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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ROLE PLAY METHOD IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL AT THE EIGHTH GRADE OF UPTD SMP NEGERI 4 GUNUNGSITOLI SELATAN

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Abstract

This research aimed to investigate the implementation of the Role Play method in improving students' speaking skills at the eighth grade of UPTD SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Selatan. The study was conducted through Classroom Action Research (CAR) consisting of two cycles, each involving planning, action, observation, and reflection. The speaking skill indicators evaluated included pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. In Cycle I, most students did not meet the Minimum Competency Criteria (KKM) of 75%. Only two students (8%) achieved the "good" category, eight students (30%) were in the "sufficient" category, while seventeen students (63%) remained in the "less" category. These results indicated that students faced difficulties in speaking due to limited practice, lack of confidence, and challenges in pronunciation. The researcher addressed these issues by providing targeted pronunciation practice and encouraging students to prepare more thoroughly. Significant improvement was observed in Cycle II. The Role Play method enhanced student engagement and reduced anxiety, resulting in better speaking performance. Five students (19%) reached the "very good" category, twenty students (75%) were categorized as "good," and only two students (7.5%) remained in the "sufficient" level. These findings demonstrate that the implementation of the Role Play method effectively improved students' speaking skills.

Key words: Role Play, Speaking Skill, Classroom Action Research

INTRODUCTION

English is a global language and speaking is one of the most essential skills for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). At UPTD SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Selatan, however, the reality shows that many eighth-grade students encounter significant challenges in speaking English. Preliminary classroom observations conducted before the research revealed that most students had limited vocabulary, made frequent grammatical errors, and struggled with accurate pronunciation. In addition, they often spoke hesitantly with long pauses, avoided initiating conversations, and tended to respond in their first language due to low self-confidence and fear of making mistakes. A diagnostic speaking test administered at the beginning of the semester further confirmed these findings, with only 7.5% of students meeting the Minimum Competency Criteria (KKM) of 75%. These conditions indicate the need for a more engaging and supportive teaching strategy to improve students' speaking performance.

In the Indonesian junior high school context, many students face difficulties in speaking English. Several studies have documented these challenges, noting that students often have limited vocabulary, lack confidence, and experience anxiety when speaking in a foreign language (Fadhilah, 2022; Wahyuni, 2018). These issues are compounded by a lack of regular speaking practice in communicative settings, which leads to hesitation, long pauses, and frequent code-switching into the first language. As a result, speaking remains one of the least developed skills among EFL learners in Indonesia.

To address these challenges, teachers need to apply innovative and interactive learning strategies

that actively involve students in meaningful communication. One such strategy is the Role Play method, which provides opportunities for students to practice speaking in simulated real-life situations. By taking on different roles, students can reduce their anxiety, build confidence, and improve their ability to use vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation effectively in authentic communication.

There are some gaps that can be identified include several important aspects related to the application of role-playing methods in teaching speaking skills. Research by Sayow et al. (2024) highlights that while traditional teaching methods often fail to engage students actively, role play serves as an effective active learning method that improves speaking skills by simulating real-life communication scenarios. This approach not only boosts students' motivation and engagement but also addresses the common challenges they face in speaking, as indicated by studies showing that role play creates a safe environment for practice and reduces anxiety associated with oral communication. Furthermore, recent findings by Henisah (2023) from the International Journal of Contemporary Studies in Education emphasize that despite the proven effectiveness of role play, its integration into standard curricula remains limited, with many educators still relying on conventional methods. This gap underscores the need for educational reforms that prioritize innovative teaching strategies like role play to foster better language acquisition outcomes. Overall, the integration of role play in language education is essential for enhancing students' speaking skills and addressing the shortcomings of traditional pedagogical approaches.

Previous research reveals the effectiveness of the role-playing method in improving students' speaking skills one important research by Nasihah and Moetia (2024) showed that the role-playing method significantly improved students' English speaking skills, especially in aspects such as accent, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension in two cycles of action research. They focused on the effectiveness of role-playing in improving students' speaking skills and motivation using quantitative descriptive research methods. This research highlights the perceived challenges students face in speaking and how role play can address these issues by creating a more interactive learning environment.

