

THE EFFECT OF ROLE PLAY ON STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITIES AT 5th GRADE OF SDN SETONOPANDE 1 KEDIRI

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to address the issue of low speaking confidence and fluency among fifth-grade students at SDN Setonopande 1 Kediri. It aimed to investigate the effectiveness of role play in enhancing students' speaking abilities. A quantitative approach was used, employing a one-group pre-test and post-test preexperimental design. The participants were 21 fifth-grade students. Data were gathered through speaking assessments that evaluated fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, accuracy, and confidence. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to analyze the results. The analysis indicated a significant improvement in students' speaking skills, with the average score rising from 55 to 84.25. The statistical result showed a p-value of 0.000, demonstrating that role play had a positive effect on speaking performance. Based on these findings, the study suggests incorporating role play into regular classroom activities to enhance students' communicative abilities.

Keywords: Role Play, Speaking Ability, Teaching Speaking, English Learning.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengatasi masalah rendahnya kepercayaan diri dan kelancaran berbicara di antara siswa kelas lima di SDN Setonopande 1 Kediri. Tujuannya adalah untuk menyelidiki efektivitas permainan peran dalam meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara siswa. Pendekatan kuantitatif digunakan, dengan menggunakan desain pra-eksperimental satu kelompok, yaitu pra-tes dan pasca-tes. Partisipan terdiri dari 21 siswa kelas lima. Data dikumpulkan melalui penilaian berbicara yang mengevaluasi kelancaran, pengucapan, kosakata, akurasi, dan kepercayaan diri. Uji Wilcoxon Signed-Rank digunakan untuk menganalisis hasilnya. Analisis menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan dalam keterampilan berbicara siswa, dengan skor rata-rata meningkat dari 55 menjadi 84,25. Hasil statistik menunjukkan nilai-p sebesar 0,000, yang menunjukkan bahwa permainan peran memiliki efek positif pada kinerja berbicara. Berdasarkan temuan ini, penelitian ini menyarankan untuk memasukkan permainan peran ke dalam kegiatan kelas reguler untuk meningkatkan kemampuan komunikatif siswa.

Kata Kunci: Permainan Peran, Kemampuan Berbicara, Pengajaran Berbicara, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the most essential components in learning English as a foreign language, as it enables students to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas effectively. According to Ibn & Bogor (2018), speaking involves more than just pronouncing words; it encompasses fluency, vocabulary mastery, confidence, and appropriate intonation to ensure that messages are clearly understood. In the context of Indonesian education, the Merdeka Curriculum offers flexibility for teachers to develop creative and contextual teaching strategies, allowing them to design lessons that integrate local culture and real-life situations. At the elementary level, English is currently taught as an elective subject, with the goal of equipping students with communicative competence in familiar contexts by the end of Phase C (Grades 5–6). This includes the ability to understand and produce simple spoken and written texts, as well as to engage in everyday conversations.

Despite these goals, many elementary school students still struggle with speaking English confidently and fluently. Preliminary observations at SDN Setonopande 1 Kediri revealed that fifth-grade students often faced difficulties in understanding spoken English and lacked the confidence to communicate orally. Factors such as limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and insufficient exposure to English contributed to these challenges. Traditional teaching methods, which often relied on drilling and memorization, failed to create engaging and meaningful learning experiences, resulting in low motivation among students.

To address these challenges, interactive and student-centered teaching strategies are needed. One effective method is the use of role play, which encourages students to actively participate by taking on different characters and practicing dialogues in simulated real-life contexts. As described by Ladousse (2004), role play not only helps students practice language structures in a natural setting but also boosts their motivation and confidence to speak English. Furthermore, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) supports the integration of role play in classrooms by emphasizing real communication as both the goal and means of language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Several studies have shown the effectiveness of role play in enhancing speaking skills. For instance, Afdillah (2014) found that role play significantly improved students' fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and overall speaking performance. Similarly, Ristianisa and Suhardi (2021) demonstrated that applying role play in elementary classrooms helped students become more confident and interactive speakers. However, most existing research has focused on different contexts or older students, leaving limited evidence about its impact on young learners, particularly within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to investigate the effect of using the role play method on the speaking abilities of fifth-grade students at SDN Setonopande 1 Kediri. By measuring students' speaking performance before and after the application of role play, the study seeks to determine whether this technique can help improve fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and confidence in speaking English. It is expected that the findings will contribute to more effective teaching strategies and support the implementation of communicative and interactive methods in elementary English classes.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design, specifically the one-group pre-test and post-test design. The aim of this method was to measure the effect of using the role play technique on students' speaking abilities by comparing their performance before and after the treatment. The research was conducted at SDN Setonopande 1 Kediri during the 2024/2025 academic year, over a period of three weeks. This school was chosen because the researcher had previously carried out a teaching and training program there and was already familiar with the students' characteristics, learning styles, and classroom environment.

