



IMPROVING SPEAKING SKILL THROUGH ROLE-PLAYING METHOD FOR SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS AT MTS MA'ARIF 29 LINGGAPURA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the implementation of the role-playing method and its effectiveness in improving the speaking skills of seventh-grade students at MTs Ma'arif 29 Linggapura. The research focused on two communicative topics, namely self-introduction and describing daily activities. A Classroom Action Research design was employed through two cycles involving planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. Nineteen students participated in the study. Data were collected using observation sheets, speaking performance tests, and documentation, and analyzed by comparing students' mean scores and learning mastery across the research cycles. The findings demonstrated a steady improvement in students' speaking achievement. The average score increased from 64.47 in the pre-cycle to 75.78 in Cycle I and reached 80.00 in Cycle II. Learning mastery also improved significantly, rising from 36.8% to 89.5%. Classroom observations further indicated greater confidence, active participation, and motivation among students during speaking activities. These results suggest that role-playing is an effective and practical strategy for enhancing English-speaking competence, particularly in schools with limited educational resources. The study provides empirical evidence that interaction-based learning can improve both communicative performance and learners' confidence without requiring advanced technology or extensive instructional media.

Keywords: *Speaking skill, Role-playing method, English learning, Junior High School, Classroom Action Research.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in the development of individuals and society. A strong education system equips students with the knowledge and skills needed to face future challenges and contributes to national progress (Ji, 2022; Rahmi & Erlinda, 2014; Fadliyana & Nugraheni, 2024). Among the essential competencies taught in schools, English has become increasingly important because it serves as a global language for communication, education, and professional interaction. For this reason, students should develop speaking skills from an early stage of education. In the Indonesian curriculum, speaking competence for junior high school

students (Phase D) is expected to correspond to the A2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), enabling learners to communicate in simple and familiar situations (Emilia et al., 2025; Saptiany & Prabowo, 2024; Thi & Que, 2025).

Despite these expectations, many students still experience difficulties in speaking English. Preliminary observations conducted at MTs Ma'arif 29 Linggapura revealed that students' speaking performance remained below the expected standard. Of the 19 seventh-grade students, only seven students (36.8%) achieved the Minimum Mastery Criterion ($KKM \geq 70$), while the

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remaining 12 students (63.2%) failed to meet the required level. The average speaking score was only 64.47, indicating that students needed additional support to improve their oral communication skills.

Several factors contributed to this problem. The school is located in a rural area of Lampung where educational resources are limited. Only five to seven English textbooks are available for classroom use, requiring students to share learning materials during lessons. In addition, unstable internet access prevents teachers from using digital learning resources or online speaking activities. Many students also lack confidence when speaking English because they are afraid of making mistakes or being judged by their classmates (Ditania, 2022; Ramli et al., 2024; Nadia & Hilalina, 2020). These conditions reduce students' participation in classroom communication. As stated by Ernis (2018), the school environment is an important external factor that influences students' learning outcomes. A supportive learning environment can increase students' motivation, confidence, and active participation, particularly in learning to speak English (Herdina & Ningrum, 2023; Xiaofan & Annamalai, 2025; Lesiana et al., 2023).

One teaching strategy that may address these challenges is role-playing. This method encourages students to communicate through meaningful and realistic situations, allowing them to practice speaking in an interactive and enjoyable way. Previous studies have demonstrated that role-playing improves students' speaking performance by providing structured opportunities for authentic communication (Octaviana et al., 2024; Yulistra et al., 2025; Widiastuti et al., 2023). Similarly, Neupane (2019) reported that students taught through role-playing achieved significantly better speaking outcomes than those taught using conventional methods.

Role-playing was selected for this study because it is practical, inexpensive, and suitable for schools with limited facilities.

The method does not require internet access, computers, or sophisticated instructional media. Instead, teachers can prepare simple role cards based on everyday situations that encourage students to use English naturally. Moreover, role-playing creates an enjoyable classroom atmosphere in which students participate actively and feel less anxious about speaking. This supportive environment helps learners develop both their speaking competence and self-confidence.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to investigate the implementation of the role-playing method in improving the speaking skills of seventh-grade students at MTs Ma'arif 29 Linggapura and to examine its suitability as an instructional strategy for schools with limited educational resources. Accordingly, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How does the implementation of role-playing improve the speaking skills of seventh-grade students?
2. Why is role-playing an appropriate teaching method for schools with limited educational facilities?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on the use of role-playing in speaking instruction has been widely conducted and has shown positive results in improving students' communication skills. Teaching English language through role-play is very influential in that it enhances students' exposure to language which is considered as the key factor to speed up the language learning process (Syafiq et al., 2021; Moge & Oroh, 2022; Akteruzzaman et al., 2023). Students via producing speech in role-play activities can have a good command of communicative competence. Moreover, conduct of role-play activities can provide a stress free learning environment where students enjoy using the language. Role-play activities will enable students to gain self-

