# A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY ON ROLE PLAY AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPING THE LANGUAGE SKILLS OF THE HIGHER EDUCATIONAL STUDENTS

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## Abstract

The paper spotlights the challenges faced by higher education students in enriching their communication skills. The central focus of the study covers how students find it difficult in using the English language and finds out how role-play helps them learn the language skills with ease and use it more effectively through a dramatic performance. Therefore, the paper is entitled "A Comprehensive study on role play for developing the language skills of the higher education students". The data for the study was obtained nearly from one thousand students belonging to different colleges. Data were collected through an online survey method in a questionnaire format.

**Keywords**: enriching, role play, dramatic performance, language skills, and survey method.

## INTRODUCTION

In the present scenario, the English language plays a vital role in everyone's successful career. The English language is an Indo-European language of the West Germanic linguistic group. Modern English is considered by many to be the language of the world and is the standard language in many fields, including computer coding, international business, and higher education. English is of British origin and is the primary language of the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, and various island states in the Caribbean and Pacific Oceans. It is also the official language of India, the Philippines, Singapore, and many sub-Saharan African countries, including South Africa.

English is the first foreign language of choice in most other countries of the world, and it is this status that has made it a global language. It is estimated that around one-third of the world's population and around two billion people are currently speaking English. In addition to the simplicity of the contents, English has two other fundamental characteristics: flexibility of functions and open vocabulary. Fortunately, being fluent in English, regardless of the language, is one of the most important forms of communication in the world, reaching over two billion people worldwide. Quirks and inconsistencies aside, the history surrounding

its monumental rise is both fascinating and rich. English is not only the language used for international communication but also the most frequently used language. Although not universal, it is the main language used in all areas of work, often the language of entertainment and socializing.

Obtaining quality education is one of the important tools for improving oneself at the same time practicality of English should be focused to maintain and run an effective and successful life. The benefits they bring to the lives of those who know English are endless. While it is important to understand that English can break down many barriers, it also develops one's cultural and societal behaviourism. A good English proficiency will, first of all, give pupils more opportunities in their life mainly for their career aspects.

English plays a key role in communication and there is no doubt that it is the most important communication tool around the world. Individually, everyone should strive hard to get good communication skills, which are the most important conditions for fantasy careers. Communication skills can be acquired directly through education by practicing and evaluating them regularly.   In order to learn and experience the development of language skills, it is preferable to involve oneself in role-play activities.

Roleplay is about imitating the personality and behavior of a different person. Communicating with each other through role-plays are fun and playful activities, also it motivates students to enhance their language skills. It is a social space that not only develops speaking and listening skills but also allows students to reflect and improve their knowledge while preserving and enhancing their creativity and imagination. Through role-playing, one can become an effective user of English and acquire four language skills including Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing (LSRW) which comprises all the skills. Not only do the role plays focus on the four language skills but also develop the creative aspects of each participant. It also promotes independent thinking and problem-solving

skills. Roleplay enriches students' language and improves communication skills which allow them to try out new vocabulary. One who regularly practices the language will gain confidence, communicate with ease and acquire an ability to maintain any social position. They learn to convey a message by choosing words carefully. That's why Roleplay is considered to be an appropriate tool for developing communication skills amongst higher education students.

Role-playing is a fun built activity for students, who learn about themselves, others, their environment, and most importantly that contribute to cognitive and physical development. Roleplay allows students to experience and explore their surroundings in real life. Students can also develop communication skills and physical mannerisms that will help them later in life. Using role-plays, students can improve their communication skills in a meaningful way. In this case, the title - "Comprehensive study of role-playing games to develop language skills of higher education students" - itself relates to students' knowledge of role-playing and how the role-playing develops communication, which shows that it is based on a personal perspective of a skill type through an online survey mode that elicits student knowledge and perspective statistics on role play. The research study describes the pupil's comprehension and knowledge about role play and how far role play can develop their communication skills among different collegiate students. This deals with the optimistic and pessimistic perspectives of role play then how it enhances one's language and communication skills, as per the pupils' understanding. Besides these, the study has also brought out the difficulties faced by the students while practicing the role-play activities, particularly for their language building.