The population of this study consisted of all fifth-grade students at SDN Setonopande 1 Kediri, totaling 21 students in a single class. Due to the relatively small number of students and the practical accessibility, the researcher used convenience sampling to include all students as the research sample. This approach ensured that the treatment could be directly observed across the entire class.

Data collection was carried out through speaking tests administered as a pre-test and post-test. Both tests focused on measuring students' speaking ability in terms of fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, accuracy, and confidence. The pre-test involved a dialogue-based speaking task where students worked in pairs to perform simple conversations, such as giving instructions. After three weeks of treatment, a post-test was conducted, using a role play scenario titled "At the Market," where students acted out buyer-seller dialogues to assess their improvement.

During the treatment phase, students participated in a series of role play activities designed to simulate real-life communication contexts. The teacher guided students in understanding the scenario, explained relevant vocabulary and expressions, and demonstrated sample dialogues. Students practiced the dialogues in pairs or groups before performing in front of the class. Throughout these sessions, the teacher provided feedback on pronunciation, fluency, and expression, aiming to build students' confidence and encourage active participation.

The data analysis involved several steps. First, a normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk method was conducted to check whether the data were

normally distributed. Since the sample size was small, the Shapiro-Wilk test was considered appropriate. Following this, a paired sample t-test was applied to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores. The researcher also visualized the score distributions with charts to compare students' progress before and after the treatment. All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 23, ensuring that the statistical results were valid and reliable.

Overall, this method was chosen to objectively assess whether the role play technique could significantly improve the speaking abilities of fifth-grade students, as measured through standardized speaking tasks and supported by quantitative statistical analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

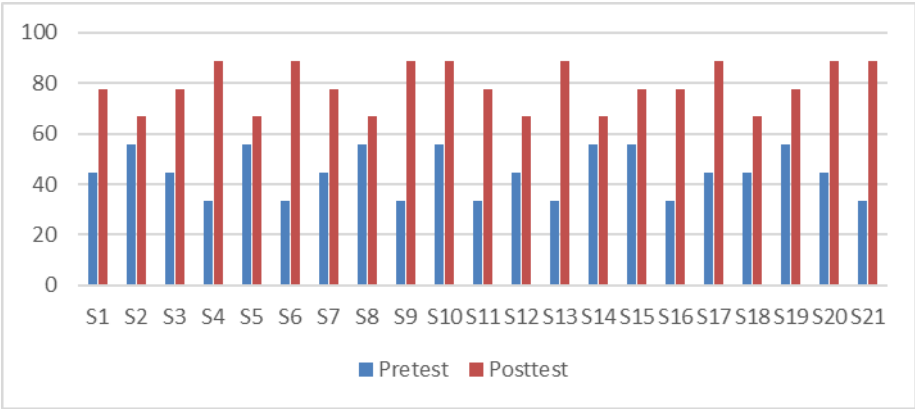
RESULT

This research investigated the effect of the role play method on the speaking abilities of fifth-grade students at SDN Setonopande 1 Kediri during the 2024/2025 academic year. The study used a pre-experimental design (one-group pre-test and post-test) with 21 students as the sample. The purpose was to measure students' speaking skills before and after being taught using role play, focusing on aspects such as fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, and confidence. In this section, the researcher describes the students' speaking performance before and after being taught using the role play method. To illustrate the students' progress more clearly, a diagram is included to compare the pre-test and post-test results. Additionally, the data analysis was carried out with the help of SPSS version 23, which was used to perform the Normality Test and the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test to obtain the necessary statistical data.

Before the treatment, the students participated in a pre-test to assess their initial speaking ability. The results revealed that most students had low scores, indicating limited proficiency in speaking English. Specifically, the average pre-test score was 55, which was significantly below the school's minimum passing grade (KKM) of 70. The frequency distribution showed that the majority of students' scores clustered in the lower ranges, confirming that students struggled with confidence, vocabulary use, and fluency when speaking English.