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confidence and consequently they will stand a better chance of promoting their speaking skills (Ardiyansah & Auliya, 2023; Jaya et al., 2025; Durrani et al., 2024). Students are motivated to use the language effectively through role-play activities (Sujiyati, 2023; Tanduklangi et al., 2019; Krisna et al., 2021).

Another study role-playing benefits students by offering an opportunity to struggle with oral communication. The results showed a significant improvement in the speaking skill of the experimental group. The students taught through the role-play method performed better than those taught through the grammar translation method. It can be concluded that role-play significantly affects students' speaking skills (Idham et al., 2022; Wu, 2018; Ilham et al., 2024).

In addition, a study speaking skills following therapy with the Role Play Technique, It is recommended to keep motivating the students to use the role-play properly in the future to improve their English speaking skills (Katemba & Grace, 2023; Madhavi et al., 2023; Ismayilli & Mammadova, 2025). These findings confirm that the role-playing method has a significant contribution to speaking instruction, especially in creating meaningful and communicative learning experiences.

3. METHODS

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design to improve students' speaking skills through a cyclical process of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research was conducted in two action cycles following a pre-cycle assessment to identify students' initial speaking ability and determine the need for instructional improvement.

The participants were 19 seventh-grade students of MTs Ma'arif 29 Linggapura, located in Linggapura Village, Selagai Lingga District, Central Lampung, during the 2025/2026 academic year. The research was implemented in three stages: the pre-cycle on October 20, 2025, Cycle I on October 29, 2025, and Cycle II on November 15, 2025.

Data were collected using classroom observation, speaking performance tests, documentation, and reflection. Classroom observations were conducted throughout the learning process to record students' attention, participation, confidence, courage, and interaction during speaking activities (Bank, 2024; Spradley, 2016; Van Maanen, 2025). Speaking performance tests were administered at the end of each stage (pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II). Students were required to perform dialogues on the topics of introducing themselves and describing their daily activities. Their performances were assessed using five criteria: pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and confidence. Students were considered to have achieved learning mastery if they obtained a minimum score of 70, in accordance with the school's Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM).

Supporting documents, including lesson plans, classroom photographs, observation sheets, and students' score records, were collected to strengthen the research findings. At the end of each cycle, reflection was conducted to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the implemented teaching strategy and to identify necessary improvements for the following cycle.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive quantitative analysis. Individual student scores, class mean scores, and the percentage of learning mastery were calculated and compared across the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II to determine the effectiveness of the role-playing method in improving students' speaking skills.

Table 1. Pre-Cycle Result

Score Range 30-49	0 Students
Score Range 50-69	12 Students
Score Range 70-89	7 Students
Score Range 90-99	0 Students
Class Average Score	64,47
Total Students' Score	1225

Table 2. Cycle I Result

Score Range 30-49	0 Students
Score Range 50-69	7 Students
Score Range 70-89	11 Students
Score Range 90-99	1 Students

Class Average Score	75,78
Total Students' Score	1440

Table 3. Cycle II Result

Score Range 30-49	0 Students
Score Range 50-69	3 Students
Score Range 70-89	12 Students
Score Range 90-99	4 Students
Class Average Score	80
Total Students' Score	1520

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

The implementation of the role-playing method was carried out through two cycles following the Classroom Action Research (CAR) procedure. Students' speaking performance was evaluated during the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II using the same assessment criteria: pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and confidence.

Table 4. Students' Speaking Achievement in the Pre-cycle

Score Range	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
30-49	0	0.0
50-69	12	63.2
70-89	7	36.8
90-99	0	0.0
Total Students	19	100
Class Average Score	64.47	
Total Score	1225	
Learning Mastery ($KKM \geq 70$)	7 students	36.8

The pre-cycle assessment was conducted to identify students' initial speaking ability before the implementation of the role-playing method. The results showed that students' speaking achievement was still unsatisfactory. As presented in Table 1, none of the students obtained scores between 30-49 or 90-99. Twelve students (63.2%) were in the score range of 50-69, while only seven students (36.8%) achieved scores between

70-89, meeting the Minimum Mastery Criterion ($KKM \geq 70$). The class average was 64.47, indicating that most students experienced difficulties in expressing themselves orally. Classroom observation also revealed that students tended to be passive, lacked confidence, and were reluctant to participate in English-speaking activities because they were afraid of making mistakes.