Additionally, a research published in the International Journal of Contemporary Studies in Education by Henisah (2023) found that role-playing techniques not only enhance speaking skills but also increase student excitement during the learning process. By providing scenarios for practice and encouraging group work based on ability, this approach supports both understanding and practical application of language skills. These research collectively suggest that integrating role play into language curricula can effectively improve students' speaking abilities while addressing common challenges faced in traditional teaching methods. This classroom action research aimed to improve students' speaking skills through the implementation of the role play method, focusing on five core indicators: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, among eighth-grade students at UPTD SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Selatan.

Literature Review

Speaking Skill

Speaking is one of the most fundamental skills in language learning, particularly in English as a Foreign

Language (EFL) contexts. According to Jannah (2020), speaking is the most important part of English learning, as it enables students to communicate effectively and express their thoughts, emotions, and ideas both orally and in writing. Speaking proficiency is essential for effective interaction in both academic and social environments. Sayow (2024) adds that speaking allows individuals to build relationships, influence others, and participate in professional and everyday discourse.

Mardiana (2024) defines speaking as "an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information." This perspective highlights that speaking is not only about vocalization, but also about meaning-making and real-time comprehension. In classroom contexts, speaking demands the use of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension all at once, often under time pressure.

Assessment of Speaking Skill

According to Helmanda (2019), the evaluation of speaking involves five key indicators: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. This rubric, adapted from Harris (1969), provides a structured way to assess oral language performance objectively. Each criterion is rated on a scale from 1 (less) to 5 (very good), offering a comprehensive overview of students' speaking competence.

This multi-dimensional approach is crucial in identifying which components need improvement. For instance, a student may have adequate vocabulary but struggle with fluency or pronunciation. Using this rubric helps educators make targeted instructional decisions and track student progress over time.

Table 1 Speaking Rubric

No		Criteria	Score
1.	**Pronunciation**	Pronunciation is very clear and almost error-free.	5
		There are some pronunciation errors, but they do not interfere with understanding.	4
		There are frequent pronunciation errors that interfere with understanding.	3
		Many pronunciation errors that interfere with communication.	2
		Pronunciation errors are very severe, difficult to understand.	1
2.	**Grammar**	No grammatical errors.	5
		Few grammatical errors, but they do not interfere with understanding.	4
		Quite a few errors, but the meaning is still understandable.	3
		Many errors that make communication difficult.	2
		Grammar is so bad that it is difficult to understand.	1
3.	**Vocabulary**	Use of relevant vocabulary in context, including expressions for giving and responding to opinions (e.g., I think, in my opinion, I agree with you, I don't think so, etc)."	5
		Most vocabulary is appropriate, with some repetition.	4
		Limited vocabulary but sufficient to convey ideas.	3
		Very limited vocabulary, difficulty conveying ideas.	2
		Very limited, often chooses the wrong words and is difficult to understand.	1
4.	**Fluency**	Speaks fluently without disruptive pauses.	5
		There are few pauses, but they do not disrupt the flow of speech.	4
		Frequently pauses or repeats words, but is still understandable.	3

		Many pauses and repetitions, making communication difficult to understand.	2
		Very frequent pauses, repetitions, or loss of words, making communication nearly impossible.	1
5.	**Comprehension**	The ability to understand the role and respond to the conversation of the other person, and to convey opinions clearly and appropriately to the situation.	5
		Understands well, although takes a while to respond.	4
		Understands fairly well, but sometimes misunderstands the meaning.	3
		Often does not understand, needs re-explanation.	2
		Does not understand, cannot respond appropriately.	1

Note; Maximum score = 25

$$Score = \frac{\text{The result of the score}}{\text{Maximum score}} \times 100$$

Role Play Method in Language Learning

Role play is a method that immerses learners in real or imaginary situations where they assume roles and engage in dialogue. Harmer (2007) explains that role play encourages students to use English more freely and creatively, as they step into roles that simulate real-life contexts. It provides a low-pressure environment that fosters risk-taking and reduces speaking anxiety.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) support this view, noting that communicative activities like role play are essential in learner-centered instruction, as they offer opportunities for authentic interaction and help students internalize functional language. Sofyan et al. (2018) emphasize that role play can improve fluency, vocabulary usage, and pronunciation because it mimics real communication, which encourages more natural language use.

