak or communicate	proficient	7
Feels normally motivated to speak or communicate	practiced	4
Feels little motivated to speak or communicate	developing	2
Does not feel motivate to speak or to communicate	beginning	0

The data obtained reveals that most of the students felt motivated to speak when applying drama activity. It can be inferred drama activity helped the students to trigger their motivation to speak English. Trivedi states being completely involved in the activities, the learner is more motivated to use the foreign language (Trivedi, 2013)

*Table 5. Students' attitude in making mistake in drama activity*

<b>Statements from aspect of making mistake</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Are not afraid of making mistake. There is a vivid communication	accomplished	2
Correctly understand the storyline clearly.	proficient	5
Makes a few mistakes in drama and tried to fix it	practiced	10
Makes significant mistakes in drama. There is a limited effort	developing	2
Afraid of making mistake. Cannot fix the problem at all.	beginning	0

From the data obtained, it shows that students only made a few mistakes in practicing their drama and were able to cope with it. Therefore,

After analyzing the five tables above, it can be concluded that most of the students have positive perception of drama activity.

### **Students' perception of drama activity**

After distributing the reflection sheet to 19 students, the results show the students' perception of the use of drama activity in speaking class as classified into positive perception and negative perception. The positive perceptions are categorized into 5 sub categories namely; building self-confidence, fun, emerging acting skill, improving vocabulary, and building teamwork. The major perceptions are illustrated below:

a. Building self confidence

There are three respondents who showed that drama activity helps them to build their self-confidence regarding to the question *what I like about drama*

Std 1. It helps me to be more confident to speak in front of many people.

Std 6. Everything, all about speaking too, pronunciation, expression, *and be more confidence.*

Std 13. It helps me to be confident to speak with people and build a corporation with my partner.

The students' statement above reveals that the activity not only focused on building productive skill but also the development of self-esteem as well. Therefore, having self-confidence leads the students to improve their speaking competence. The idea is in line with Songsiri (2007:28) statement, "Students' confidence in language learning, especially in speaking, is one of the main factors to drive or to inspire students to reach their goals.

b. Fun

Some students think that the application of drama in speaking class was fun and they enjoyed it as shown by their responses described below.

What I like about drama is ...

Std 2. It is fun and we really enjoyed it.

Std 8. It's fun. I really enjoyed it.

c. Emerging acting skill

Applying drama activity in speaking class also emerged the students' acting skill as shown by the students' statement as follow.

Std 3. The process was amazing. I learned how to act.

Std 7. Acting. We act different character.

Std 8. We used many expressions for our character.

Std 9. Acting.

Std 19. Playing different role with my friends to express the story.

The data obtained reveals that students enjoyed playing role of the imaginative character beyond their characters or reflect themselves. Through drama, students were able to improvise activities that requires students to alert, to listen, and express their understanding in an immediate and imaginative responses. It is in line with Zyoud (2010), “drama draws upon students’ natural abilities to imitate and express themselves, and if well-handled should arouse interest and imagination.”

d. Improving vocabulary

Drama activity also helps to improve the students’ vocabulary as seen from the students’ statements below.

Std 5. I can speak using various vocabularies.

Std 12. I practiced many vocabularies.

Std 14. We used vocabulary in different context.

The data obtained from students indicates that the applying drama activity help them to improve their vocabulary that contributed to promote their speaking ability. Moreover, drama activity gives an opportunity for students who had lack of vocabulary to speak. The ideas are supported by Aldavero (2008) in Zyoud (2016) who stated drama activities help students to communicate in the foreign language including those with limited vocabulary.

e. Building teamwork

Students ideas about drama activity is also help to build teamwork among the students.

Std 18. We must work in group. It is different with other activities.

Std 13. It helps me to be confident to speak with people and build a corporation with my partner.

The above data claim the positive perception of students when performing with their peers in front of the teachers. At the same time, students also gain social values by working in a team. McGregor et al suggested the involvement in drama results in greater understanding of people and their situations, mastering the use of the process of representing, ordering and expressing feelings and ideas, controlling and using dramatic media, and working with others on both symbolic and real levels (as cited in Eskelinen, 2017:25).

The other respondents think that they like the implementation of drama in all aspects. Students also feels that they get more knowledge about drama.

In order to get deeper understanding of the students’ perception of drama activity, students were also given a space to give free comments about the implementation of drama

activity. Their comments also indicated their positive perception of drama activity as described below.

Std 3. We should practice more. Practice makes perfect.

Std 4. We did such a great job.

Std 5. It's awesome.

Std 13. The drama was so amazing and it is memorable.

Std 15. Actually I don't like drama, but now I have enough understanding about drama after we had practiced last week and we dare to practice in front of our teacher. We did a great job.

Proud of you class!

Std 19. Good job!

All the above statements show that students did enjoy the drama activity and did it well. Based on the data analyzed above, it could be concluded that students mostly have positive perception of drama activity.

### **Negative perception of drama activity in speaking class**

Although most of the students show their positive perception of drama activity, there few of students who had negative perception of drama activity in responding to the questions *What I don't like about drama is....*. The students' ideas are as follow:

Std 6. Memorizing too long text.

Std 16. Long script. It's difficult to memorize the script and combine with the expressions.

Std 11. Sometimes boring, because it's too long.

From the data obtained, the students had negative perception of drama activity due to the length of dialog they had to memorize. It can be concluded that they had problem in memorizing the script and less strategy to fix the problem when they performed. Students' positive perception are dominated compared with the negative perception. Therefore, it can be concluded that students had positive perception of drama activity in speaking class.

### **DISCUSSION**

This study was attempted to seek the students' perception of drama activity in speaking class. The qualitative data analyzed in this study provide the answers to the research question. In the light of data analysis, the results shows that students have positive perception about drama activity in speaking class. Speaking rubric were used to collect the students' self-



assessment of their speaking after applying drama activity. The rubric allows the students to show their weakness and their strength during their performance. Drama activity helped them to promote their vocabulary, reducing their anxiety, developing speaking fluency, motivating the students to speak, and enabled them to fix their mistakes.

In addition, students' Reflection Sheet indicates that students also have positive perception of drama activity in speaking class. The result shows that students really enjoyed performing drama in speaking class and help them to promote their speaking ability. The discussion was categorized into 5 categories which are building self-confidence, fun, emerging acting skill, improving vocabulary, and building teamwork. Although there few negative perception, it clearly stated that they like to have drama activity as long as it did not have too long script. Therefore, drama activity can be considered as one of the best tool to emerge the students in speaking class.

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