**Methodology:**

This survey data collection for this study was conducted through online mode. Nearly twenty Survey questions were prepared

in the mode of Google Form. Questionnaires were circulated among the pupil of G.Venkataswamy Naidu College, both regular and self-financing courses, and to all the nearby colleges of Kovilpatti. The data for the study was obtained not only from the English literature students but also from the students who belong to majors like – Commerce, Physics, Mathematics, Botany, Chemistry, Statistics, BBA, Electronics, and Engineering branches. Therefore the questionnaires were comprehensive and general to both arts and science and engineering departments. The questionnaire was kept open for about ten days to receive the filled-in data from the students. In the form, each question was given three to four options to help students understand the questions and provide appropriate answers. After the deadline, we received nearly 1000 responses from the students.

The questionnaires were all about how far they were interested in the English language and their struggles to communicate in English. Then their comprehensive knowledge about role play and their opinion on the use of role-playing were taken for the study. The study also shows that role play would enrich every student's communication skills.

Advantages of Role Play

Roleplay should be designed based on students' centered. It helps students with turning out to be more intrigued and involved in finding out with regards to the material, however role play additionally coordinates the information in real life by resolving issues, investigating choices, and looking for novel and intelligent fixes to social situations.

Roleplay permits every individual from the class to practice and dominate interactive abilities to submit to rules and guidelines, perseverance, tolerance, solidarity, and collaboration as well as science process abilities of perception, communication, application, appreciation, foreseeing, deducing, etc., in a gamble-free environment. Students are also prepared to face large audiences throughout everyday life.

Roleplay gives confidence to the students to understand the position and sensation of others and look past their nearby suppositions and assumptions. Students accomplish a more profound comprehension of their views and those of others. Hence, it is considered to be an undeniably more powerful technique that motivates each student to showcase their various roles.

Roleplay is the best and most effective way to enhance the skills of communication, critical thinking, and working helpfully in groups. Moreover, practicing the activity will prepare students to face the challenges in the work atmosphere and make them more resourceful.

### Research findings:

As per the data collected through the questionnaire i.e. through an online survey, the questionnaire opens with "Do you know English?" According to the pie chart given below in figure no.1, almost 55.9% of the students choose that they like the English language. This shows that most of the students like the English language but they have some sort of struggles in their practical usage. About 25.2% of students prefer the option very much, which express that only a few set of students have a little interest in the English language and they have some practice in it. Whereas only 18.9% of students opt for the option the most, this shows that they have the flair for the English language. Students belonging to this category have adequate knowledge about the language but didn't find an appropriate platform to express and use the language. It is evident from the data that 55.9% of students just like the English language but when it comes to ordinary usage, those students never wanna be a part of that and have an interest.
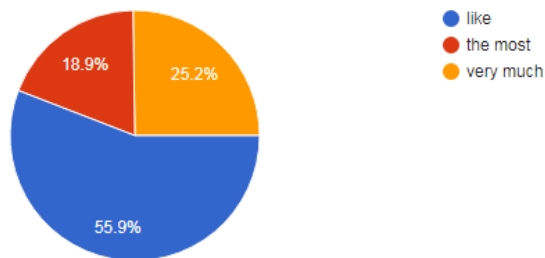
Figure no.1

The next question is, "Can you speak in English?" As per the pie-chart given in figure 2, 49.5% of the students chose the option Yes, which means that they can speak in English. About 12.6% of the students chose option No, which they can't verbalize in English. About 37.8% of students occasionally use English from time to time. From this pie chart, it is obvious that 49.5% of the students can speak in English, others are not comfortable in using it because they are not sure that the language they use is whether correct or not.
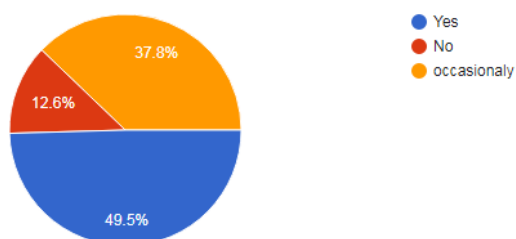


Figure no.2

Then, we included a question, "Do you know about role play?" this is one of the main questions used for my study that receives a positive response from the responders. The previous two questions are considered to be the basics for this question. Regarding figure no.3, 50.5% of the students choose the option Yes, which means that they knew about Roleplay. 18% of the students choose an option No, which means that they didn't know role play. About 31.5% of the students choose the option may be which means that they have occasionally heard about the role play, but didn't have a clear idea about it. Thus, the pie chart reveals that most of the students have a basic understanding of the language practicing tool - role play.
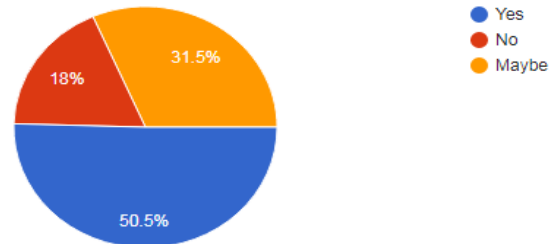