Table 5. Students' Speaking Achievement in Cycle II

Score Range	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
30-49	0	0.0
50-69	3	15.8
70-89	12	63.2
90-99	4	21.0
Total Students	19	100
Class Average Score	80.00	
Total Score	1520	
Learning Mastery ($KKM \geq 70$)	17 students	89.5

Following the identification of these problems, the role-playing method was introduced in Cycle I. Students practiced

English through simple role-play scenarios related to introducing themselves and describing daily activities. Pair work and

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guided dialogues were used to encourage communication in a supportive classroom environment. As shown in Table 2, students' speaking performance improved considerably. The class average increased to 75.78. Eleven students obtained scores between 70–89, one student achieved a score between 90–99, and seven students remained in the 50–69 range. Consequently, the percentage of students achieving learning mastery increased to 63.2% (12 students). Classroom observations indicated that students became more willing to speak, participated more actively in pair discussions, and demonstrated greater confidence, although pronunciation and grammatical errors were still observed.

Based on the reflection conducted after Cycle I, several improvements were

introduced in Cycle II. Students were provided with more varied role-play situations, additional speaking practice, and immediate feedback from the teacher. These modifications produced further improvement in students' speaking ability. As presented in Table 3, the class average increased to 80.00. Four students achieved scores between 90–99, twelve students scored between 70–89, and only three students remained below the mastery criterion. Overall, 17 of the 19 students (89.5%) successfully met the Minimum Mastery Criterion. During classroom observation, students appeared more confident, communicated more fluently, interacted actively with their classmates, and showed greater enthusiasm throughout the learning activities.

Table 4. Improvement of Students' Speaking Achievement Across the Research Cycles

Indicator	Pre-cycle	Cycle I	Cycle II
Number of Students	19	19	19
Total Score	1225	1440	1520
Class Average Score	64.47	75.78	80.00
Students Achieving KKM	7	12	17
Learning Mastery (%)	36.8	63.2	89.5

The comparison of students' speaking achievement across the three stages demonstrates a continuous improvement in learning outcomes. The class average increased from 64.47 in the pre-cycle to 75.78 in Cycle I and finally reached 80.00 in Cycle II. Likewise, learning mastery improved substantially from 36.8% to 63.2% and eventually to 89.5%, indicating that the role-playing method effectively enhanced students' speaking skills.

4.2 Discussion

The findings indicate that the implementation of the role-playing method successfully improved the speaking skills of seventh-grade students at MTs Ma'arif 29 Linggapura. The improvement was evident not only in students' speaking scores but also in their classroom participation, confidence, and willingness to communicate in English. These findings are consistent with

communicative language teaching principles, which emphasize that language is acquired more effectively when learners actively use it in meaningful interaction rather than merely studying linguistic forms (Richards, 2006; Brown & Lee, 2015).

Several factors contributed to this improvement. First, role-playing provided students with meaningful opportunities to use English in authentic communicative situations. Instead of memorizing vocabulary or grammar rules, students practiced expressing ideas through conversations that reflected their daily lives. This learning experience enabled students to develop fluency and confidence simultaneously. According to Harmer (2007), speaking activities that simulate real-life communication encourage learners to negotiate meaning, develop communicative competence, and improve fluency through repeated interaction. Similarly, Thornbury

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(2005) argues that speaking proficiency develops when learners are given sufficient opportunities to produce language in meaningful contexts.

Second, the role-playing activities created a relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere. Many students who were initially afraid of making mistakes became more comfortable because they were acting as characters rather than speaking as themselves. This reduced speaking anxiety and encouraged greater participation during classroom activities. As students practiced repeatedly in pairs and groups, they gradually became more confident in using English orally. These findings support Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which proposes that lower levels of anxiety and higher motivation facilitate second-language acquisition by allowing learners to process linguistic input more effectively. Likewise, Ur (1996) emphasizes that enjoyable communicative activities increase learners' willingness to participate and reduce fear of making mistakes during speaking practice.

Third, the findings demonstrate that effective speaking instruction does not necessarily depend on sophisticated educational technology. Although the school had limited textbooks and unstable internet access, the teacher was able to implement role-playing using simple dialogue cards and everyday situations. This suggests that interaction-based teaching strategies may have a greater impact on speaking development than the availability of digital learning resources. Vygotsky (1978) argues that learning occurs most effectively through social interaction, where learners construct knowledge collaboratively with peers and teachers. The present findings indicate that meaningful interaction, rather than technological sophistication, plays a central role in developing oral communication skills.