Lestari (2021) found that role play significantly enhanced students' willingness to participate, particularly among shy learners. The creative and interactive nature of role play makes learning more enjoyable, which contributes to better language retention. Likewise, Willem (2024) stresses that role play allows students to apply grammar rules in dynamic situations while expanding their range of expressions.

Theoretical Advantages of Role Play

Several researchers highlight the pedagogical benefits of role play. According to Nasihah and Moetia (2024), role play encourages collaboration and active participation, helping students develop communicative competence and interpersonal skills. Katemba and Grace (2023) found that role-playing not only improved speaking scores but also increased students' self-regulation and motivation.

Brown (2001) aligns role play with constructivist learning theory, where learners construct knowledge through active experience and reflection. In this approach, students are not passive recipients but become active agents in their language development. Role play also integrates other skills such as listening and reading (in script preparation), making it a holistic instructional tool.

Challenges in Implementing Role Play

Despite its advantages, role play also presents challenges. Febrisma (2013) argues that its effectiveness heavily depends on the teacher's ability to facilitate and guide the activity. Without clear objectives or

structured support, role play may become disorganized or intimidating for some students. Yulianti et al. (2019) also caution that cultural sensitivity must be considered when designing scenarios, as some topics or behaviors may be inappropriate or uncomfortable for learners.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR), a method designed to solve real-world classroom problems and improve teaching practices through systematic inquiry. According to Lateh et al. (2021), action research emphasizes practical problem-solving in specific educational contexts through a cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflection. This cyclical model enables the researcher to implement interventions and evaluate their impact in continuous phases. The reflective stage is particularly important because it allows the researcher to analyze what worked, what did not, and why.

Furthermore, Khasinah (2013) states that Action Research involves the systematic collection of data with the aim of bringing about positive changes in a particular setting. In the field of education, this often leads to improved teaching strategies, learning conditions, and student outcomes.

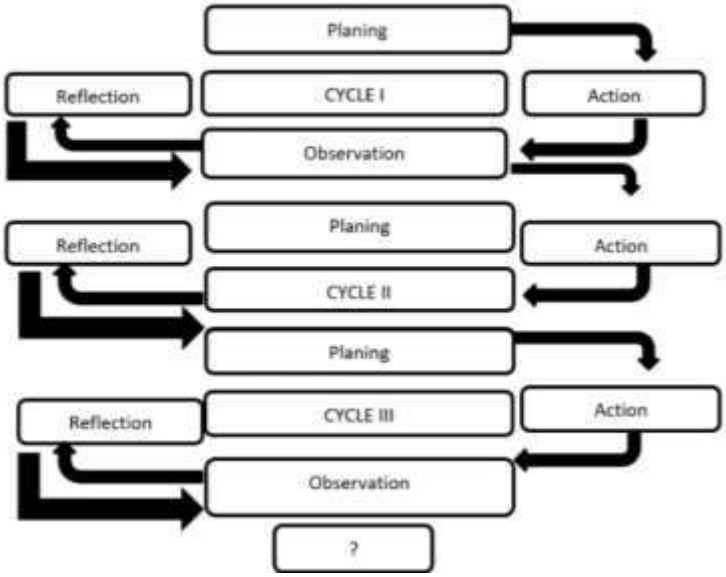
Thanavathi (2017) outlines the four core stages of CAR as follows:

a. **Planning**: The researcher identifies problems—in this case, low speaking skills among students—and prepares instructional plans using the role play method to address the issue. This stage includes selecting learning materials, preparing tests, and designing observation sheets.
b. **Action**: The teaching strategy is implemented. Students perform dialogues using the role play method with the help of selected scenarios.
c. **Observation**: The researcher and a collaborator observe the classroom activities to document student participation, engagement, and performance.
d. **Reflection**: The results of the intervention are evaluated. If the intended improvements are not achieved, revisions are made and the cycle continues.

