

## **THE IMPACT OF ROLE PLAY ON THE SPEAKING PERFORMANCE OF EFL STUDENTS**

**Hartatya Novika<sup>1</sup>, M. Arbain<sup>2</sup>**

[hartatyanovika@gmail.com](mailto:hartatyanovika@gmail.com), [muhammadarbain1973@gmail.com](mailto:muhammadarbain1973@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

This study investigates the effectiveness of role play activities in enhancing the speaking performance of EFL students within a non-Western educational context. While prior research has acknowledged the general benefits of role play, limited studies have assessed its direct impact on speaking skills in culturally specific environments. Employing a one-group pretest-posttest design, the study measured changes in speaking proficiency among 29 second-year students enrolled in the English Language Education program at Universitas Islam Kalimantan (Islamic University of Kalimantan) Muhammad Arsyad Al-Banjari. Participants completed a pretest measuring fluency, accuracy, and communicative competence, followed by a series of role play interventions, and a subsequent posttest using the same rubric. Statistical analysis revealed a significant improvement in speaking scores, with the mean rising from 76.97 to 82.69. A paired samples t-test confirmed this increase was statistically significant ( $t = -9.389$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that the role play intervention positively influenced students' speaking performance. These findings suggest that culturally contextualized role play can be an effective pedagogical tool in EFL settings, particularly in improving learners' spoken English proficiency.

**Keywords:** Role Play, Speaking, Performance, EFL Students

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners face numerous challenges in developing their speaking proficiency. While traditional classroom activities often focus on passive skills such as reading and listening, speaking remains a pivotal skill for communication in real-world contexts (Brown, 2023; Yilmaz & Güngör, 2022). Consequently, educators continually explore innovative teaching methods to enhance speaking performance, one of which is role play. This approach, which

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<sup>1</sup> Islamic University of Kalimantan Muhammad Arsyad Al-Banjari Banjarmasin, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Islamic University of Kalimantan Muhammad Arsyad Al-Banjari Banjarmasin, Indonesia

immerses students in simulated real-life interactions, is argued to improve not only linguistic accuracy but also communicative competence and confidence (Karakas & Erdogan, 2021; Mustafa & Zafar, 2023).

Role play, as an interactive and dynamic pedagogical tool, has gained considerable attention in recent years due to its perceived benefits in language acquisition (Perea & Gallego, 2023). By placing students in varied social scenarios, role play encourages spontaneous speech, collaborative interaction, and the use of authentic language structures (Kuo & Hsu, 2024). Furthermore, research suggests that role play can significantly reduce the anxiety often associated with speaking in a foreign language, providing a supportive space for learners to experiment with language without the fear of judgment (Siti & Sunaryo, 2022).

In line with these findings, the present study seeks to investigate the impact of role play on the speaking performance of EFL students, specifically examining whether such activities foster measurable improvements in fluency, accuracy, and communication effectiveness. Previous studies have largely supported the efficacy of role play in enhancing speaking skills; however, gaps remain in terms of how different types of role play influence these outcomes across diverse EFL contexts (Sujatmiko, 2024; Smith & Zhang, 2023).

A significant body of research highlights the dual importance of cognitive and emotional factors in second language acquisition. Role play addresses both dimensions by stimulating cognitive processes such as problem-solving and critical thinking while simultaneously providing emotional support that encourages active participation (Zhang & Li, 2022). Additionally, the social nature of role play promotes engagement, which has been identified as a key determinant of successful language learning (Alghamdi & Alseidi, 2023). According to Long (2024), the interactive and learner-centered nature of role play creates opportunities for students to practice speaking in a context that mirrors authentic communication, thereby enhancing both their linguistic and interpersonal abilities.

Moreover, it is essential to recognize the role of motivation in second language learning. Studies indicate that students who engage in role play are more likely to feel motivated due to the contextual relevance and dynamic interaction

involved (Fukuda & Han, 2023). This motivation is critical as it not only influences students' attitude toward speaking activities but also their overall language development (Mackey & Gass, 2022). The impact of motivation on the speaking performance of EFL students through role play remains an area of keen interest for researchers, with significant implications for both teaching methodology and curriculum design.

