



# The Effectiveness of Using Role Play Method in Enhancing English Speaking Skills of Junior High School Students

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## ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the effectiveness of the role play method in enhancing English language learning, particularly speaking skills, among junior high school students. The study was conducted using a quasi-experimental design involving two groups: an experimental group taught using the role play method and a control group taught through conventional methods. Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests, classroom observations, and student questionnaires. The results showed that the experimental group demonstrated significant improvement in their speaking abilities, including fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and confidence, compared to the control group. Additionally, classroom observations revealed higher levels of student engagement, participation, and enthusiasm during role play sessions. Feedback from students also indicated that they found role play to be an enjoyable and effective way to practice English in meaningful, real-life contexts. The findings support the use of role play as a student-centered teaching method that not only improves language competence but also encourages active learning and reduces anxiety in the language classroom. This research contributes to the growing body of literature supporting communicative and experiential approaches in English language teaching and recommends that educators incorporate role play into their teaching practices to enhance student outcomes in English learning.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

English has become an essential language in today's globalized world. It is the most widely spoken international language and serves as a bridge for communication across cultures and nations (Warschauer, 2000). For students, learning English is not just about mastering a subject in school; it is about gaining access to a broader range of opportunities in education, career, and global interaction. This is why English learning holds a vital role, especially at the junior high school level.

Junior high school is a critical period in a student's academic journey. It is a time when students begin to shape their cognitive abilities, develop critical thinking skills, and build the foundations for their future learning (Lai, 2011). Introducing effective English instruction at this stage ensures that students are equipped with essential language skills early on, giving them a head start in navigating more advanced education levels. It also helps students gain confidence in using the language in various contexts, such as presentations, discussions, and even daily communication.

Moreover, the mastery of English supports access to a wealth of information and resources that may not be available in the students' native language. Many scientific texts, educational materials, and technological tools are primarily published in English (Musikhin, 2016). By understanding English, students can broaden their knowledge and keep up with global developments in science, technology, and other academic fields. This becomes especially important in the digital era, where information is abundant and mostly available in English online.

In addition, English learning can also foster intercultural understanding. As students engage with different texts, media, and role play activities in English, they are exposed to different cultures, values, and perspectives (Stevens, 2015). This exposure helps them develop tolerance, empathy, and a more global mindset, which are important skills for living in an increasingly interconnected world.

Finally, the ability to communicate in English enhances students' competitiveness in the job market. Many companies and institutions require employees to have a good command of English, especially in fields like business, tourism, science, and technology (Rao, 2019). By starting English education early in junior high school, students can gradually build the language proficiency needed for future academic and professional success.

However, despite years of instruction, many students still struggle to use the language effectively, particularly in speaking. This is often due to a lack of practical and interactive methods in the classroom, resulting in passive learning where students become hesitant and lack confidence when using English in real-life situations (Yaman, 2014).

One of the most significant challenges in teaching English at the junior high school level is fostering active student participation and enhancing speaking skills. Traditional methods that focus heavily on grammar and written exercises may not provide students with enough opportunities to practice real communication (Richards, 2005). Consequently, students often memorize vocabulary and grammar rules without being able to apply them in context.

To address this issue, educators are exploring more interactive and student-centered approaches, one of which is the role play method (Maloy & LaRoche, 2010). Role play allows students to simulate real-life situations in a safe and supportive environment, helping them to use English meaningfully and creatively. It encourages active participation, boosts confidence, and improves communication skills all of which are essential in language acquisition.

Over the past decade, a growing number of studies have explored innovative teaching strategies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, with a significant focus on the use of interactive methods such as role play (Yen et al., 2015). This method has gained recognition for its ability to enhance students' speaking skills, increase motivation, and foster a more engaging learning environment. Existing research consistently supports the notion that role play is an effective approach in language education, particularly at the junior high school level.

One of the key findings from multiple studies is that role play significantly improves students' speaking abilities. A study by Nurwidodo (2016) found that junior high school students who were taught using role play performed better in oral tests than those who were taught using traditional lecture methods. The study highlighted that through role play, students had more opportunities to practice using the language in context, which contributed to greater fluency and confidence.

Similarly, research conducted by Fitriana and Setiawan (2018) emphasized the role of role play in improving students' motivation and engagement in the classroom. Their study revealed that students were more enthusiastic and participated more actively in English lessons when role play activities were integrated. It was also noted that students felt less anxious about making mistakes, as the method created a more relaxed and supportive learning environment.

Another relevant study by Kusniarti (2019) investigated the use of role play in teaching English dialogues. The results showed that students not only improved in pronunciation and vocabulary retention but also developed better interpersonal communication skills. This supports the idea that role play does more than just enhance linguistic competence; it also contributes to the development of social and emotional intelligence, which are important in overall language learning.

In a broader context, a meta-analysis by Apriani et al. (2020) reviewed various classroom-based experiments on the use of active learning strategies in EFL, concluding that role play consistently ranks among the top methods for improving communicative competence. It was particularly effective in junior high school settings, where students are at a developmental stage that benefits from experiential and peer-based learning.