IJOEEL
International Journal of English Education and Linguistics
VOL. 07 NO. 02, DEC 2025

To visualize this procedure, the researcher used the following figure to depict the CAR cycle adapted from Kemmis and McTaggart (1988):

Figure 1 Procedure of CAR Model by Kemmis and Mc.Taggart



Participants

The subject of the research was the eighth-grade students of UPTD SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Selatan, comprising 27 students (13 males and 14 females). The participants were chosen through total sampling since all students in the class were involved in the teaching-learning process. Based on initial observation, many students struggled with pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and comprehension during speaking activities.

Instrument

The instruments used in this research were:

a. Observation Sheet
   Used to record classroom dynamics and students' involvement during role play activities. According to Wikman et al. (2024), observation is essential in real-time documentation of students' participation and interaction, helping the researcher gather qualitative data about learning behavior.
b. Speaking Test
   The speaking test was conducted after each role play session to evaluate students' speaking skills. The test required students to perform short dialogues based on the role play scenarios provided during the cycles. In Cycle I, the topic was "Keep It Clean, Keep It Green", while in Cycle II, the topic was "School Project on Littering". Each pair of students was given approximately 3–5 minutes to perform their dialogue. Assessment was based on five indicators: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, using a rubric adapted from Harris (1969) as cited in Helmanda (2019).

IJOEEL
International Journal of English Education and Linguistics
VOL. 07 NO. 02, DEC 2025

c. Documentation
This included photographs, lesson plans, student performance results, and reflective notes. As Ya-nan (2023) emphasizes, documentation helps examine classroom dynamics and evaluate instructional impact over time.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was conducted both qualitatively and quantitatively:

1. **Qualitative Data**: Analyzed through observation and field notes. Following Henderson (2015), the analysis involved three stages:
   a. *Data Reduction*: Selecting relevant observation data.
   b. *Data Display*: Presenting data in narrative, table, or chart form.
   c. *Conclusion Drawing and Verification*: Interpreting findings and validating them through revisiting the field if necessary.
2. **Quantitative Data**: Derived from the students' speaking test scores. The assessment was based on a speaking rubric adapted from Harris (1969), as explained in the Literature Review section, which includes five indicators: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Each indicator was scored on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = Less and 5 = Very Good. The total score was then converted into a percentage using the formula:

$$\text{Score} = \frac{\text{Obtained score}}{\text{maximum score}} \text{ x100}$$

The scores were categorized into achievement levels using the following classification:

Table 2 Classification of assessment criteria

Score	Classification
85-100	Very Good
71-84	Good
60-74	Adequate
25-59	less

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This research was conducted at UPTD SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Selatan in North Sumatra. Based on preliminary observation, students faced several difficulties in speaking English, such as mispronunciation, grammar errors, limited vocabulary, lack of fluency, and less comprehension. These challenges motivated the use of role play as a method to improve speaking skills. The study was carried out in two cycles, each consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection stages.

Cycle I

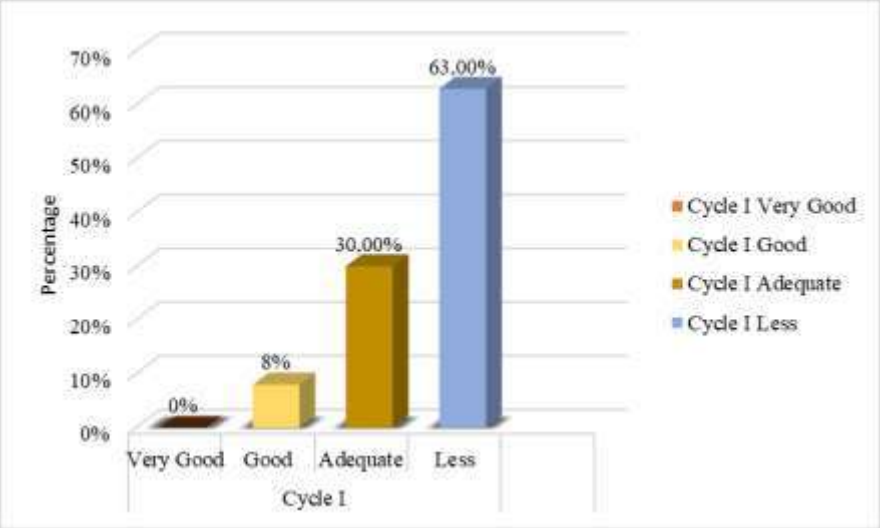
Cycle I consisted of two meetings. In the first meeting, the researcher introduced the role play technique

