ROLE-PLAY IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The major concern of this study is to expose role-play activities in developing children's English language skills. This paper will explore the level of knowledge of role-play activities among teachers before detailed descriptions about the role-play activities to be further discussed in developing and enhancing the children English language skills as well as the challenges faced by teachers when conducting the activities. This research uses a qualitative method. The researcher has conducted a semi-structured interview with three preschool teachers from Bachok district schools. A set of 16 questions based on the research question is used as the research instrument. The data from the interview is analysed using thematic analysis where themes were picked from the interview with the respondents. First, this study is aimed to help teachers to plan and conduct role-play activities in preschools and kindergarten. The findings show that the teachers are well-versed with the role-play method and also have been practising the method for some time now. The findings also indicate that the role-play method indeed has an influence in helping the children learn English as Second Language. This research also helps teachers to understand better and reflect about their role-play sessions that they have done before and figure out the problems and ways to overcome them and improvise for better outcomes. Hence, this study helps reader to understand that role-play activities are related to children's development especially in social, emotional, physical and cognitive of the children and the best technique to guide the children learn English as their Second Language.

Keywords: role-play, English as second language, early childhood education

INTRODUCTION

The 21st Century Skills Early Learning Framework (PA21 ELF) direct underlines ten fundamental techniques to assist children learn to bolster the conveyance of ideal 21st century early learning encounters and past (Scott, 2017). These includes child-centred, whole child focus plays based, cooperative learning, blended approach, flexible attitude, differentiated instruction, formative assessment, consistency and combined learning domains. In accordance with the strategies, it is important to consider the learning environment as it has a significant impact on the way children learn and develop. The elements of engaging environment are safe, variety of materials, nurtures children, focus on the children and variety types of activities.

While going deeper of these schools and kindergartens programmes, it is found that that the focus of such activities are to develop the children's English language skills. The activity can provide an excellent learning experience for the children to learn and develop especially in helping them to learn new vocabularies (Mohd Yusop et al., 2018), practice their speaking skills (Mohamad Albaree Abdul et al., 2019), get familiar with the language

(Masnan & Mohd Radzi, 2015), character and values building in creative (Mamat & Asong, 2014) and enriched environment with supervision of the teacher (Craciun, 2010).

Statement of Problem

One of focal issues of carrying out role-play exercises is that an instructor may lose control over the lesson. Amid role-play exercises, it is quite tough to guarantee that all learners keep to the intended language focus (Masnan & Mohd Radzi, 2015). "In Malaysian classrooms, learners might choose to use their mother tongue for discussion purposes, thus failing the objectives of using role-plays in developing speaking skills" (Shangeetha et al., 2010, p.16). Other than that, in some cases learners may decline to take part within the role-play or play into the character or the circumstance, causing the role-play to fail. As an instructor, it isn't simple to guarantee all learners in a lesson of 30 or more take part.

Livingstone (2004) contends that role-play takes excessive amount of classroom time. Learners have to be close with the thought of role-play and sufficient time is required for input after the role-play. Be that as it may, brief and basic role-plays take approximately 20 minutes to conduct. In an English lesson of 40 minutes, the time ought to be adequate for an instructor to present the role-play and give brief input a while later. Hence, time management could be an issue that can be overcome.

Other from time management, some researchers states that the organization of role-play might present a few issues such as unfitting classroom organization and high noise levels. In any case, numerous role-plays don't require many of gesture from learners (Williams-Siegfredsen, 2017; Livingstone, 2004). They might act out the parts in their places. Even if the role-play requires bounty of space, it is sufficient to move the table and chairs out of the way. On the off chance that the noise made by learners is 'healthy', meaning "it isn't much of an issue as learners are carrying out the assignment that was intended" (Shangeetha et al., 2010, p.17). However, the instructor needs to guarantee that the noise level is kept to a minimum so as not to disturb other classes.

Research Objective

The following objectives will be referred as a framework to this study. This study will highlight three objectives which are;

i) To explore the teacher's knowledge about role play in teaching English as Second Language in Early Childhood Education.
ii) To study whether role-play influence children's ability in speaking English as Second Language in Early Childhood Education.
iii) To explore the challenges faced by the teacher when using role-play method in helping children learn English as Second Language in Early Childhood Education.

Literature Review

There are few theories that are discussed and supported this study which are Spolsky's General Theory of Second Language Learning, Theory of Constructivism, Social and Cognitive Development Theory.

Spolsky's General Theory of Second Language Learning

This model stands for 'general hypothesis of second language learning' that typifies the researcher's theoretical views on the in general relationship between relevant components, each learner contrasts, learning openings and learning results. It is hence an ambitious model; within the breadth phenomena it is attempting to clarify (Dulay & Burt, 1974). The rectangular boxes show the components which researcher believes are most critical for learning that's, where variety can lead to contrasts in victory or failure. The arrows interfacing the different boxes show directions of influence. The substance of the different boxes is characterized at incredible length, as consisting of clusters of interacting conditions, which make language learning more or less likely success. These summarize the comes about of an incredible assortment of empirical language learning research, as Spolsky's translates them.