The findings of this study support previous empirical research. Octaviana et al. (2024) reported that role-playing creates meaningful communication and enhances students' speaking performance by encouraging active interaction. Likewise, Neupane (2019) concluded that students

taught through role-playing achieved significantly better speaking outcomes than those taught using conventional instructional methods. Similar findings were reported by Huang (2008), who found that role-playing increases learners' communicative competence, motivation, and classroom engagement by creating authentic communicative experiences. In addition, Ladousse (2004) explains that role-playing enables learners to practice language creatively while simultaneously developing confidence and interpersonal communication skills.

The present study also contributes to the existing literature by providing evidence from a rural Islamic junior high school with relatively limited educational resources. While many previous studies have focused on urban schools or technology-supported classrooms, the current findings demonstrate that simple communicative teaching strategies remain highly effective when implemented systematically. This suggests that pedagogical quality and learner interaction may be more influential than technological availability in improving students' speaking competence.

Overall, the consistent increase in students' average scores from 64.47 in the pre-cycle to 80.00 in Cycle II and the substantial improvement in learning mastery from 36.8% to 89.5% provide strong evidence that the role-playing method is an effective instructional strategy for improving speaking skills among junior high school students. The findings answer the research questions by demonstrating that role-playing enhances speaking ability through active communication practice, collaborative learning, reduced speaking anxiety, and increased learner confidence. Therefore, role-playing represents an appropriate, practical, and cost-effective instructional strategy, particularly for schools with limited educational resources.

5. CONCLUSION

This classroom action research demonstrated that the implementation of the role-playing method effectively improved the

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speaking skills of seventh-grade students at MTs Ma'arif 29 Linggapura. The improvement was reflected in both students' speaking achievement and their active participation throughout the learning process. Students became more confident, interacted more frequently in English, and showed greater willingness to communicate during classroom activities. Quantitatively, the average speaking score increased from 64.47 in the pre-cycle to 80.00 in Cycle II, while learning mastery improved substantially from 36.8% to 89.5%.

These findings indicate that role-playing provides meaningful communicative practice that allows students to develop fluency, confidence, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and interactional competence simultaneously. The study also demonstrates that effective speaking instruction can be achieved without sophisticated technological resources when teachers employ interactive, student-centered learning strategies. Therefore, role-playing can be considered an effective and practical pedagogical approach for improving English speaking skills, particularly in junior high schools with limited educational facilities.

The findings of this study have several important implications for English language teaching. For English teachers, role-playing offers an effective instructional strategy that promotes active learning, authentic communication, and increased learner confidence. Teachers are encouraged to integrate role-playing regularly into speaking lessons by designing communicative scenarios related to students' daily lives and gradually increasing the complexity of speaking tasks.

For schools and educational administrators, the results indicate that improving speaking instruction does not necessarily require expensive digital infrastructure. Instead, investment in teacher

professional development focusing on communicative language teaching and interactive classroom management may produce greater improvements in students' oral proficiency.

For curriculum developers, the findings support the inclusion of more experiential and communicative speaking activities within English language curricula. Role-playing can complement textbook-based instruction by providing authentic opportunities for learners to practice real-life communication while developing critical interpersonal and collaborative skills.

Finally, the study contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting learner-centered pedagogy in EFL contexts, particularly within rural schools where educational resources remain limited.

Future research is recommended to extend the findings of this study in several ways. First, studies involving larger sample sizes across multiple schools would improve the generalizability of the findings. Second, longitudinal research is needed to examine whether the improvements in speaking proficiency can be maintained over longer instructional periods.

Third, future studies may compare the effectiveness of role-playing with other communicative teaching strategies such as simulation, storytelling, task-based language teaching, debate, or project-based learning to identify the most effective approaches for different learner characteristics. Fourth, mixed-methods research incorporating interviews, classroom observations, and learner reflections would provide deeper insights into students' perceptions, motivation, and speaking anxiety during role-playing activities.

Finally, future investigations may explore the integration of traditional role-playing with

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digital technologies, including virtual role-playing environments, mobile-assisted language learning applications, artificial intelligence-supported conversation partners, or virtual reality simulations, to determine whether combining communicative pedagogy with educational technology can further enhance students' speaking competence in diverse EFL learning contexts.

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