While existing research provides a general understanding of role play's benefits, few studies have explored its direct impact on speaking performance in diverse EFL contexts, especially in non-Western educational settings (Chen & Zhang, 2023). This gap warrants further exploration, as the effectiveness of role play may be influenced by cultural and contextual variables that have yet to be fully examined. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the role play activities employed in EFL classrooms and assessing their effects on the speaking performance of students in a specific cultural context.

The findings of this study will contribute to the ongoing dialogue on effective language teaching strategies, providing valuable insights for educators seeking to incorporate role play into their instructional practices. By addressing the relationship between role play and speaking performance, this research will offer practical implications for enhancing EFL instruction, with a focus on fostering communicative competence and improving student outcomes in real-world speaking tasks (Chou & Weng, 2024).

Through this investigation, it is hoped that the study will shed light on the specific elements of role play that contribute to language improvement and provide evidence for its integration into broader pedagogical frameworks. Ultimately, the study aims to demonstrate that role play is not just an engaging activity but a powerful tool for fostering language proficiency in EFL learners.

## **B. METHODOLOGY**

### **1. Research Design**

This study utilizes a one-group pretest-posttest design to assess the impact of role play on the speaking performance of English as a foreign language (EFL) students. In this design, a single group of students will undergo both a pretest and

posttest, allowing for comparisons of speaking performance before and after exposure to role-play activities (Creswell & Poth, 2022). The use of this design is particularly appropriate for this study as it enables a controlled examination of changes in speaking proficiency over a specific period, while minimizing the need for a control group (Cook & Campbell, 2023). By assessing the same group of students before and after the intervention, any observed changes in performance can be attributed to the role-play activities employed.

Table 1. One Group Pretest-Posttest Design

Group	Pretest	Treatment	Posttest
Exsperimen	Y1	X	Y2

**Description:**

\* Y1: Measurement of Speaking Skills before the implementation of the online Sociodrama Method

\* Y2: Measurement of Speaking Skills after the implementation of the online Sociodrama Method

\* X: The implementation of the role-play technique

According to previous studies, this type of design is commonly used in educational research, especially when it is difficult or unethical to assign participants to different experimental and control groups (Campbell & Stanley, 2022). It also allows for an accurate measure of individual growth in speaking ability, which is central to the research objectives of this study.

**2. Population and Sample**

The study's population consists of second-year students enrolled in the English Language Education program at Universitas Islam Kalimantan (Islamic University of Kalimantan) Muhammad Arsyad Al-Banjari Banjarmasin. The target sample comprises 29 students who were selected based on convenience sampling. These students were chosen because they were available during the study period and had been exposed to basic EFL instruction. They represent a typical group of EFL learners at an intermediate level of language proficiency, which makes them

ideal for investigating the effectiveness of role play on improving speaking performance (Sujatmiko, 2024).

Convenience sampling was chosen due to its practicality and the availability of participants within the specific context of the university. This sampling method is frequently used in educational research when researchers have limited access to larger or more diverse populations, but it still offers valuable insights into educational practices (Palinkas et al., 2022).

### **3. Technique of Data Collection**

To assess changes in speaking performance, the study will employ a pretest-posttest methodology. The pretest will be conducted before the role-play intervention and will consist of a speaking task designed to measure participants' speaking fluency, accuracy, and overall communication skills in English. The task will require students to engage in a brief conversation on a familiar topic, assessed using a standardized rubric that focuses on aspects such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and coherence (Brown, 2023).

Following the pretest, students will participate in a series of role-play activities over a designated period. These role-play tasks will simulate real-life situations (e.g., ordering food in a restaurant, negotiating a business deal), providing opportunities for students to practice English in context and improve their communication skills through interaction (Mustafa & Zafar, 2023). The role plays will be structured to cover a range of topics and scenarios, ensuring that they align with the linguistic competencies needed for academic and professional settings (Perea & Gallego, 2023).

After the role-play intervention, the posttest will be conducted, which will mirror the pretest task but with a different scenario to ensure the assessment measures spontaneous speaking ability (Karakas & Erdogan, 2021). Both pretest and posttest assessments will be evaluated by two independent raters to ensure reliability and validity. The raters will use the same rubric to score the students' performances, providing a clear measure of improvement or decline in speaking ability.

### **4. Data Analysis**

The data collected from the pretest and posttest scores will be analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize the mean, median, and standard deviation of the speaking scores. A paired-samples t-test will be used to compare the pretest and posttest scores and determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in the students' speaking performance after the role-play intervention (Field, 2023). This method is appropriate as it evaluates the effectiveness of the intervention within the same group, providing insight into the specific impact of role play on speaking performance (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2022).