Theory of Constructivism

Jean Piaget believed that it is important for children to experience whatever they want to learn about to enable them to construct knowledge (Williams-Siegfredsen, 2017). They need real and relevant experiences, with lots of handling, direct contact and playful exploration of materials. Constructivism emphasizes on the thought of human learning is developed that the learners construct new information upon the establishment of past learning and underneath are the benefits of constructivism (Bada & Olusegun, 2015).

Theory of Social and Cognitive Development

Vygotsky's theory of social and cognitive development work together and build each other. He believed that learning takes place in the real social world when there are interactions between children and adults in playing and learning together. (Williams-Siegfredsen, 2017). One of the most important concepts in this theory is Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which stated that the distance between the foremost troublesome assignment a child can do alone and the foremost troublesome assignment a child can do with assistance either from a grown-up or another child.

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) has been characterized as the distance between the real developmental level as decided by autonomous issue tackling and the level of potential improvement as decided through issue tackling beneath grown-up guidance or in collaboration with more competent peers. This process is called scaffolding. His theoretical framework is based upon his conviction that social interaction plays a crucial part within the advancement of cognition (Mohamad Albaree Abdul et al., 2019). It is critical that grown-ups working with young children spend time thinking carefully around the nature of outdoor encounters.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The qualitative, interpretive approach was chosen for the present study because it was considered important that the role-play activities in teaching English as Second Language in early childhood education should be examine through the process of gathering "thick description, acknowledging contradiction, ambiguity, inconsistency and situation-specific factors" (Carr, 2001, p. 13) as a result of obtaining the "informed and patient cooperation of people who know the setting" (Walsh et al., 1993, p. 472).

Using alternative approach is particularly appropriate in early childhood setting because as Walsh et al. (1993) also note that interpretive research has an important place in research on education of young children. It has potential, in the negotiated, collaborative relationship between the researcher and the researched, to give voice and visibility to those groups, children and practitioners, who historically have been silenced an isolated.

Research Sample

The selection of the sample as a respondent is using the purposive sampling method that is the characteristics of the respondent required for this study has been determined. The characteristics are that preschool teachers consist of male and female students. Have at least a bachelor's degree of academic achievement and have at least 5 years of teaching experience. From the predefined features, respondents will be selected using simple random sampling, which gives all respondents the same opportunity to be selected.

The selection of the sample only focused on preschool teachers is based on the fact that the respondents already have knowledge and experience as well as long exposure related to role-play activities in teaching English as a Second Language in Early Childhood Education. Therefore, the researcher is confident based on the position of the sample, the appropriate data can be obtained and reliable.

Research Population

The study population consisted of 34 preschool teachers from Bachok district. A total of 4 teachers were taken as the study sample. This amount exceeds 11% of the total population. In research method theory, it is better to have more numbers so that it is more reliable in the findings of the study and can reduce sampling errors.

Research Instrument

Research instruments are measurement tools for collecting data to meet the needs of research. In this study, a set of semi-structured interview questions are used as tools to collect the data needed. The interview questions are designed based on the research objectives. The selection of language will help to ensure the effectiveness of interview session and the ability to gain more information for the study (Chua, 2014).

Method of Data Collection

Most case studies are qualitative in nature although the researcher employs mixed methodology and methods. Well-designed qualitative study is usually small, the data are detailed and the methods employed are to discover the meaning of the content and to answer the research questions (Best, 2016).

In the process of collecting data, it is important to have a good access with the community or study location and to build a good rapport so that the respondent can provide good and useful data for the study (Othman Lebar, 2015). In this study, the methods of data collection in this study involved semi-structured interview. The researcher follows the process of conducting research to obtain the data that meet the needs of the research questions.

Data Analysis Method

In fulfilling the research questions, the data collected were further analysed based on different methods of analysis. Analysis and interpretation are the process of making sense of our collected data (Best, 2016). Qualitative analysis allows researcher to sort and summarize data from qualitative measures such as interviews and observations. Qualitative analysis can provide rich information about your sample.

The transcript of the interview was analysed by using thematic analysis. The collected data from the interview session should be arranged systematically (Chua, 2014). The transcript is listened three times to find the themes related to the research. Thematic analysis involves identifying the main ideas or themes of the participant's responses or behaviours and then grouping common themes together and the steps to thematic analysis.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings are based on the research objectives of this study.

The Teacher's Knowledge about Role Play in Teaching English as Second Language in Early Childhood Education

Respondent A said he first become known of this method when he went through the KSPK and have been using the method ever since. Respondent C said;

> *"I learn about the method through KSPK. I actually have been using this activity for quite some time already."*

She had been experimenting with the method and trying to find which type of activity suits her well and has been observing the activity that the children like the most and comfortable with. Along with Respondent B who said;

> *"From preschool course and KSPK Curriculum. I learn this method through the KSPK ……"*

when asked where she get the knowledge of the role-play method.

Respondent B further explained that she did not only het the information about role-play through KSPK, but also through Early Childhood Education Course that she attended few years back. She said that through the course she gets better understanding and were given more exposure about the role-play and had been assisted on how to conduct the role-play activities and the know how's during the course.