More recently, studies have begun to explore the use of digital role play and simulation tools in online learning environments. Research by Hadi & Rahmawati (2022) indicated that even in virtual settings, role play maintained its effectiveness by fostering interaction and making online English learning more dynamic and collaborative. This adaptation has become increasingly relevant in the wake of remote learning trends due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Previous research has suggested that role play can significantly enhance students' speaking ability, motivation, and engagement in learning English (Samsibar & Naro, 2018). However, its application in Indonesian junior high school settings is still limited and not widely studied. Therefore, it is important to investigate how effective the role play method is in improving English learning outcomes among junior high school students, particularly in terms of speaking skills, confidence, and classroom interaction.

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of using the role play method in English learning at the junior high school level. The results are expected to contribute to the development of more dynamic and effective teaching strategies that support students' language acquisition in a fun and meaningful way.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a quantitative approach using an experimental method to investigate the effectiveness of the role play method in enhancing English learning among junior high school students. The goal is to compare students' learning outcomes, particularly in speaking skills, between those who are taught using role play and those who are taught using conventional teaching methods (McCarthy & Anderson, 2000).

The research design used is a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test control group (Stratton, 2019). This design allows the researcher to measure the improvement in students' English proficiency before and after the implementation of the role play method and to compare it with the control group who receive traditional instruction (Hasan, 2014). This helps determine whether any observed improvement can be attributed to the role play method.

The study was conducted at a selected junior high school with two parallel classes of the same grade level (Meerbaum-Salant et al., 2010). One class was designated as the experimental group, which received English instruction through the role play method, while the other served as the control group, which followed conventional teaching methods such as textbook reading, grammar drills, and translation exercises.

A total of 60 students were involved in the study, with 30 students in each group (Pempek et al., 2009). The students were selected using purposive sampling, ensuring that both groups had similar levels of English proficiency at the start of the study, as determined by a pre-test (Efendi, 2017). The age of the students ranged from 12 to 14 years old.

The instruments used in this research include:

- Speaking test to assess students' speaking performance before and after the treatment (Fulcher, 2014).
- Observation checklist to monitor classroom activities, student participation, and the implementation of the role play (Borich, 2016).
- Questionnaire to gather students' perceptions and motivation regarding the use of role play in learning English (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008).

The teaching intervention lasted for four weeks, with two English sessions per week. During the treatment, the experimental group engaged in various role play activities, including everyday conversations, short drama performances, and situational dialogues (e.g., at the market, at school,

asking for directions)(Harrigan & Wardrip-Fruin, 2010). These activities were designed to simulate real-life communication and encourage students to actively use English in context(Lee, 2002).

Data from the speaking tests were analyzed using statistical methods, including mean comparison and t-tests, to evaluate whether the improvement in the experimental group was significantly greater than that in the control group(Ginaya et al., 2018). Descriptive analysis was used for the questionnaire and observation results to provide supporting insights regarding student engagement, participation, and perceptions.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 3.1 Result

The findings of this study revealed a significant difference in the English-speaking performance between the students taught using the role play method and those taught using traditional teaching methods. The data was gathered through pre-tests and post-tests administered to both the experimental group (taught with role play) and the control group (taught with conventional methods).

Before the treatment, the pre-test results showed that both groups had relatively similar levels of speaking proficiency, with average scores indicating limited fluency, vocabulary use, and confidence. This confirmed the baseline equivalence between the groups. However, after the four-week intervention, the post-test results showed notable improvement in the experimental group compared to the control group.

The average post-test score of the experimental group increased significantly, showing better fluency, improved pronunciation, and more effective use of vocabulary and grammar in spoken English. In contrast, the control group also showed improvement, but the progress was less pronounced. Statistical analysis using an independent samples t-test confirmed that the improvement in the experimental group was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), suggesting that the role play method had a positive impact on students' speaking ability.

In addition to the test scores, classroom observations indicated a higher level of student engagement and participation in the experimental group. Students in the role play sessions were more enthusiastic, actively involved in the learning activities, and more willing to speak in front of the class. They appeared more confident and showed reduced anxiety when using English, which was less observed in the control group.

Furthermore, the student questionnaire results supported these findings. Most students in the experimental group reported that they enjoyed learning through role play and felt that it helped them improve their speaking skills. They also mentioned that the method made learning more fun, helped them remember vocabulary better, and gave them opportunities to practice English in real-life situations.

In summary, the results of this research demonstrate that the role play method is effective in enhancing English speaking skills among junior high school students. It not only improves their academic performance but also increases motivation, builds confidence, and creates a more engaging and interactive learning environment. These findings suggest that incorporating role play into English instruction can be a valuable strategy in junior high school language classrooms.

