

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Role-playing is a teaching method in which students are allocated certain roles and are expected to communicate and behave accordingly. The implementation of role-play activities within higher education settings has attracted increased attention in recent years as a pedagogical technique for improving professional listening and speaking skills. Universities have recognized the potential of role-play as a dynamic and engaging method for students to develop vital communication abilities, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Research has proved the potential for online role plays in language learning to expand opportunities for communicative competencies (Najjemba & Cronjé, 2020). The use of role-play activities in a Professional Listening and Speaking course has become an important aspect of preparing students for the demands of their future professions, which frequently need excellent communication in a variety of professional contexts. Individuals, peers, and groups are several types of role-play that can be used while implementing role-play. Role play is a well-known approach for introducing students to unfamiliar social contexts. Role-play early in the course can expose students to various situations they are likely to face in their future careers (Ajleaa & Maarof, 2018).

However, the implementation of role-play in higher education is not without its challenges. Teachers and students have faced many challenges as the educational landscape changes, especially with the ongoing shift toward online and hybrid learning. These challenges frequently have to do with engagement, adaptability, technology, and the integration of role-play into a broader curriculum. The students also have trouble adjusting to virtual learning and are worn out from learning the actual course material, and on top of that, this can have a domino effect that could result in students dropping out in the future (Leo et al., 2021).

Particularly about online role-play, there have been significant challenges for both teachers and students. According to Doğantan (2020), during the live course platform, it was seen that some students were particularly hesitant to take the floor.

The moderator often stepped in to encourage these students. Unpredictable world events caused the shift to virtual worlds, requiring a reassessment of how role-play might be applied to encourage the necessary abilities inside a digital reality. This shift led to concerns about the validity of online role-playing scenarios, the efficiency of feedback systems, and the emotional involvement of students who could be physically distant from their teachers and classmates.

Students enrolled in Professional Listening and Speaking courses in offline settings encounter a similar situation. Even in an offline setting, challenges persist issues such as student English language comprehension and time management (Nihazram & Masnan, 2020). According to Kettula and Berghäll (2013), the students are a critical audience for one another which can trigger students' anxiety. These challenges require a comprehensive understanding of role-play in higher education as it is today. Based on pre-interviews, the most common problem faced by students in offline role-play is managing the practice with other group members.

In response to these challenges, this study investigated the experiences and perspectives of university students enrolled in Professional Listening and Speaking courses, in offline settings. This research aims to provide insightful information that can influence curriculum development, instructional practices, and the design of effective role-play experiences in higher education through exploring the difficulties they encountered and suggesting alternative solutions. Through this investigation, the researcher hopes to improve the learning environment and provide role-play opportunities for developing professional communication skills while considering the changing needs and preferences of today's university students.

Doğantan (2020) conducted a study related to the use of role-play in online learning by interviewing students. According to the study's findings, both synchronous and asynchronous online role-playing can help students improve their communication skills. Fan (2020) was investigated the challenges of using role-play by interviewing a teacher. The study concluded that the challenges of using role-play are the preparations were made at the last minute of the moment, so their performance was unsatisfactory, the different English proficiency of the students,

and the class size that is largely made the students have inadequate opportunities to perform. Another relevant study was conducted by Pradhana R. A. et al. (2021). They interviewed Senior High School students in Indonesia. This study aimed to explore the students' experience of using role-play in an online class and found the difficulties when using role-play techniques are the language itself, lack of vocabulary, and lack of confidence.

Based on the previous studies mentioned above, little information on those studies that investigated offline role-play. Thus, the researcher attempts to fill this gap by investigating Indonesian university students' challenges and solutions in implementing role-play in offline settings with different theories. In summary, this study aims to investigate the university students' challenges and solutions in conducting role-play in offline settings.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

The research question addressed in the present study is “What are the students' challenges and solutions when implementing role-play?”

1.3 Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding, the researcher presents definitions of some terms related to the study.

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| 1.3.1 | Role-Play | Role-play is a method used in teaching listening and speaking that involves playing the role of someone else. |
| 1.3.2 | Role-Play in Higher Education | Role-play in higher education means that the role-play activity is carried out at the university level. |
| 1.3.3 | Challenges | Challenges are various problems that are difficult and require effort to overcome these problems. |

- 1.3.4 Solutions** Solutions are the things that are done to solve various problems to produce a way out.
- 1.3.5 Professional Listening and Speaking** Professional Listening and Speaking (PLS) is taught in the course, which the teacher created and offers lessons to help students improve their speaking and listening skills on a professional level.

1.4 Aim of the Study

Related to the research questions, the study aims to investigate the students' challenges and solutions while implementing role-play activities in the Professional Listening and Speaking course.

1.5 Significance of the Study

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

This study will contribute to the development of speaking learning theory through role-play.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

The present study will contribute and can be used as a reference for English teachers or students to prevent the challenges when using role-play.

1.5.3 Empirical Significance

This study will present empirical insight into the challenges that students face when using role-play and how they overcome it.