



## **Enhancing Grade VIII Students' English-Speaking Skills through Role Play in Junior High School**

Jelita Dian Pratiwi Panjaitan  
Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta  
jelitapanjaitan20@gmail.com

### *Abstract*

Speaking is often considered as the most demanding language skills in English language learning. This action research was aimed to enhance the speaking skills of grade VIII students at one of the public junior high schools in Yogyakarta through the role play in the academic year of 2020/2021. The research was conducted in two cycles with three meetings in each cycle. The research subjects were 34 students of grade VIII D of a public junior high school in Indonesia. The steps in this research were reconnaissance, planning, action and observation, and reflection. The data were collected through observation, interviews, a pre-test, a progress test, and post-test. The results of the research showed that there was an enhancement of the students' speaking skills through the use of the role play. Besides, they also enhanced their confidence to speak in English since they had a lot of chances to practice role play. The analysis of the qualitative data, the enhancement can be seen from the students' pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency and there are improvement of students' confidence and enthusiasm. Meanwhile, the analysis of the quantitative data, the enhancements could be seen from the scores of pre-test and post-test. The result showed that the mean score of the students' speaking performance increased from 60.55 to 79.11 in the post test. The gain score of the students' speaking skills was 1.9. The use of role play technique in enhancing English speaking skills offers an insight on opportunity to more practice as the key to role play which influenced in the enhancement of the students' English-speaking skills.

**Keywords:** *speaking skills, role play, English language learning*

### **Introduction**

In Indonesia, English as a foreign language is taught at Junior High School as a compulsory subject. It is implemented in the hope that the students will reach an

informational level of literacy. It means that the students are expected to be able to access their knowledge, their ability, their courage, and their confidence by using English. Learning English is considered to be successful when the students are able to use English as a means of communication. Therefore, the use of English for the students is a compulsory because mastering English is a priority for foreign language learners.

Nowadays, with respect to the importance of English, a number of educational institutions from elementary school until universities have implemented English into their curriculum. English is taught in Elementary Schools in order to help the students to understand and master it. Furthermore, the purpose of learning English for students is to develop the students' competence in spoken and written skills. Later on, when they get into the world of work, they have the ability to communicate based on four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Baker and Westrup (2003) state that learners who speak English very well can have greater chance for better education, finding good jobs, and getting promotion.

To meet the targets of the purposes of English for junior high school, the teaching and learning process need to involve: media, materials, and students. To enhance and master speaking ability, students should practice English in oral communication without feel shy and uncertain. To support it, the students need the teacher to implement activities that attract students' attention that enable the students to develop their skills to participate in oral communications. One of the ways in enhancing students' speaking is by applying role play as a English learning activity in the classroom through involving the media and materials, Barkley (2004) states that role play is a created situation in which students deliberately act out or assume characters or identities they would not normally assume in order to accomplish learning goal.

According to the students' interview, all of the students in the school where the research was conducted are good at listening, reading and writing skill, but ironically, they have very significant problems in speaking skill. The problems are varied, including media, materials, and students. The common problem is that it is difficult for the students to pronounce English words. The students consider that learning English is very difficult, and they often speak their local language. Furthermore, the students are lack of reference books and there are no interesting media available. Consequently, students only learn the materials from the exercise on textbooks. There are no brainstorming or a game on the materials. Therefore, some students are still less active or not paying attention in the teaching-learning process.

English learning materials have a crucial part in teaching and learning process in the classrooms. The school needs appropriate English materials based on the recent curriculum. To make the learning process more interesting, the teachers should use some media in introducing materials. The materials can be in the form of texts, video, picture, and PowerPoint that is colorful so that the materials are eye-catching and more interesting.

Students have an important role to be actively involved in the process of enhancing their speaking skills. English learning must be able to motivate the students motivated to learn English, especially in speaking skills. Another problem is that the students lack of English vocabulary because they are passive users of English. To make the students more interested and attractive in learning English, the teacher should apply various activities in the teaching

and learning process. The method and process of teaching are created to be effective and efficient. Various learning theories and concepts are accustomed to make the students familiar with English.

