ROLE PLAYING ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT STUDENT'S SPEAKING SKILLS IN ASKING AND GIVING DIRECTIONS IN AN EFL CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

In supporting oral communicating skills, role play provides the students with the opportunity to practice in contextal and interactive setting. This research investigated the use of role-playing activities to support students' oral communication skills, especially in asking and giving direction. The study was conducted at a senior high school in West Java Indonesia with 30 tenth-grade students as participants. It employed a qualitative case study approach, using classroom observations, student questionnaires, and interviews as instruments for data collection. The findings reveal that role play supported the students' communication skill development in asking and giving direction through the stage of modeling, practicing and performance. Role-playing encouraged students' engagement and reduced anxiety during speaking activities. Although some challenges were encountered such as limited vocabulary, fear of public speaking, and time constraints students generally responded positively to the method and expressed enthusiasm for its use in English lessons. The students' positive perceptions indicate that role-playing can be an effective and enjoyable method for developing oral communication skills in EFL context. The results suggest that integrating role-playing into regular language instruction can provide a dynamic, student-centered approach to develop essential speaking skills in high school settings.

*Keywords***:** *Role-play, oral communication, EFL classroom, asking and giving directions*

INTRODUCTION

English is widely acknowledged as a global language, essential for communication in education, business, and international relations. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) from early education to higher levels. Despite the extended exposure, many students still struggle to speak English fluently. Speaking,

among the four major skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), remains the most challenging to master due to limited practice, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes (Rahmawati & Ertin, 2014).

Traditional language instruction in many Indonesian schools emphasizes grammar and writing, often neglecting the development of speaking abilities. As a result, students may know the rules of English but lack the confidence and fluency to communicate orally. According to Brown (2007), communicative language teaching (CLT) emphasizes meaningful communication and real-life interaction, making it necessary for teaching practices to focus on developing students' speaking competence. One effective method within this approach is role-playing. Role-playing is a technique where students assume roles and simulate real-life situations using the target language. It creates an interactive environment that fosters spontaneous speech, encourages collaboration, and reduces speaking anxiety. Huang (2008) argues that role-playing offers a valuable learning experience for students by allowing them to practice language use in meaningful contexts. Harmer (2001) adds that such activities enable learners to develop confidence and fluency.

Numerous studies have highlighted the benefits of role-play in language learning. Kusnierek (2015) found that students participating in role-play activities showed improvements in both fluency and vocabulary retention. Krebt (2017) also demonstrated that learners engaged in role play became more confident and less anxious when speaking English. However, these studies often address general speaking abilities without focusing on specific functional language uses, such as giving and asking for directions.

In addition, much of the existing research is based on university-level learners or broad ESL contexts, leaving a gap in the literature concerning high school students in Indonesian EFL classrooms. Permatasari and Wulandari highlighted the impact of role-playing activities on improving students' fluency in English speaking for university students (2025), while Arham et al (2016) addressed its use in nursing classes in college. Limited studies have specifically investigated how role play supports students in mastering situational speaking tasks like directional communication in secondary schools.

The current study aims to address this research gap by investigating the role of role-playing activities in developing students' ability to ask for and give directions in English. The study was conducted at a public senior high school in West Java, Indonesia. The participants were 30 tenth-grade students who had limited prior experience with role play techniques.

The problem statement guiding this study is: How can role-playing activities support students' oral communication skills in the specific context of asking and giving directions in an EFL classroom? To address this problem, the study poses the following research questions:

1. How do role-playing activities support students' skills in asking and giving directions in an EFL classroom?
2. What are the students' perceptions toward the use of role-playing activities to support their speaking skills?

This research aims to explore the impact of role-playing activities on students' speaking performance, particularly in their use of directional language. It also seeks to understand students' attitudes and challenges toward role-playing as a method of instruction. By focusing on a specific communicative function, this study provides insights into how role play can serve as a student-centered strategy in EFL classrooms.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the pedagogical literature on communicative teaching practices in EFL contexts. It emphasizes the practical benefits of incorporating interactive methods in classroom instruction and addresses a specific functional skill that is often overlooked in speaking instruction. The findings are expected to inform teachers, curriculum developers, and future researchers interested in enhancing speaking proficiency through innovative methods such as role play.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore the role of role-playing activities in enhancing students' oral communication skills. A case study design was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of how students experience and respond to role-play tasks in real-life contexts through asking and giving direction. The research was conducted at a senior high school located in West Java, Indonesia. The school follows the national curriculum. The study took place over three classroom sessions during the English lesson schedule.