Figure no.3

The next question that was included in the questionnaire is "Do you know dialogue writing?" As per the findings in figure - 4, almost 64% of the students have chosen the option Yes, which expresses that they have already practiced dialogues one-on-one and have a clear knowledge about it. About 11.7% of the students chose option No, which shows that they have never used dialogue as a tool to enhance their learning. Then the remaining 24.3% of the students who chose the option may be which ridiculously reveals that they unknowingly use dialogue writings without its consciousness. Thus, the data obtained shows that most of the students know what dialogue writing is and some didn't know how to write it. But it is satisfactory that most of the students know the importance of using dialogue writing.
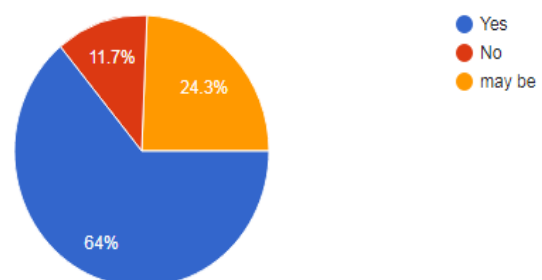


Figure no.4

The next in the questionnaire was "Do you know, role play is a kind of dialogue?" This question is used to find out the student's perspectives on role play. As shown in the pie chart - figure no. 5, 53.2% of the students chose the option Yes. It reveals that half of the students knew that role play will be in dialogue format. About 18% of the students chose option No, which shows they don't even have an idea of the importance of using dialogues.

The remaining 28.8% of the students chose the option Maybe, this shows that they were in a dilemma that whether role-play is a form of dialogue or not even not sure about it. Thus through the data, the highest rank of the mean score is 53.3%, so most of the students know that Roleplay is a form of dialogue.
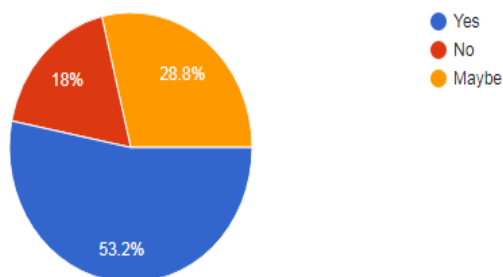


Figure no.5

The following questions will showcase students' practical experimentation on Roleplay and the study will express how they practiced Roleplay and their practical difficulties in acquiring the skill. The question was "Have you ever participated in a Roleplay?" Based on the pie chart figure no.6, about 40.5% of the students know what the use of role-playing is and even have participated in the role-play activities. The remaining, 59.5% of students chose option No, which shows they have never participated in the role-play activities and even it undoubtedly gives you an idea that they were not given opportunities to use the language tool for enhancing their language.
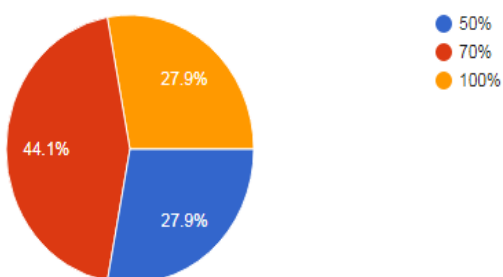


Figure no. 6

The next question was "Do you agree that role play improves your language skills?" As per the data obtained through question no.7, about 0.1% of the students chose the option to disagree. About 14.4% of the students chose the option Neutral, which shows that they

partially agree that role play would enhance their language. Around 71.2% of the students chose the option Agree, which reveals that most of the students agree that role play would enhance their language skills. About 14.4% of the students who chose the option strongly agree, this proves that these students have strong faith that role play would improve their language skills. Thus the figure no.7 reveals that most of the students agree to the point that practicing role play would develop their language skills.
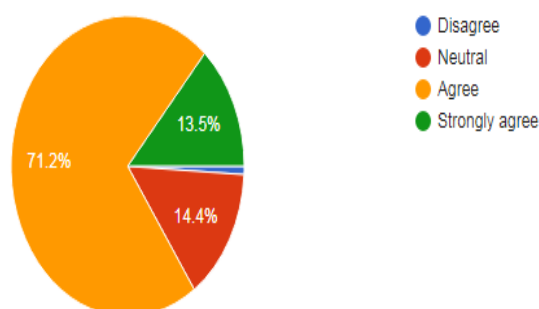