The problems in the learning process in this public junior high school is that the method used by the teacher is less interesting for Junior High School students especially for speaking. Thus, the students feel bored in class because they are just silent and listening to their teacher about the learning materials. Because of that, the students' speaking problem are the students only master a limited amount of vocabulary and often mispronounced the words that made them feel too difficult to pronounce some words because they are still confused on how to pronounce them and they did not have more practices to learn speaking.

The other problem is the school only provides the government recommendation textbook as the learning source. The textbooks are properly provided, but the problem is that the students need something supplementing yet effective to develop their proficiency. They do not have enough reference books and no interesting media provided. Consequently, the students only learn the materials from the exercise on the textbook. There are no brainstorming, games and other interesting speaking activity. Based on my observations, the main problem is that only a few students who have the potential to learn speaking English well and the rest are busy with themselves or remain silent and not actively participating in the class. Some students were not conducive in teaching learning activities. They are noisy and it disrupts the concentration of those who want to learn.

## **Method**

This study is an action research. In doing so, the researcher had a collaborative work with the English teacher. The research subject were 34 eighth grade students of the classes in the high school. This research followed the action research model from Kurt Lewin's design which consists of four phases within one cycle and I choose the phases proposed by Madya (2009), which were the modified version from Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) phases. It added one extra step before the planning, and it is called the Reconnaissance. The steps will be reconnaissance, planning, action, observation, and reflection. The qualitative data were obtained through observation, interviews, while the quantitative data through the pre-test, progress test, and post-test.

## **Findings**

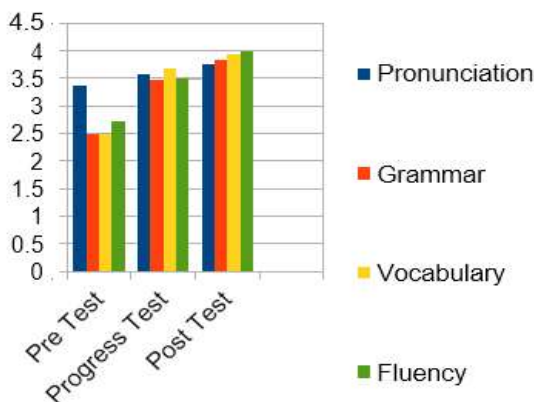
In this research, role play was implemented to create speaking learning activities using different situation. The actions are presented to solve the problems that the students meet; 1) Providing various kinds of exercise, especially speaking 2) Giving vocabulary enrichment to make students acquire some words used in the lesson 3) Implementing role play to give more opportunities for students to practice speaking during the teaching and learning process. 4) Motivating and encouraging students in the teaching and learning process. 5) Giving feedback and appreciation for students. The activities were created to cater students' goals and needs.

In addition, students' improvements were proved by students' scores in their pre- test, progress test, and post-test. Their scores are presented below.

*Table 1 Students' score*

Test	Aspect				Total Score
	Pronunciation	Grammar	Vocabulary	Fluency	
Pre-Test	3.36	2.48	2.48	2.73	60.55
Progress-Test	3.58	3.48	3.68	3.49	71.47
Post-Test	3.76	3.83	3.95	3.99	79.11
Gained Score	0.40	1.35	1.47	1.26	1.9

From Table 1, there is a clear trend of improvement in students' overall scores and its detail. It can be concluded that the role play showed positive results for students in the teaching-learning process, especially in enhancing students' speaking skills. In conclusion, the general finding of the students' improvement is described in the four aspects in the chart below.



*Figure 1 Comparison of students' speaking score*

## Discussion

The findings revealed significant effect of using role play to enhance students' speaking skills. Using the role play can be very useful in teaching speaking. Through role play, there were many aspects enhanced such as students' pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency.

Based on the result of the research, the students showed some enhancements, especially in students' speaking skills. The results of the post-test support it. The result showed that all aspects of speaking were enhancing compared to the pre-test and the progress-test results. For example, in the aspect of pronunciation, student pronunciation is enhanced and now the students know how to pronounce some words that are commonly used in communication. Vocabulary material also helps students to increase their knowledge of vocabulary and makes it easier for them to express their ideas or opinion in speaking. Another aspect that was

enhanced was their fluency. They did not hesitate to speak in English and encouraged to practice their speaking. This means that they have developed their self-confidence and they did not have a fear of speaking English. On the other hand, students became active and very enthusiastic during the teaching and learning process, especially English lessons. They have tried to speak English in their communication. Role play can be used in teaching speaking. These findings support Holt & Kysilka (2006) then they stated that role play activities can be fun and lead to better learning. Because these activities help EFL learners to understand the importance of cooperation and to have an interest in learning.