1. Students Speaking Scores

Diagram 1 Students Pre Test and Post Test Scores Comparison



Based on the diagram above, the students’ post-test scores are generally higher compared to their pre-test scores. The blue bars illustrate the pre-test results, while the orange bars indicate the post-test scores. The majority of students showed an improvement in their scores following the treatment. While a small number of students showed little to no change or a slight decline, the overall outcome demonstrates a positive progression.

2. Normality Test

Table 1.The Normality Test

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-test	.218	21	.011	.799	21	.001
Post-test	.243	21	.002	.796	21	.001
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

According to the table presented above, the significance value of the pre-test is 0.001, which is below the threshold of 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted, signifying that the pre-test data do not follow a normal distribution. Similarly, the significance value of the post-test is also 0.001, which is below 0.05. This means that the post-test data are likewise not normally distributed.

Table 2. The Rank Test

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Post-test - Pre-test	Negative Ranks	0 ^a	.00	.00
	Positive Ranks	21 ^b	11.00	231.00

	Ties	0 ^c		
	Total	21		
a. Post-test < Pre-test				
b. Post-test > Pre-test				
c. Post-test = Pre-test				

The results indicated that all 21 students showed improvement, as evidenced by the 21 positive ranks (Post-test > Pre-test) and a total absence of negative ranks (Post-test < Pre-test) and ties (Post-test = Pre-test). The mean rank for the positive differences was 11.00, with a total sum of ranks amounting to 231.00. These findings suggest that the role play technique had a consistently positive impact on students’ speaking abilities, with no instances of decline or unchanged performance.

Table 3. The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Test Statistics ^a	
	Post-test - Pre-test
Z	-4.026 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	
b. Based on negative ranks.	

The results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test further confirmed a statistically significant difference between students' speaking scores before and after the implementation of role play. The test yielded a Z value of -4.026 and an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of .000. Since the significance value is less than 0.05, this indicates that the improvement in students’ speaking abilities after the role play intervention was statistically significant. The negative Z value is reported based on the calculation involving negative ranks, though in this case, no negative ranks were observed. These results support the conclusion that the role play technique had a meaningful and positive effect on students' speaking performance.

The analysis revealed a Z-score of -4.026 with an Asymptotic Significance (2-tailed) value of 0.000. Since the p-value is lower than the commonly accepted significance level of 0.05, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant difference between the students’ speaking scores before and after the use of the role play technique. These results suggest that

the implementation of role play had a meaningful and positive effect on the speaking abilities of fifth-grade students at SDN Setonopande 1 Kediri.

The results of this study revealed a substantial improvement in students' speaking abilities after being taught using the role play technique, with the mean score increasing from 55 in the pre-test to 84.25 in the post-test. This finding aligns with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasize meaningful interaction as both the goal and method of language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). By practicing dialogues in real-life scenarios, students became more engaged and confident in expressing themselves in English. The effectiveness of role play observed in this study is also supported by previous research. Afdillah (2014) demonstrated that role play significantly improved students' fluency, vocabulary, and pronunciation in speaking. Similarly, Ristianisa and Suhardi (2021) found that role play enhanced elementary students' speaking skills by providing opportunities to practice language in interactive contexts. These studies, together with the current findings, highlight the value of role play in helping students overcome anxiety, increase participation, and build communicative competence.

From the curriculum perspective, the use of role play aligns well with the Merdeka Curriculum, which encourages student-centered and contextual learning approaches. By designing scenarios based on everyday life, such as buying and selling at the market, teachers helped students apply English in familiar contexts, which is emphasized in Phase C learning outcomes. Additionally, role play supports the development of essential speaking aspects like fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, and confidence, making it an effective strategy for elementary classrooms. Overall, the findings of this study reinforce the idea that interactive and contextual learning methods, like role play, not only improve speaking skills but also foster a more dynamic and enjoyable learning experience for students.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this research clearly demonstrate that the role play method had a significant positive impact on the speaking abilities of fifth-grade students at SDN Setonopande 1 Kediri. The average score increased from 55 in the pre-test to 84.25 in the post-test, supported by the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test which yielded a significance value of 0.000. This statistically significant improvement shows that role play is an effective method for teaching speaking skills in an elementary school context.

Several factors contribute to the success of role play in this study. Firstly, role play provided students with authentic and contextual practice, allowing them to use English in scenarios relevant to their daily lives, such as buying and selling at the market. This aligns with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which encourages meaningful, student-centered learning experiences. By connecting language learning with familiar contexts, students

were able to better understand and apply vocabulary and expressions, resulting in higher levels of fluency and accuracy.