Figure no.7

Another interesting piece of data that we would like to obtain from the students is that "If you have a chance to participate in a role-play will you?" As per the data obtained through figure no.8, about 50.5% of the students chose the option Yes, which shows that half of the students agree that if they were provided with a chance to participate in a role-play; they would make use of the opportunity to enhance their language skill. Whereas it is heartbreaking that about 15.3% of the students don't wish to participate in the role play. Through the data obtained, we come to know that students skill lack interest in learning English. But the mentors must create interest amongst the learners. On the other hand, 3/4 of students chose the option Maybe, which shows that they have some hesitations and difficulties to participate in it. The mentors and language trainers also must encourage and motivate students to take part in role-play activities and help them develop their language skills.
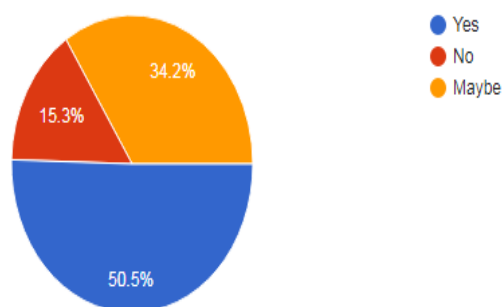
Figure no. 8

The subsequent question is "Did you hesitate to participate in a role play even though you liked it?" As per the information obtained from figure no. 9, about 24.3% of the students chose option No, which says that they won't hesitate to participate in a role-play as they liked it.  Nearly, 65.8% of the students chose the option Sometimes, which shows that whenever they were given chances to participate, out of fear and as they lack confidence, they will hesitate to participate in the role-play events even though they liked it. About 9.9% of the students chose the option Often, which says that they will always have hesitation to do it.  Hence, while assessing the responses provided by the students, we come to know that though most of the students studied through Tamil medium and even after entering higher educational institutions; those students never wanna focus on English.
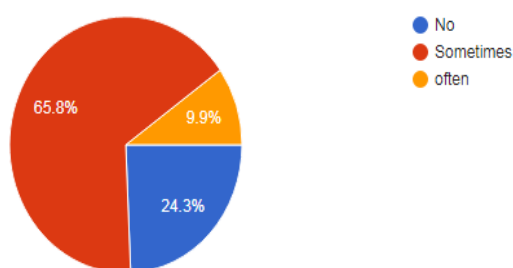


Figure No. 9

The next question was "What is your inconvenience in role play?"  According to the pie chart figure no.10, the following data were obtained:

| S.No. | Details of the questions | %    |
|-------|--------------------------|------|
| 1     | Lack of Language         | 32.4 |
| 2     | Lack of Vocabulary       | 13.5 |
| 3     | Lack of Grammar          | 30.6 |
| 4     | Lack of Confidence       | 23.4 |

which shows that students have difficulty not only in grammatical and sentence formation but also, they lack confidence. Each student has some sort of inconvenience in language, vocabulary, Grammar, and confidence. Even though students face difficulty in understanding and using the language skill, they never attempt to enhance those skills.
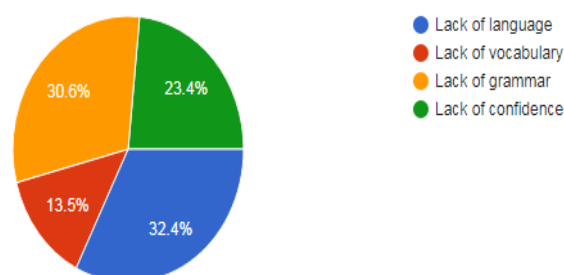


Figure No.10

The next question was "Does everyone get an equal chance to participate in a role play?" According to the pie chart figure no. 11, about 50.5% of the students chose the option Yes, such students feel that they were given equal opportunity to involve themselves in the role play.  About 19.8% of the students chose option No, it is because as per the data collected in question 10, they feel inferior only because they lack language, grammar, vocabulary, and also lack confidence. About 29.7% of the students chose the option Maybe, which shows that they aren't clear about it. Thus the pie chart reveals that most of the students are given chances to participate in the role play.
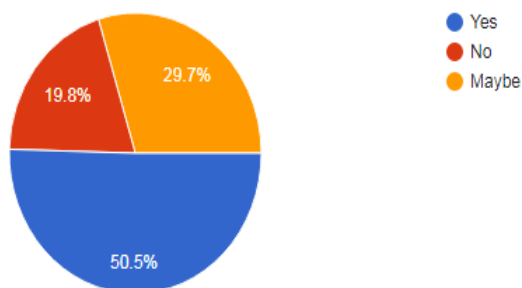
Figure no. 11