Influence of Role-play to Children's Ability in Speaking English as Second Language in Early Childhood Education

Study respondents named motivation as one of the factor that changed the children during the role-play activity. Respondent B believed that positive words and encouragements motivate the children to do better and try harder to learn the language. She also believes that the children will not be afraid of making mistakes if teachers would always encourage them and tell them it is okay to make mistakes.

Self-esteem is also one of the changes that all respondents agree on the influence of role-play activity had on children. Respondent B also stated that after a few sessions of the role-play activity, the children begin to build up courage to speak more English words and their confidence level when speaking English improve so much and become more prominent as time goes by.

The respondents also reported that peer-influence plays a big role in pulling the children in taking part in the role-play activity. Respondent A said;

> *"Seeing their friends taking part in role-play would make them want to join too."*

By joining the activity, the children would be able to learn at least one new word during the activity. They will eventually try to use the English words and then will be able to use simple phrases and sentences from the role-play sessions.

The Challenges Faced by the Teacher when Using Role-play Method in Helping Children Learn English as Second Language in Early Childhood Education.

Many of the study participants perceived that in order implement the method in teaching English as Second Language, there are few challenges faced by the teachers. With implementation of role-play approach, they believed the challenges would occur. One of the main challenges the teachers faced is the children cannot understand the English language. The children are not used to the new language and are having a hard time trying to understand the language. Respondent A said;

> *"Most children are trying hard to understand the vocabulary and instructions used. At first they barely able to understand the instruction and do not know what to do."*

Respondent B said;

"The children sometimes cannot understand the English words used and instruction given by teacher. They would just stare and gape their mouth when they cannot understand the words and instruction."

With the children not being able to understand the language, teachers are having a hard time trying to introduce the language to them.

Respondent C also faced the same problem as other teacher, the children having problem understanding the language. The children refusing to join in the role-play activity because they cannot understand the language is considered a big problem to her. It is now up to her how to persuade or attract the children to participate into the role-play activity.

DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH IMPLICATION

The research findings showed that all the respondents gained knowledge of role-play method from the content in KSPK (National Standard Preschool Curriculum). The curriculum content that help the teachers become known of this method and has been using the content in the curriculum as guidelines in conducting the role-play activity. All three respondents stated that they first learn about the method through KSPK and have been using the information and conduct the role-play method ever since.

The research findings imply that the role-play activity does influence children's ability to speak English as Second Language. Teachers' motivation during the activity plays a big role in influencing the children to speak English. The teachers' encouragement towards the children reaction and participation during the role-play incite the children to join the activity and learn the language while participation in the role-play. Trawick-Smith and Dziurgot (2011) study recognizes that teachers' and children's reactions are variable and individualized. They found that instructors given bolster to children according to their requirement, and such "good-fit" association more as often as possible driven to autonomous ensuing play than poor-fit interaction. Children's confidence and self-esteem.

The study also found that the children are easily influenced by their peers. When they see their friends joining the activity and being able to speak English words, they would want to be able to do the same too so they would join the activity to fit in. When they are able to use and understand the English words used in the role-play activity they would feel like they fit in the group and content to be able to do what their friends had been doing. Young ELLs are as of now formatively in a position of challenge. The children are uncertain of the purpose of the new language and the fittingness of language utilization inside particular settings (Xu & Drame, 2008). This inability causes stress and dissatisfaction on the part of the child and diminishes the activity to be part of the community; usually known as the emotional channel (Dulay & Burt, 1974).

So, it is vital to consider the learners' level of language capability when executing role play exercises within the classroom. Agreeing to Beck et al. (2013) a justifiable definition clarifies basic characteristics of the word, counting the parameters of its utilize and the specific ideas passed on. Moreover, a definition is classified as student-friendly in case it outlines the word's meaning in language accessible to the children.

Other than that, diversity of exercises too plays a vital part to effectively spur and draw in the children into the role-play exercises given to an English language lesson. Realia can assist to bring role-play to life. For instance, when playing the role of a server and a client, children may well be inquired to do or bring to a lesson menus and aprons. These basic props may make the entire process more important for the lesson (Budden, 2004).

Implication

This study benefits and helps parents, teachers, educators and other researchers in the future. This research helps teachers and educators to plan and conduct role-play activities with the children since their early age so that they understand what they are doing and to build a strong foundation of what they know and have learnt before. Besides, this study provides new insights to parents in such a way that they can apply those skills at home and helps children to learn English as Second Language not only at school but also at home.

CONCLUSION

This study helps more role-play activities to be conducted in preschool level. The study informed us that the teachers are aware and have knowledge about role-play method. Despite the challenges faced, they find their ways to overcome the challenges and find room to improve themselves along the way. This study concludes that role-play activities indeed helps children to learn English as Second Language.

Hence, this study helps reader to understand that role-play activities are related to children's development especially in social, emotional, physical and cognitive of the children and the best technique to guide the children learn English as their Second Language. This study in hope to build a generation in line with the goals of the National Education Philosophy which aims to produce a balanced human being in terms of intellectual, spiritual, physical, emotional, and social starting from childhood.

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