Furthermore, the most crucial function of the role play is to give students much chance to practice in communication. In addition, the researcher also gave the feedback to the students after they had their performances. The researcher gave appropriate feedback to engage the students during the lesson. By giving a good feedback to the students, it helps the students to know their mistakes and improve their skill. This finding supports Brown (2001) which reported that the teacher should provide appropriate feedback and correction.

The students also said that the role play helps them to learn to speak English, and they are enthusiastic to speak English. They said that the role play made them enjoy the English learning process. Furthermore, all of them also agree that role play made the students' motivation enhanced and they enjoyed the English-speaking activity. This finding supports Hand (2011) state that the effective use of role play can add variety to the kinds of activities students are asked to perform. It encouraged the students' creative thinking and developed their behavioral skills.

These findings were in line with Van Ments (1983) in Graves (2008) identifies three general advantages to role-playing activities: they are positive and handling attitudes and feelings, they provide a secure venue for expressing personal and sometimes unpopular attitudes and opinions, and role play is extremely motivating because the majority of students enjoy these sorts of activities and become more inspired learners. This role play activity has not been implemented yet in the eighth-grade students of this school before this research was done. This role play activity could be used as a new activity in learning English to avoid the monotonous ways of teaching. It supported by the findings during the research when the students played role, the students had an opportunity to learn English. It was very useful to learn how interaction might take place in a variety of situations. The role-play activity can also improve the students' confidence. The findings also showed that the students were more excited and enthusiastic in learning English, although the time of role play preparation took plenty of classroom time. Another weakness of role play activity found during the research is the offline implementation of the role play itself, due to the global pandemic of Covid-19, all the learning activities are conducted through online meeting (daring) but the students always showed their best play of role. Finally, the students became more active during the process of English learning. Based on the discussion above, the role play activity can be employed as a learning activity to help the students enhance their speaking skills.

## **Conclusion**

This research was aimed to enhance grade VIII students' English-speaking skills through role play. This action research began on 13th August and ended on 17th September

2020. The actions carried out in two cycles. As stated in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that the use of role-play able to enhance students' speaking skills. In addition, there were two kinds of data that the researcher collected in this research. The first data were qualitative data which could be seen as follows. The use of role play in Cycle 1 successfully made the students interested in lesson. It helped the students to gain their motivation to learn and join the class activity. In Cycle 1, it was found that there were successful and unsuccessful actions due to some factors. In order to solve the unsuccessful actions, there were an additional action to be conducted in Cycle 2, such as giving good feedback to the students. By implementing the action in Cycle 2, it was successfully enhanced the students' motivation and their speaking skills.

In terms of quantitative data, there was an enhancement on the students' speaking skills which could be seen from the result of the test in the end of the cycle. The mean of the students' scores showed a slight improvement. In the pre-test, the mean score of the pronunciation is only 3.36. The grammar mean score is 2.48, the vocabulary mean score is 2.48, and the fluency mean score is 2.73. Meanwhile, the mean score of the post-test showed a significant increase. The pronunciation mean score is 3.76, the grammar mean score is 3.83, the vocabulary mean score is 3.95, and the fluency mean score is 3.99. The mean score of all tests are improved from 60.55 in the pre-test to 79.11 in the post-test. It is very clear that there are significant enhancements on the students' speaking skills through the role play according to the pre-test and post-test. The findings presented in the following conclusions:

1. role play was effective to enhance the students' speaking skills. The students performed better in speaking because they had more opportunities to practice. As the result, they would enhance their speaking skills and also their confidence.
2. English teaching and learning process supported the students to explore more vocabulary and improve their pronunciation. It helped them to more understand the expressions that should be used during the lesson.
3. The materials accompanied with some tasks able to help the students to learn the language function. Most of the students could do the task well. It means the students understood the materials.
4. Giving good feedback for the students helped the students to enhance their speaking skills.