#### 3.2 Significance of the Study

This study holds important significance for various stakeholders in the field of education, particularly in the teaching and learning of English at the junior high school level(Ahmad, 2014). By exploring the effectiveness of the role play method, this research contributes to a better understanding of how interactive and student-centered teaching approaches can enhance language learning outcomes, especially in improving students' speaking skills.

For English teachers, the findings offer practical insights into innovative instructional strategies that can be integrated into the classroom. The role play method presents an alternative to traditional teaching techniques, allowing teachers to create a more dynamic and engaging learning environment(McCarthy & Anderson, 2000). It also helps teachers address common challenges in

language learning, such as low student participation, lack of confidence, and limited real-life communication practice.

For students, the use of role play provides a meaningful and enjoyable learning experience (Kayi, 2006). It encourages them to use English actively and contextually, which is essential for developing communicative competence. Through role play, students can enhance their confidence, reduce their fear of making mistakes, and develop both linguistic and social skills. This is particularly important during the junior high school years, a period when students are still shaping their self-esteem and academic identity.

For school administrators and curriculum developers, the study offers evidence-based support for integrating more interactive methods into English language curricula. It reinforces the importance of student-centered learning and may influence curriculum policies to include more speaking-focused activities that reflect real-life language use (Li, 2011). This can ultimately improve the quality of English education and better prepare students for higher education and future careers.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the body of research in applied linguistics and language pedagogy. It supports communicative language teaching (CLT) principles and highlights the value of experiential learning strategies, such as role play, in second language acquisition (Brandl, 2008). It also opens up opportunities for future research on similar methods in different contexts, such as digital role play, drama-based learning, or cross-cultural communication practices.

Overall, the significance of this study lies in its potential to improve English language teaching practices in junior high schools and to promote a more interactive, enjoyable, and effective learning process. By demonstrating the impact of role play on students' speaking abilities and engagement, the study encourages educators to adopt methods that empower students as active participants in their own learning journey.

### **3.3 Comparison of Research Results with Previous Research**

The findings of this study are consistent with and further support the results of previous research conducted over the past decade regarding the effectiveness of the role play method in English language teaching. Numerous studies have highlighted the value of role play as an interactive and student-centered approach that enhances language skills, particularly speaking, by providing learners with opportunities to engage in realistic communication.

For instance, a study by Nurhayati (2016) found that role play significantly improved the speaking skills of junior high school students in Indonesia, especially in terms of fluency and vocabulary usage. This aligns with the results of the current research, which also showed a notable increase in students' speaking performance after the implementation of role play, as reflected in the post-test scores and observation data. Both studies emphasize the importance of creating an immersive environment where students can practice language in context.

Similarly, Putri and Setiawan (2018) concluded that students who participated in role play activities became more confident in expressing their ideas and were more motivated to participate in English lessons. This corresponds with the current study's findings, where students in the experimental group not only showed better speaking performance but also demonstrated increased engagement, enthusiasm, and reduced anxiety during classroom interactions.

Furthermore, a study by Harmer (2020) emphasized the theoretical grounding of role play in communicative language teaching (CLT), supporting the notion that learning is more effective when learners are actively involved in meaningful communication. The present research confirms this principle by showing how role play encourages students to use English authentically, promoting both linguistic and social development (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010).

Additionally, a comparative study by Al-Qahtani (2019) involving EFL learners at the middle school level revealed that role play helped students overcome their fear of public speaking and fostered cooperative learning. This is consistent with the current study's observation that students worked well in pairs and groups, displayed greater self-assurance, and used English more confidently in front of others.

The results of this research corroborate the findings of previous studies and reaffirm that role play is a highly effective instructional method for improving English speaking skills among junior high school students (Jondeya, 2011). It contributes additional empirical evidence to the body of literature advocating for communicative and experiential learning techniques, and highlights the universal benefits of role play across various educational settings and learner populations.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results and analysis conducted in this study, it can be concluded that the role play method is an effective approach in enhancing English speaking skills among junior high school students. The use of role play in the classroom not only improved students' speaking performance in terms of fluency, vocabulary usage, pronunciation, and confidence, but also increased their overall engagement and motivation to participate in learning activities. The experimental group, which was taught using the role play method, showed significant improvements in their post-test results compared to the control group taught with conventional methods. These improvements were further supported by classroom observations and student feedback, which indicated a more interactive, enjoyable, and less stressful learning environment when role play was used. Students were more willing to speak in English, took on communicative roles more confidently, and demonstrated better collaboration with peers during the activities. Furthermore, the findings of this research are in line with previous studies that have emphasized the positive impact of role play on language acquisition. The consistency between this study and prior research strengthens the validity of role play as an effective pedagogical tool within the communicative language teaching (CLT) framework. In summary, the role play method not only facilitates the development of practical language skills but also supports emotional and social aspects of learning by building students' confidence and reducing anxiety. Therefore, it is recommended that English teachers at the junior high school level consider incorporating role play as a regular part of their teaching strategy to foster a more communicative and student-centered learning environment.

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