and explained the dialogue topic *"Keep It Clean, Keep It Green"*. Students were divided into pairs and practiced the dialogue with teacher guidance. In the second meeting, students performed the role play in front of the class and completed the speaking test.

Table 3. The Students' classification criteria in cycle I

No.	Classification		Frequency (person)	Percentage %
	Score Range	Category		
1.	85-100	Very good	-	-
2.	75-84	Good	2	8 %
3.	60-74	Adequate	8	30 %
4.	25-59	Less	17	63 %
	total		**27**	**100** %

Graphic 1 The Students Speaking Skills through Role Playing method in Cycle I



IJOEEL
International Journal of English Education and Linguistics
VOL. 07 NO. 02, DEC 2025

Based on the evaluation results from Cycle I, it was found that of the 27 students who participated in the study, the majority still had low speaking skills. Only two students (8%) achieved the "Good" category with a score range of 75–84, while eight students (30%) achieved the "Adequate" category with a score of 60–74. The remaining 17 students (63%) fell into the "Less" category, achieving scores between 25–59. None of the students achieved the "Very Good" category (85–100), indicating that their speaking skills still fell short of expectations.

The low average score was caused by several factors:

a) **Limited vocabulary mastery**, making it difficult to expand beyond the memorized script.
b) **Frequent pronunciation errors**, reducing clarity and confidence.
c) **Hesitation and lack of fluency**, marked by long pauses and repeated words.
d) **Weak comprehension**, especially when responding to follow-up questions.
e) **Unfamiliarity with the role play method**, which made students focus on memorization rather than natural interaction.

These results indicate that the learning methods used in Cycle I were not fully effective in improving students' speaking skills. Many students still struggled with pronunciation, sentence structure, vocabulary mastery, and public speaking skills. Therefore, improvements to more focused and interactive learning strategies are needed in subsequent cycles to achieve significant improvements.

Cycle II

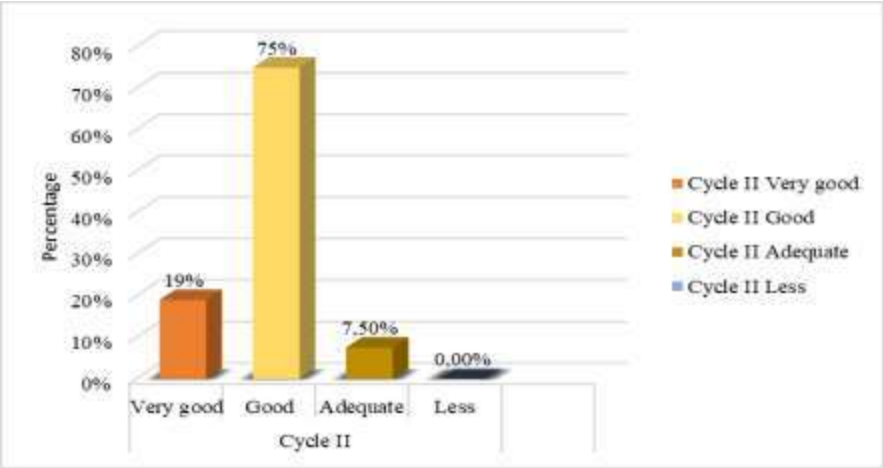
Based on reflection from Cycle I, adjustments were made: scripts were simplified, students practiced in smaller groups, and the teacher modeled conversations more clearly. The role play script was changed to 'School Project on Littering'. As a result, students were more confident and active during the speaking sessions. The following are the findings of this study.