The next question "How far role-play has been reached among students?" was used to identify the effective implementation of role-playing amongst students. According to figure no.12, about 10.8% of the students chose the option 25%, which shows that roles have reached 25% among the students. About 47.7% of the students chose the option 50%, which shows that role play has reached half part of the students. About 28.8% of the students chose the option 28.7%, which says that role play has reached 75% among the students. Only 12.6% of the students chose the option 100%, which says that they have thought that role play has reached 100% of the students. Thus, according to the pie chart role-play has reached 50% of students, but it was strongly felt from the previous questions that it was not effectively implemented.
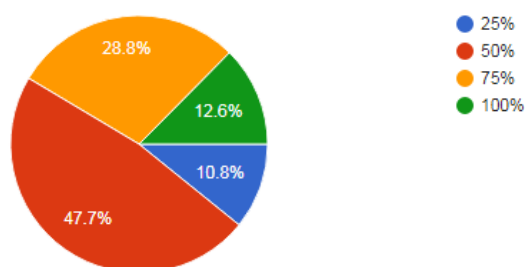


Figure no.12

The next question "At which stage role play will be more effective?" was included to identify at what stage students have an interest in developing their language skills. As per the data collected that is represented in figure no.13, about 29.6% of students chose the option Schooling, which shows that students were taught role-play during their schooling as a subject, but students were not given regular

practice to enhance their skills. The next 40.5% of the students chose the option Higher studies, which shows that this time those students who were not given practice during their schooling would develop their skills by making use of the language training and drills. The importance of the English language would be inculcated amongst students, only if they understand the value of English and use it for their future career prospects. The remaining 28.8% of students chose the option of Social gathering, which shows that they have an outlook that role play could be effectively developed only through Social gathering. As they are mature children, they are not aware of using role-play even in social gatherings. It is because of the influence of the Tamil language amongst the first language learners.
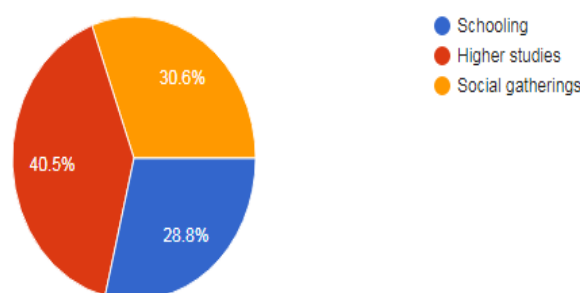


Figure no.13

The next question was "Can you learn different strategies of your life from role play?" About 33.3% of the students chose the option Yes, which shows that they could learn different strategies of life through role-playing. This is only because they were given multiple situations to share, discuss and gain ideas on several incidences through role play. About 38.7% of the students chose the option Sometimes, which shows that they could learn life strategies from role-playing at times. About 27.9% of the students chose the option No idea, which shows that they didn't have any perspective about role play. Thus from the pie chart, it is evident that students can learn various life strategies through role play.
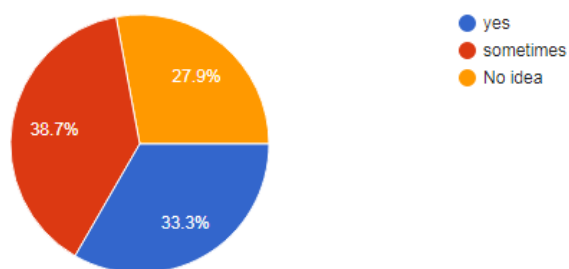
Figure No. 14