The participants in this study were 30 tenth-grade students enrolled in an EFL class. These students had not previously experienced role-playing activities as part of their English instruction. Participants were selected based on purposive sampling, considering their accessibility and relevance to the research objectives.

Data were collected using three primary instruments: classroom observation, open-ended questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews.

1. Observations were conducted during each of the three sessions to document student interactions, engagement, and challenges.
2. Questionnaires were distributed after the final session to gather students' perceptions regarding the challenges and enjoyment of role play.
3. Interviews with selected students provided deeper insights into their experiences and challenges during the role-playing activities.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data collected. Observation notes, questionnaire responses, and interview transcripts. The analysis focused on students' activities and their development in speaking skills, their perceptions of role play, and challenges encountered.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied triangulation by using multiple data sources. Member checking was also conducted by confirming interpretations with participants, and the researcher maintained detailed documentation of all research procedures to support dependability and confirmability.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Role-Playing Activities in Support Students' Skills in Asking and Giving Directions

The findings show that the role play supports students' skills in asking and giving direction in English through three specific instructional focuses: modelling, practicing, and performing.
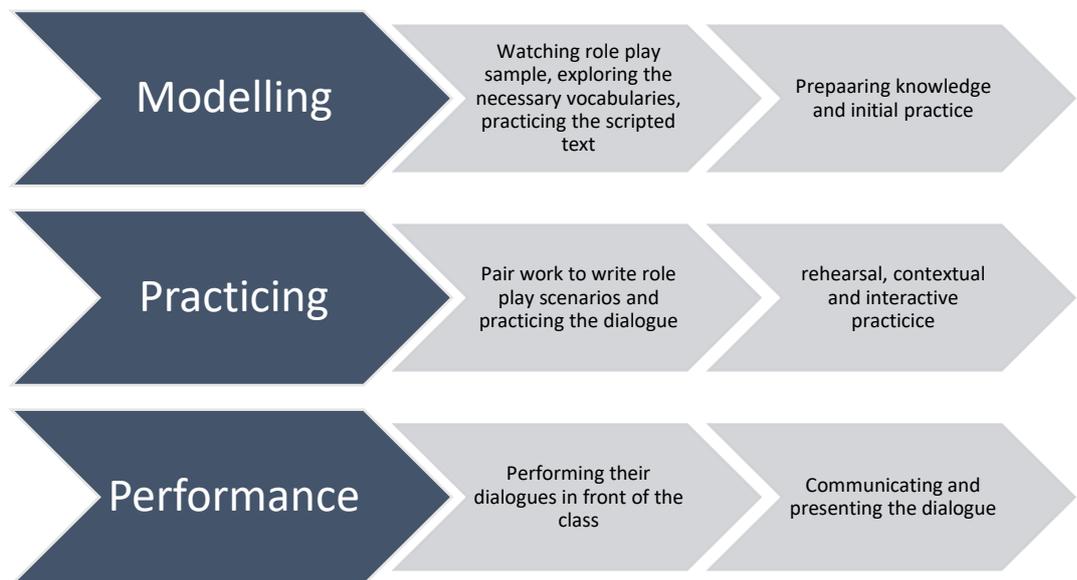