Table 4 The Students' classification criteria in Cycle II

No.	Classification		Frequency (person)	Percentage %
	Score Range	Category		
1.	85-100	Very good	5	19 %
2.	75-84	Good	20	75 %
3.	60-74	Adequate	2	7,5 %
4.	25-59	Less	-	
	total		**27**	**100** %

IJOEEL
International Journal of English Education and Linguistics
VOL. 07 NO. 02, DEC 2025

Graphic 2 The Students Speaking Skills through Role Playing method in Cycle II



The evaluation results in Cycle II showed a significant improvement in students' speaking skills after implementing the improved role-play method compared to the previous cycle. Of the twenty-seven students, five students (19%) achieved the "Very Good" category with scores between 85 and 100. Furthermore, the majority of students, twenty students (75%), fell into the "Good" category with scores ranging from 75 to 84. Meanwhile, only two students (7.5%) fell into the "Adequate" category (60–74), and no students fell into the "Less" category (25–59).

The average score in Cycle II exceeded the KKM of 75, with most students achieving the "Good" or "Very Good" categories. The improvement was supported by:

- **Increased familiarity with the role play method**, which reduced hesitation and anxiety.
- **Better vocabulary preparation**, allowing more spontaneous interaction.
- **Pronunciation drills**, which minimized errors found in Cycle I.
- **Smaller group practice**, which gave students more opportunities to speak.

These data indicate that most students experienced significant improvement in their speaking skills. They appeared more confident, were able to construct sentences correctly, and had improved pronunciation and comprehension. This indicates that the implementation of the role-play method in Cycle II was effective in improving the five indicators of speaking skills: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. With no students in the low category, this method can be recommended to continue to be used and developed in learning to speak English in the classroom.

Observation Data

During the implementation of the Role Play method, observation sheets were used to assess both the teacher's and students' activities. In Cycle I, the researcher's activity achievement was 58% in the first meeting and improved to 82% in the second. Student participation was also observed to rise from 63% to 72%. In Cycle II, researcher activities reached 100% implementation, while student engagement also increased to 100%, indicating full participation. These observations show a positive trend in teaching effectiveness and student involvement.

IJOEEL
International Journal of English Education and Linguistics
VOL. 07 NO. 02, DEC 2025

Documentation Data

To support the validity of observational data, documentation was also conducted during the teaching and learning process. Photos were taken to capture student participation in role-playing activities, group discussions, and performance presentations. This visual evidence confirms students' engagement and enthusiasm throughout the classroom action research. Additionally, students' speaking score sheets and scenario scripts served as supplementary documentation to strengthen the research findings.
The following are research documentation of the research.

Figure 2. Activities role playing/Performance presentation



Figure 3 Group discussion



IJOEEL
International Journal of English Education and Linguistics
VOL. 07 NO. 02, DEC 2025

Students' Speaking Score Sheets

RUBRIC SPEAKING cycle I

Students	Pronunciation	Grammar	vocabulary	Fluency	Comprehension	Score
S1	1	1	1	1	1	5
S2	2	2	2	2	2	10
S3	2	2	2	2	2	10
S4	1	1	1	1	1	5
S5	1	1	1	1	1	5
S6	1	1	1	1	1	5
S7	1	1	1	1	1	5
S8	1	1	1	1	1	5
S9	1	1	1	1	1	5
S10	2	2	2	2	2	10
S11	2	1	2	2	2	10
S12	1	1	1	1	2	6
S13	2	2	2	2	2	10
S14	1	1	1	1	1	6
S15	2	2	2	2	2	10
S16	3	3	3	3	3	15
S17	2	1	1	1	1	6
S18	2	1	1	1	1	6
S19	2	2	2	2	2	15
S20	2	1	1	1	1	6
S21	1	1	1	1	2	6
S22	2	2	2	2	2	10
S23	1	1	1	1	2	6
S24	1	1	1	1	1	6
S25	2	2	2	2	2	10
S26	1	1	1	1	2	6
S27	1	1	1	1	1	5