The next question was "Are you good at using vocabulary?" According to the pie chart figure no.15, about 45% of the students chose the option Good, which shows that these students are good at using vocabulary. It is a common fact that not only students even common people use 10 to 20 percent of English words in their day-to-day life. So, students have also known umpteen number of English words that were learned during their way of life. Practicing is more important than knowing a word. Therefore, 7.2% of the students chose the option Very good, which shows that they are very well-versed at using English words. About 42.3% of the students chose the option Not bad, which shows that they are fairly good at using vocabulary. This is because, students do have the habit of memorizing words, without knowing their correct meaning and usage. That's why students hesitate, feel shy, and even hesitate to use English inside the classroom. And finally, the pathetic situation of the remaining 6% of the students is they have never tried learning, practicing, and performing the English language and words. Thus from the pie chart figure no.15, it is evident that most of the students are good at using vocabulary but lacks cohesion and coherence.
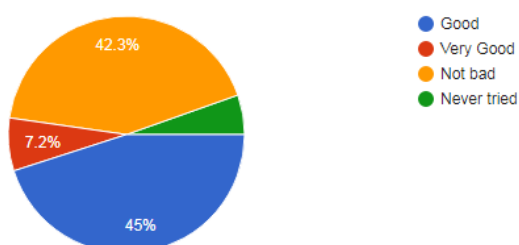


Figure no. 15

Another important question that we would like to assess is that "Is word power important in language building?" As per the

pie chart figure no.16, about 27.9% of students chose that 50% of word power is important in language building. About 44.1% of the students chose that 70% of word power is important in language building. About 27.9% of the students chose that 100% word power is important in building one's language. Thus from the pie chart figure no.16, most of the students said that 70% of word power is important for building one's language well. Based on the data obtained, we are happy that students are very sure about the importance of word power. As everyone knows a minimum of 1000 – 2000 words, we believe that word power along with students' confidence can enhance their language skills.
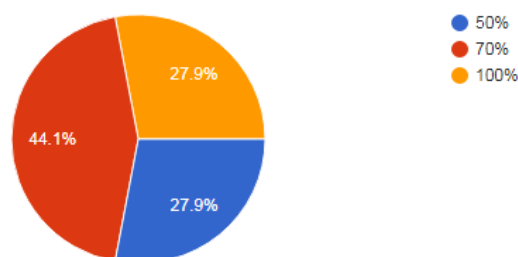


Figure no. 16

Then, we included another question assessing their understanding - "Do you think the lack of language develops role-play skills?" According to the pie chart figure no.17, about 51.4% of the students chose the option Agree. About 37.8% of the students chose the option Partially agree. About 10.8% of the students chose the option Disagree. We received ridiculous answers from the students. While evaluating the answers, we come to know an unavoidable fact that students are incapable of understanding questions. This problem could be solved unless they were motivated to use language effectively.
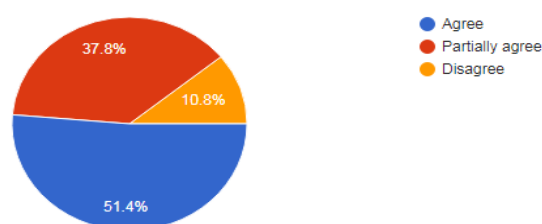


Figure no. 17

"Are movies the developed form of role play?" is yet another question used to assess students' understanding of the developed form of role-playing. According to the pie chart figure no.18, about 60.4% of the students chose the option Agree. About 34.2% of the students chose the option Partially agree. About 7% of the students chose the option Disagree. Students have been watching movies and play for years and have listened to several dialogues on different situations. But they never focus on watching or listening to English movies or plays but only on the Dravidian language spoken since prehistoric times. That becomes a major obstacle in every student's development.
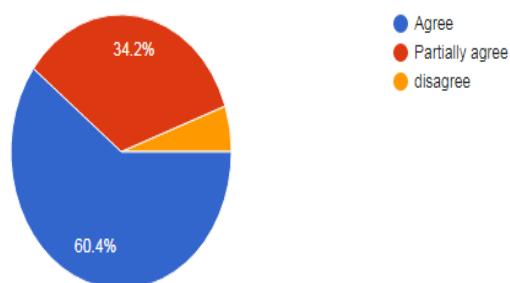