Figure 1. The Stages of Role Play Activity in the Class

Modeling

In the modelling session, the students were introduced to the expressions and vocabulary related to giving and asking for directions. They observed sample conversations through video and practiced pronunciation and sentence construction. Observation data showed that students were attentive and engaged, although they relied on scripted language. This session served as an introduction and exposure to the target language used in role-play scenarios. This activity builds students' initial understanding of the structures and expressions used in giving and asking situations for direction. Although there are still some students who look nervous and not fluent in practicing the sentence construction, this process is an important foundation in familiarizing students with the use of English in a real context. According to Kusnierek (2015), role play can be a very effective tool in the teacher's hands, as its major goal is to boost student participation in the classroom and to promote learning in the theoretical knowledge of a language in practice which is why the structured guidance is necessary, especially for students who learn English as a foreign language. The activity continued with interactive

practice questions through the LearningApps platform and the practice of making short dialogues in pairs in the next session

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Practicing

In the practicing session, the students were guided to collaborate in pairs to create their own short role-play scenarios. They were encouraged to apply the vocabulary and expressions learned in the previous session. Students were more active and began to construct original sentences. Interview data indicated that students felt more confident after guided practice. Then the pairs rehearsed the role play and were given feedback by the teacher.

Performance

In this session, the students performed their dialogues in front of the class. The observation reveals that most students showed improvement in fluency and confidence compared to their role play practice in the first session. Most students could deliver their lines clearly, with appropriate intonation and gestures. A few students still needed prompts, but their effort reflected engagement and involvement. The performance was followed by reflection, peer feedback, and a class discussion to reinforce learning outcomes.

Students' Perceptions toward the Use of Role-Playing Activities in Supporting their Speaking Skills

Based on the open-ended questionnaires and interviews, most students expressed positive responses to the role-play activities in supporting their speaking skills, especially in the topic of asking and giving direction. The findings indicate that role-playing helped enhance supported students' oral communication skills in the context of asking and giving directions. The activity helped reduce speaking anxiety and provided a supportive environment for practicing real-life language use. They stated that the activity was fun, helped them remember vocabulary better, and made them more confident in speaking English. One student (S2) shared, "I became more courageous to speak up because it was like playing." These results are in line with previous studies by Krebt (2017) and Kusnierek (2015), which highlight role play's benefits in improving fluency and confidence.

Several challenges were noted during the implementation. The most common difficulties were related to limited vocabulary, minor pronunciation issue, and difficulty in expressing ideas spontaneously. Nervousness, particularly during public performance, was also reported, such as expressed by a student (S13) "In the beginning, I was very nervous because I had to come to the front of the class, but after that, the activitiy became fun". In that case, the students admitted that the more they practiced, the more their confidence increased. Further, the time allocated for group preparation was also identified as a constraint by the students that suggest more time management by giving more portion for preparation before the students performed the role play.

The improvement in pronunciation, fluency, and classroom interaction supports the theoretical framework underlying this study. Although some challenges remained, such as nervousness and vocabulary limitation, the overall student responses demonstrated a positive shift in attitudes toward speaking English.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the use of role-playing activities in enhancing students' oral communication skills, particularly in the context of asking and giving directions in an EFL classroom. The findings confirmed that role play is an effective pedagogical tool that promotes student engagement, reduces anxiety, and builds confidence in speaking English. Through a structured sequence of modeling, practicing, and performing, students developed not only linguistic skills but also collaborative and social competencies. Most participants reported increased confidence and enjoyment, with observable improvements in fluency and vocabulary application. While challenges such as limited vocabulary and nervousness were encountered, these were gradually reduced through repeated practice. Theoretically, this study reinforces the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) by illustrating how interactive, student-centered strategies like role play can bridge the gap between language knowledge and communicative competence. Practically, the findings suggest that role play can be applied effectively in high school EFL classrooms to address specific communicative goals such as giving directions.

The study contributes to existing literature by narrowing the focus to a functional speaking activity and exploring students' actual classroom experiences with role play. It also offers practical insight for EFL teachers seeking to incorporate more active and contextual learning strategies. However, the study is limited in scope to one class at a single school, and its duration was relatively short. Future research could involve longer-term implementation across different contexts and include more varied role-play themes to evaluate broader impacts on oral communication.

In conclusion, role-playing has proven to be a meaningful and effective method for supporting oral communication in EFL learning. The research questions posed have been answered affirmatively, with strong evidence from classroom observations and student feedback. Role play should be considered a valuable component of speaking instruction in language education settings.

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