In addition to the paired-samples t-test, qualitative analysis will be employed to assess students' feedback regarding their experiences with the role-play activities. A short questionnaire will be distributed to participants after the posttest to gather subjective data about their perceived improvements, difficulties encountered, and attitudes toward role play as a teaching method. This feedback will be analyzed thematically, identifying recurring patterns and sentiments that contribute to understanding the effectiveness of the intervention (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data will provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of role play on speaking performance, allowing for both statistical conclusions and nuanced insights into the students' experiences.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### a. Result

**Table 2.** Description Statistics

		Pretest	Posttest
N	Valid	29	29
	Missing		0
Mean		76.97	82.69
Media		78.00	83.00
n			
Mode		75a	82
Std. Deviation		5.710	5.874
Minimum		61	70

Maximum      84      93

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The results in Table 1 show an improvement in students' speaking performance from the pretest to the posttest. The mean score increased from 76.97 in the pretest to 82.69 in the posttest, indicating a positive change. The median and mode values also reflect this trend, with the posttest showing slightly higher scores (83 and 82, respectively). The standard deviation increased slightly from 5.710 to 5.874, suggesting slightly more variability in the posttest scores. Overall, the data demonstrate that the students' speaking skills improved following the intervention.

**Table 3.** Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences		Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation		Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-5.724	3.283	.610	-6.973	-4.475	-9.389	28	.000

The Paired Samples Test results in Table 2 indicate a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores ( $t = -9.389$ ,  $df = 28$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). The mean difference is -5.724, suggesting an improvement in students' speaking performance from pretest to posttest. The 95% confidence interval for the difference ranges from -6.973 to -4.475, further supporting the conclusion that the change is statistically significant. The standard deviation of 3.283 and the standard error mean of 0.610 indicate the degree of variation in the score differences. Overall, these results provide strong evidence that the intervention led to a measurable improvement in speaking skills.

**b. Discussion**

The significant improvement in students' speaking performance observed in this study aligns with findings from recent research on the effectiveness of interactive methods, such as role play, in enhancing EFL learners' speaking skills. Previous studies have shown that active learning techniques like role play foster greater engagement and encourage real-world language use, leading to improvements in fluency and accuracy (Sujatmiko, 2024; Yilmaz & Güngör, 2022). Additionally, the slight increase in standard deviation suggests that while most students improved, the degree of progress varied, which is consistent with findings by Zhang and Li (2022), who noted individual differences in responsiveness to communicative activities. These results support the growing body of evidence advocating for communicative teaching strategies in EFL contexts.

The statistically significant improvement in speaking performance, as indicated by the Paired Samples Test, aligns with recent studies that emphasize the effectiveness of communicative techniques like role play in language learning. Research has consistently shown that interactive methods promote language proficiency by enhancing learners' speaking fluency and confidence (Zhang & Li, 2022; Sujatmiko, 2024). The large t-value and small p-value in this study reinforce findings from similar studies that suggest structured interventions can lead to measurable improvements in EFL learners' speaking abilities (Yilmaz & Güngör, 2022). Additionally, the variation in scores, reflected in the standard deviation, mirrors individual differences in language acquisition, as highlighted in previous research (Perea & Gallego, 2023).

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The primary research question addresses how role play activities in EFL classrooms impact students' speaking performance, particularly in non-Western contexts. The study concludes that role play significantly enhances students' speaking skills, as evidenced by a notable improvement in pretest and posttest scores. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on role play in language acquisition, particularly by focusing on non-Western educational settings. It expands the understanding of how cultural and contextual factors influence the effectiveness of role play in EFL classrooms, providing theoretical insights into its

role in promoting learner engagement and language proficiency. Based on the findings, it is recommended that EFL teachers incorporate role play activities into their instructional strategies to foster a more interactive and engaging learning environment. Teachers should tailor these activities to fit the cultural context of their students, ensuring relevance and effectiveness in improving speaking skills. One limitation of the study is its focus on a single educational context, which may not be able to be generalized to all EFL settings. Further research is needed across different cultural and educational backgrounds to confirm the findings. Future studies should explore the long-term effects of role play on language acquisition, investigate different types of role play activities, and examine how these activities interact with other teaching methodologies to improve language skills in diverse contexts.

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