Figure no. 18

Based on figure 19, students do know the benefits of role-playing, about 88.2% of the students have mentioned that it would develop communication and language skills. About 59.7% of the students were of the view that they could overcome fear and gain self-confidence. About 58.8% of the students specified that role play would allow them to act out and make sense of real life, they also felt that they could improve their vocabulary. About 56.3% of the students stated that the role play would develop social skills as they could collaborate with others. About 40.3% of the students felt that they would improve their grammar and forms. About 42.9% of the students avowed that role play would encourage students to express their ideas and feelings in a relaxed environment. 37% of the students affirmed that it would allow the students to explore, investigate, experiment and the remaining 42% of the students confirmed that it would spark creativity and imagination. After the thorough training given to the students, they could understand the various key benefits of the role-play activity.
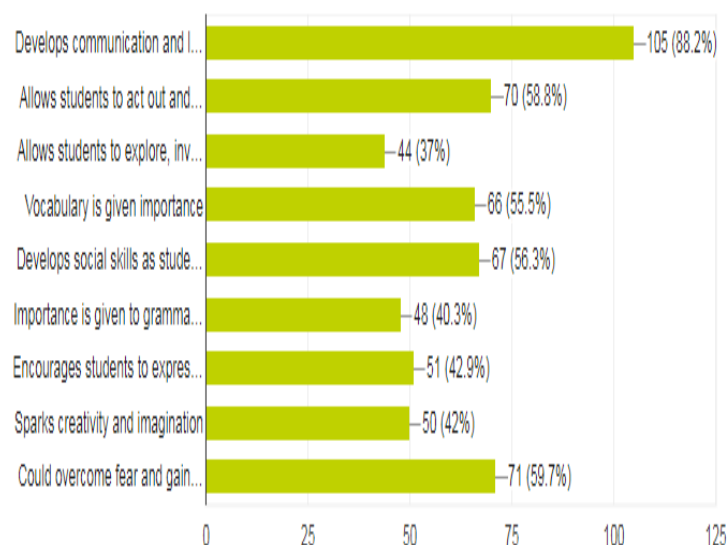


Figure no.19

The next question used for the study is that "Can students memorize and mention the words through role play?" As given in figure no.20, about 47.7% of the students chose that 75% can memorize and mention the words through role play. About 36.9% of the students chose that 50% one can memorize and mention the words through role play. About 15.3% of the students chose that above 75% one can memorize and mention the words through role play. Through the data obtained from the question, students are sure that they could effectively apply, memorize and use words in different situations that were learned during role-play activities. The sole purpose of role-playing is fulfilled by nurturing the efficiency of the students.
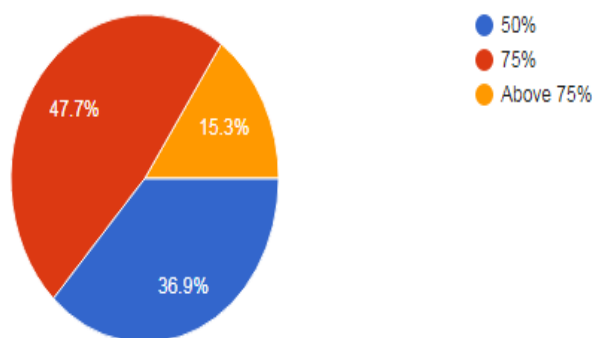


Figure no. 20

The next question was, "Can we learn language spontaneity through role play?" As per the pie chart figure no.21, about 51.4% of the students chose the option Yes. About 18% of the students chose the option Not sure. About 30.6% of the students chose the option Maybe. Students who have entered the higher educational institution have a deep sense of understanding that role play will surely develop their language skills and help them communicate spontaneously in English. Through this set of questions, we are confident that students have understood the purpose of roleplay.
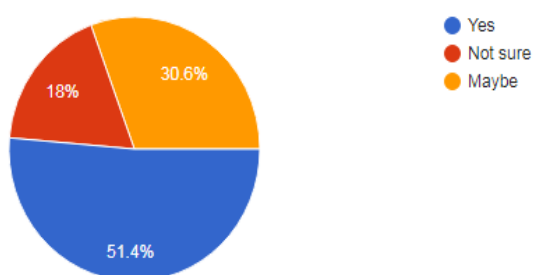


Figure No.21

"If we conduct a role-play session will you participate?" This is the final question that helped us to organize further training activities for the welfare of the students. According to the pie chart figure no.22, about 73% of the students chose the option, Yes and 27% of the students chose the option No. After assessing the data provided, we have started to provide full-fletched language training focusing on role-playing.
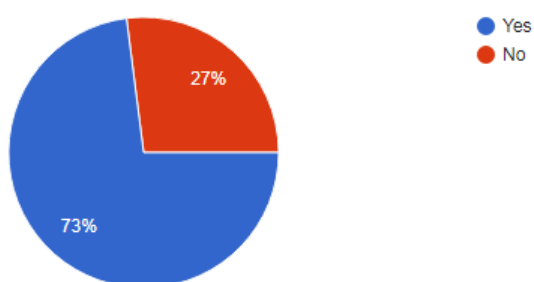


Figure No. 22

## Discussion:

Through the research findings, the researcher discusses the methods to improve the language skills of higher education students through the tool of role-play activity. The discussion also deals with the comprehensive knowledge of students on role play.