The implementation of role play was able to attract the students' motivation in learning English. The students need more support to enhance their speaking skills. When it comes to enhancing the speaking skills, students need various ways of spoken English. However, not only ways of spoken English, but the teachers also have to give the students more opportunities to practice their speaking, so they were able to improve their speaking skills.

## References

- Anderson, G. L. Herr, K., & Nihlen, A. S. (1994). *Studying Your Own School: An Educator's Guide to Qualitative Practitioner Research*. Sage Publishing.
- Bailey, K.M. (2005). *Practical English Language Teaching: Speaking*. McGraw- Hill.

- Baker, J., & Westrup, H. (2003). *Essential Speaking Skills: A Handbook for English Language Teachers*. Continuum.
- Barkley, E.F., Cross, K.F., & Major, C.H. (2005). *Collaborative Learning Techniques: A handbook for College Faculty*. Jossey- Bass Publisher.
- Brown, H.D. (2001). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. Prentice Hall.
- Brown, H.D. (2004). *Language Assessment: Principal and Classroom Practice*. Pearson Education, Inc.
- Burns, A. (1998). Teaching speaking. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 18,102– 123.
- Burns, A. (1999). *Collaborative Action Research for Language Teachers*. Cambridge University Press.
- Burns, A. (2010). *Doing Action Research in English Language Teaching; A Guide for Practitioners*. Routledge.
- Doff, A. (1988). *Teach English: A Training Course for Teachers Trainer's Handbooks*. Cambridge University Press Inc.
- Fauziati, E. (2009). *Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)*. Era Pustaka Utama.
- Fauziati, E. (2009). *Introduction to Methods and Approaches in Second or Foreign Language Teaching*. Era Pustaka Utama.
- Graves, E.A. (2013, September 9th). *Is Role Playing an Effective Teaching Method?* <http://chs.ohio.edu/resources/documents/graves.pdf>.
- Hartoyo. (2011). Curriculum and Material Development: *syllabus/course outline*. Program Pasca Sarjana, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA.
- Holt, .L. C. & Kysilka, M. (2006). *Instructional Pattern: Strategies for Maximizing Students Learning*. Sage Publishing.
- Huang, I. Y. (2008). Role Play for ESL/EFL Children in The English Classroom. *The Enternet TESL Journal*, 14(2). <http://itslj.org/Technique/Huang- RolePlay.html>.
- Jack C. Richards. (2008). *Teaching Listening and Speaking; From Theory to Practice*, Cambridge University Press
- Kutner, M, et al. (2007). *Evaluating professional development, a framework for adult education*. U.S. development of education division of adult education and literacy: PRO-NET
- McDonough, J, & Shaw, C. (1993). *Materials and Methods in ELT: A Teacher's Guide*. Blackwell Publisher.
- Nunan, D. (2003). *Practical English Language Teaching* (1st ed). McGraw- Hill.
- Prastuti, E. (2003). *Using Role Play Technique to Improve the Tenth Grade Students*. [unpublished undergraduate thesis]. Yogyakarta: Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, FBS Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta.

*Enhancing Grade VIII Students' English-Speaking Skills through Role Play in Junior High School*

Jelita Dian Pertiwi Panjaitan

Richard-Amato, P. A. (2003). *Making It Happen: from Interactive to Participatory Language Teaching: Theory and Practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Longman.

Sofiatun, N. (2012, March 4). *Pengaruh Bermain Peran (Role Playing) dalam Meningkatkan Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris*. <http://www.infodiknas.com/207-pengaruh-bermain-peran-role-playing-dalam-meningkatkan-pembelajaran-bahasa-inggris/>.

Thornbury, S. (2005). *How to Teach Speaking*. Pearson Educational Limited.

Umam, C. (2011). *Improving the Students' Speaking Ability through Role-Playing Technique*. [unpublished undergraduate thesis. Kediri: Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, STAIN Kediri.

Yuliana, Y, Kristiawan, M, & Suhartie, T. (2014). The Effect of Role Play Toward Students' Speaking Skill (an Experiment Study at Grade XI IPA High School 1 Batang Anai, Padang Pariaman Regency, West Sumatera, Indonesia). *Journal of Applied Sciences Research* 1(4):279-283.