RUBRIC SPEAKING cycle II

Students	Pronunciation	Grammar	vocabulary	Fluency	Comprehension	Score
S1	3	3	3	3	3	15
S2	4	3	3	4	4	18
S3	4	2	3	4	3	17
S4	2	2	2	2	2	10
S5	2	2	2	2	2	10
S6	3	3	2	3	3	15
S7	3	3	3	3	3	15
S8	3	3	3	3	3	15
S9	3	3	3	3	3	15
S10	4	3	3	4	4	18
S11	3	3	3	3	4	16
S12	3	3	3	3	3	15
S13	3	2	3	3	4	16
S14	3	3	3	3	3	15
S15	4	3	3	4	4	15
S16	5	3	3	5	5	21
S17	3	3	3	3	3	15
S18	3	3	3	3	3	15
S19	4	3	3	3	4	17
S20	3	3	3	3	3	15
S21	3	3	3	3	3	15
S22	4	3	3	4	4	18
S23	3	3	3	3	3	15
S24	3	3	3	3	3	15
S25	4	3	3	3	3	16
S26	3	3	3	3	3	15
S27	3	3	3	3	3	15

Scenario Scripts

Title: Keep It Clean, Keep It Green

Characters:

1. ***Axel – A student who cares about the environment***
2. ***Olivia – A student who often litters***

Scene: In the schoolyard

Script:

Axel : (shocked) Olivia! Why did you throw trash on the ground?
Olivia : Ah, relax, Axel. It's just a small candy wrapper.
Axel : But still, Olivia! If everyone thinks like that, our school will be full of trash.
Olivia : But there are janitors who will clean it up, right?
Axel : Yes, but that's not an excuse to litter. We should help keep our environment clean.
Olivia : Hmm… I never thought about it that way before.
Axel : Imagine if our school was full of trash. It would be uncomfortable, right? Also, trash can cause diseases.
Olivia : Wow, I didn't realize that. I'll pick up the trash and throw it in the bin.
Axel : Great, Olivia! From now on, let's remind each other to always keep our surroundings clean.
Olivia : Agreed! I won't litter anymore.
(They walk together to the trash bin, dispose of the trash properly, and smile.)

IJOEEL
International Journal of English Education and Linguistics
VOL. 07 NO. 02, DEC 2025

Title: School Project on Littering

Characters:

1. ***Rina – A student interviewing for her school project***
2. ***Budi – A student who saw someone littering***

Script:

Rina : Hi, Budi! Can I ask you some questions about littering for my school project?
Budi : Sure, Rina! What do you want to ask?
Rina : Have you ever seen someone littering in our school?
Budi : Yes, I did. Last week, I saw a student throwing a plastic bottle on the ground near the canteen.
Rina : Oh no! What did you do when you saw that?
Budi : At first, I felt upset. Then, I kindly reminded him to throw the bottle in the trash bin.
Rina : That's good! Did he listen to you?
Budi : Yes, he picked up the bottle and threw it in the bin. He even apologized.
Rina : That's great! Have you ever joined a clean-up activity before?
Budi : Yes! Last month, our class participated in a school clean-up program. We cleaned the schoolyard, classrooms and even made posters about keeping the environment clean.
Rina : That sounds fun! What did you learn from that activity?
Budi : I learned that keeping our school clean is a shared responsibility. If everyone takes care of their trash, our environment will be much better.
Rina : I totally agree! Thank you, Budi, for sharing your experience.
Budi : You're welcome, Rina! I hope your project goes well.

Discussion

The findings of this study showed a significant improvement in students' speaking skills after the implementation of the role play method. Based on the results of two action research cycles, students demonstrated progress in all five speaking indicators: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. In Cycle I, most students fell into the "less" and "adequate" categories, while in Cycle II, the majority reached the "good" and "very good" categories. This improvement highlights the effectiveness of role play in promoting active participation and real-time communication practice in the classroom.

These results align with the findings of Nasihah and Moetia (2024), who also used classroom action research to examine how role play enhanced speaking performance across multiple indicators. Their study confirmed that sustained practice through realistic conversational scenarios enabled students to overcome anxiety and improve fluency and vocabulary. Likewise, this study found that students became more confident and expressive when they were allowed to practice their roles in contextual conversations.