Considering the comprehensive knowledge of students on role-play, the research findings show that only half a percent of students knew the significance of role-play activity. The remaining half percent of students didn't have the basic knowledge about it. To rectify this, the students should be given experimental knowledge on role play. The students should be encouraged and they should be motivated to participate in these joyful learning activities.

The research findings show the greatest drawback that most of the students didn't receive opportunities to participate in role-playing. If they were provided with the changes of taking part in the role-play, this would build every student's knowledge, intelligence, and creativity. Such opportunities would bring out their innate talents. The students should be given the right platform to expose their skills.

In the discussion on improving the language skills through role-playing activities, the research findings show that 70% of the students agree that they can improve their language skills more effectively only through role-play activities. The students are ready to participate in role-playing if they are given chances and make their skills much better. Even though the students are very eager to participate in role-playing, they have some hesitations to participate in it. Due to the lack of some stuff in their skills, most of the students have inconvenience in the following: first, they lack language, next in grammar, then in vocabulary, and finally, they lack confidence.

To rectify this sort of inconvenience in role-play, the students should follow the step-by-step measures to make the inconvenience into a very convenient way. Firstly, students should be encouraged to build confidence in

themselves, because this is considered to be the basics that help students participate freely without any hesitation. Then motivating students to participate in the role play incessantly, the remaining inconvenience will automatically be rectified.

According to the research findings, it is evident that students will gain the key benefits of role play such as developing their communication and language skills, could overcome fear and gaining self-confidence, developing social skills to express their ideas and feelings, sparking their creativity and imagination. Hence, students could learn language spontaneity through role play and it can also develop their social and emotional skills.

## Results:

Roleplay is approved to be communicative language learning since students are actively get involved in conversations. Students are not passive but active learners. Students become the center of teaching not the teachers as found in common ways of education. Step by step student is led into the independent phase of learning. Firstly, students are provided guided conversation in which students follow the script, and in the next phase students are provided a semi-script where students are provided half of the conversation and the rest are created by the students. And in the independent phase, the students are provided a context and they create and develop conversation by themselves. So role-play strategy develops students' participation in learning effectively.

In role-play, students not only learn the language but also try to behave as if they are in real work. So they learn two things at the same time that is language and nursing behaviors. One big problem in learning a foreign language is to find the opportunity to speak in English. During the role-play, students get many opportunities to speak since they have to practice it in the group before acting it in front of the class. And speaking in the context of nursing, the students enjoy it since they have previous knowledge of it. One important thing

is that role-play stimulates and urges them to speak. In the context of learning, providing effective stimuli is a hard job for English teachers to bring students into an active condition of using English. Roleplay is categorized as a good strategy to stimulate students to speak. Students are urged to make improvisation in the conversation. Students are provided the opportunity to be more creative in using language. That goes with the theory of learning that good learning is not only making students memorize the materials but making them enthusiastic and creative to find more by themselves.

The result of the study shows that by implementing role play in the class – particularly for the higher education students, they would develop their speaking skills together with the skill of acting in pairs and groups. During this activity, teachers act as a facilitator and a controller. They help when students get suck to find appropriate words to say or fail to use suitable expressive language. By effectively putting the role play into practice, students become creative to do some improvisations based on their knowledge or real experiences they read or see in real life. Such learning makes them understand the importance of participating in the activity.

Generally, it is believed that the lack of speaking is caused only due to the lack of opportunity to practice speaking in the classroom. Practicing role play regularly and continuously, will provide confidence to the students and help them communicate with ease. Moreover, by putting role play into practice as much as possible in their learning, students' English speaking skills can be developed properly.

## Conclusion:

Based on the research findings and the discussion, the study concludes that the role-play activity was mostly comprehensive among the higher education students. Some of the students didn't have experience in role-playing. So, they lacked the basic knowledge of learning a language using role-play activity. If the

students are provided with adequate training, they will become more efficient in using the English language. Through the continuous practice of role-play activity, the students could enhance their skills in speaking, enrich their vocabulary, grammar, and writing skills. The students would also gain problem-solving skills through role-play activity and can acquire knowledge about the societal activity. The students can easily get away from their hesitations and gain more confidence in using the language. Thus, every student can effectively improve their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (LSRW) through role-play activity.

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