Secondly, role play created an interactive and collaborative learning environment. Unlike traditional methods such as rote memorization or drills, role play actively engaged students through dialogue and performance. This interactive nature reduced their anxiety about making mistakes and helped build their confidence in speaking English. As seen in the pre-test, students initially hesitated and often struggled to express themselves. However, after repeated practice through role play, they became more willing to speak, even when mistakes occurred, highlighting the importance of practice in developing speaking skills.

The research also highlighted improvements in specific aspects of speaking, including fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary use. Through structured dialogues and guided practice, students learned to pronounce words more clearly and speak with fewer hesitations. The supportive classroom atmosphere encouraged students to try new words and expressions without fear, gradually expanding their vocabulary. This supports the idea from Ladousse (2004) and Harmer (2007) that role play can help learners use language creatively and develop greater fluency.

Additionally, the role play method aligns well with communicative language teaching (CLT) principles, which emphasize the use of language as a tool for real communication. By simulating real-life situations, students not only practiced speaking but also developed important communicative strategies, such as asking for clarification or responding politely. These skills are essential for effective communication and are often difficult to develop through more traditional, teacher-centered methods.

The improvement observed in students' post-test scores also reflects the motivational effect of role play. The fun and engaging nature of acting out roles kept students interested and motivated to participate actively in the lessons. This motivation likely contributed to better performance, as students were more attentive and willing to practice. The research thus supports previous studies, such as those by Afdillah (2014) and Ristianisa & Suhardi (2021), which found that role play could effectively improve students' speaking skills by providing meaningful practice opportunities.

Despite the positive results, the study also had limitations that should be noted. The sample consisted of only 21 students from a single school, and the research duration was relatively short (approximately three weeks). As such, while the findings are promising, further research with larger samples and longer intervention periods would be beneficial to confirm and expand upon these results. Additionally, the unique characteristics of the students and school context may have influenced the findings, which means the same method might yield different outcomes in other settings.

In conclusion, the discussion of these findings shows that role play is an effective and practical strategy to improve speaking abilities among young learners. It supports students' fluency, accuracy, and confidence by providing real-life practice opportunities in a supportive environment. As part of a communicative approach, role play can help students move beyond memorization and truly engage with the English language, preparing them for more advanced communication tasks in the future.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The results of this study conclude that applying the role play method has a significant and positive effect on the speaking ability of fifth-grade students at SDN Setonopande 1 Kediri. The main goal of this research was to find out whether role play could help students overcome difficulties in expressing ideas, improving fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and boosting confidence in speaking English. The findings show that before the treatment, students' average speaking scores were low, and many students felt insecure and hesitant to communicate in English. After three weeks of treatment, there was a notable improvement, with the mean score increasing from 55 in the pre-test to 84.25 in the post-test. This indicates that role play successfully created an interactive, meaningful, and student-centered learning environment that supported students' speaking development.

The improvement in students' speaking skills can be attributed to the interactive and contextual nature of role play, which allowed students to practice language in real-life scenarios such as buying and selling in the market. By taking on different roles, students became more engaged, confident, and motivated to participate actively during the lessons. This finding aligns with the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which emphasizes real communication as both the goal and means of language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Moreover, previous studies by Afdillah (2014) and Ristianisa & Suhardi (2021) have similarly shown that role play is effective in improving students' fluency, vocabulary, and confidence, supporting the results of this research.

From a curriculum perspective, using role play aligns with the Merdeka Curriculum's principle of differentiation and student-centered learning. By designing activities that reflect students' daily lives and interests, such as market transactions, teachers help students learn English in familiar contexts. This supports the development of communicative competence, which is one of the key goals in Phase C of the Merdeka Curriculum for upper elementary students.

However, this study also has limitations. It was conducted with only one class of 21 students and for a relatively short duration of three weeks. Additionally, there was no control group for comparison, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, further research is recommended to

validate these results across larger and more diverse samples, and over longer periods.

Based on the findings, several suggestions can be made. For teachers, it is recommended to integrate role play activities regularly into speaking lessons, as they can help students become more confident and fluent speakers. Teachers should carefully select topics that are relevant to students' daily lives and ensure clear instructions and supportive feedback during practice. For future researchers, it is suggested to include control groups and extend the treatment duration to explore the long-term impact of role play on speaking skills. Further studies could also investigate the use of role play in improving other language skills, such as listening, reading, or writing, within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum.

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