Henisah (2023), in her study published in the International Journal of Contemporary Studies in Education, emphasized that role play increased student engagement and excitement during language learning. Similarly, in the present study, the students' involvement was evident through their enthusiasm in both Cycle I and Cycle II. This emotional engagement is crucial, as it helps reduce learners' fear of making mistakes and encourages them to speak more freely, especially in front of their peers.

The success of the role play method in this study also reflects the idea of "learning by doing," where students are actively involved in constructing meaning. Katemba and Grace (2023) highlighted

that role-playing provides meaningful speaking opportunities through interaction, which leads to deeper language acquisition. In the current study, students were required to use target expressions such as opinions, agreement, and disagreement, which helped them internalize functional language in context.

Another recent study by Kholili et al. (2024) also supports the use of role play in enhancing students' confidence and spontaneity in speaking English. Their findings noted that the technique was effective not only in skill development but also in promoting peer collaboration. This aligns with the collaborative activities in this research, where students worked in pairs, shared feedback, and learned from each other's performances. This cooperative learning environment contributed to more dynamic language use.

Furthermore, Wikman et al. (2024) explained the importance of observation tools in documenting classroom behavior and improvement. In this study, the observation sheets indicated increased student engagement, better pronunciation, and more accurate grammar usage over time. This suggests that combining role play with systematic observation and reflection can produce effective results in language classrooms.

In addition to observation, documentation played a vital role in capturing the success of the intervention. Visual evidence such as photos and speaking performance records strengthened the findings and provided tangible proof of student progress. As Ya-nan (2023) suggested, documentation can serve as a reflective tool for teachers to track instructional effectiveness and adjust teaching strategies accordingly.

In summary, the implementation of the role play method in this research was consistent with various contemporary studies that emphasize interactive, student-centered learning for language improvement. By simulating real-life communication, students were able to overcome psychological barriers, engage actively, and demonstrate measurable improvement in speaking skills. Therefore, integrating role play in English teaching, especially in junior secondary schools, should be encouraged to foster communicative competence and learner autonomy.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the findings of this classroom action research, it can be concluded that the implementation of the role play method significantly improved the speaking skills of eighth-grade students at UPTD SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Selatan. The improvement was observed across the five speaking indicators: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension—where initially, students showed considerable limitations, particularly in pronunciation and grammar.

In the first cycle, only 8% of students achieved the "Good" category and none reached "Very Good," while 63% of students remained in the "Less" category. After applying improvements in Cycle II, the results changed dramatically. By the end of the second cycle, 75% of students reached the "Good" category and 19% reached "Very Good," while no students remained in the "Less" category. This represents a 67.5% increase in the "Good" category and a 19% gain in the "Very Good" category. These outcomes strongly indicate that the role play method was effective in developing students' speaking competence.

Moreover, role play fostered higher student engagement, encouraged meaningful interaction, and helped students practice authentic communication in an enjoyable learning environment. Students became more confident, expressive, and willing to participate actively in classroom activities. Nevertheless, the method was not without its challenges. Some students continued to struggle with

pronunciation, and the activities were relatively time-consuming. Furthermore, variations in student confidence affected participation levels during performances.

Despite these limitations, role play proved to be a valuable and effective strategy for improving speaking skills in EFL classrooms. It is recommended that English teachers integrate role play into speaking lessons, particularly with added emphasis on pronunciation and vocabulary support. Teachers are also encouraged to create a safe and inclusive atmosphere that motivates all students to speak. Students should be provided with more opportunities to practice speaking outside the classroom through role play, peer conversations, and language games.

For future researchers and education practitioners, this study may serve as a reference in designing classroom interventions using interactive methods. However, it is important to note that this research was conducted in only one class and limited to two cycles without comparative data from other groups. Therefore, further studies with broader participant groups, extended cycles, and comparative designs are recommended to validate and expand upon these findings. Continued exploration of communicative and student-centered strategies will contribute meaningfully to improving English speaking instruction in Indonesian schools.

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