

USING IMPROMPTU ROLE-PLAYING AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS IN EFL CONTEXT

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Abstract: Students' speaking problems include limited vocabulary mastery and insufficient opportunities for classroom practice. Previous studies have shown that impromptu role-play is an effective technique for improving speaking skills. This study aims to investigate the effect of the impromptu role-play technique on the English-speaking ability of eleventh-grade English Literature students at a senior high school in Tanjungpinang. This research employed a pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design. The instrument was a two-minute speaking test performed in front of the class. The sample consisted of 30 students selected through purposive sampling. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. The result of the paired-sample t-test revealed a significance value of 0.000, which was lower than 0.05, indicating that the alternative hypothesis was accepted and the null hypothesis was rejected. This finding shows that the implementation of impromptu role-play significantly improved students' speaking skills. The study implies that impromptu role-play can be used as an effective technique to promote students' speaking performance and confidence through simulated real-life communication.

Keywords: *English as a foreign language, impromptu role-play, speaking skill, Tanjungpinang senior high school*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking stands out as a productive and crucial skill that often presents significant challenges for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. Speaking involves three key components: the speaker, the listener, and the utterance, with expressions that must be comprehensible to the listener. Alfiana & Wijirahayu (2024) noted that speaking is a communication procedure involving at least two people that allows them to express their views. Through speaking, people express their information and convey their thoughts. Harmer (2001) in Kholifah et al. (2021) suggested that speaking is the ability to speak fluently, which presupposes not only a knowledge of language features but also the ability to process information and language on the spot.

However, speaking English is still a challenge for many students, for they have such as limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and minimal opportunities to practice in the classroom. These speaking challenges are particularly complex for EFL learners because they require a balance between grammatical accuracy and clear communication. This phenomenon is not unique to Indonesian students, as EFL learners worldwide face similar difficulties. Students in Iraqi universities encounter many obstacles in mastering and learning English, lacking several essential ingredients for language learning (Idham et al., 2022). Similarly, many studies have shown that Moroccan EFL students tend to lack fluency in their English speech (Lahbib & Farhane, 2023). These challenges reflect common issues in EFL contexts globally, where limited exposure to authentic language use and cultural understanding often impedes effective communication skills development.

These global challenges are clearly reflected in the local Indonesian context. Research observations at the 11th-grade English literature (Moving Class) of Senior High School (SHS) in Tanjungpinang, Kepulauan Riau Province, revealed that students experience difficulties in speaking. According to the English teachers, both formative and summative tests showed low scores, with averages of 72.4 and 56.4, respectively, among 45 students. During the researcher's primary observation at the school, students demonstrated difficulty expressing themselves in front of the class. Furthermore, observations conducted on November 14, 2024, revealed that students lacked adequate vocabulary knowledge. They were reluctant to practice both in and outside class and demonstrated fear of making mistakes, resulting in diminished confidence when speaking

publicly. Those problems encompassed a lack of students' speaking skill at 11th-grade English literature.

As a result, students need a variety of cutting-edge methods to make learning more approachable and interesting, particularly in speaking. Teachers play a vital role by implementing appropriate methods to enhance students' speaking abilities. One particularly effective strategy is the role-play technique. The previous researches have demonstrated the effectiveness of role-play techniques in addressing speaking difficulties among EFL learners. Previous research by Pinatih (2021) indicated that role-play significantly helps students develop greater confidence as speakers. Ayuningtias et al. (2019) observed that character roles in stories enable students to use language more effectively and naturally.

Although a substantial body of research supports the use of role-play techniques in language learning, a comprehensive review of the literature reveals a notable gap concerning their effectiveness in English literature classes under Indonesia's recently implemented Merdeka Curriculum framework. While previous studies (Lahbibbi & Farhane, 2023) have highlighted the general benefits of role-play in various EFL contexts, none have specifically investigated its application in specialized moving class settings or its effectiveness within literature-focused language learning. Moreover, the discrepancy between existing research findings and the current classroom conditions at the Tanjungpinang SHS underscores the need to explore whether role-play can effectively address the speaking challenges faced by students in this unique educational context.

If this study was not conducted, teachers in similar literature-based moving class programs may continue to rely on conventional speaking activities that provide limited opportunities for meaningful communication practice. As a result, students' speaking proficiency, classroom participation, and confidence may remain low. In addition, the absence of empirical evidence regarding the use of role-play in the Merdeka Curriculum context will make it difficult for teachers to select appropriate and effective techniques for improving students' speaking performance.

Based on the background, the research question is stated as follow: "Is there a significant improvement in students' speaking skills before and after the implementation of the impromptu role-play technique?" Based on the theoretical framework, the previous discussions, and explanations previously described, the alternative hypothesis of this

study is Ha: “Students’ speaking skills improve after the implementation of the impromptu role-play technique.” And the null-hypothesis is H0: “Students’ speaking skills do not improve after the implementation of the impromptu role-play technique.”

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Nature of Speaking

The term speaking, as stated by Nation and Newton (2009) in Wael et al. (2018), “may involve presenting reports or expressing a viewpoint on a particular topic as part of work or academic study”. According to Guebba (2021), speaking is defined by three primary aspects: purpose, participation, and planning. The first aspect, purpose, can be transactional or interpersonal. The second aspect, participation, may be interactive or non-interactive. The third aspect refers to the type of speech, which can be either planned or spontaneous.

Burns (2012), as cited in Mandasari and Aminatun (2020), states that speaking skills require physical, cognitive, and sociocultural processes, as well as speaker knowledge, which occur in real-life contexts and develop over time. Speaking is the ability to convey and deliver information to others. It is one of the most important productive skills for promoting interpersonal interaction and communication. It includes not only the ability to articulate words but also the ability to engage in meaningful conversations, express ideas coherently, and adjust language use in various social and professional contexts. In addition, Rao (2018), as cited in Jaya et al, (2022), argues that speaking is a key component in learning a foreign or second language. This indicates that speaking is essential for students’ comprehension and language development. According to Kardiansyah and Qodriani (2018), the main objective of speaking is to make others understand the meaning being conveyed. They also state that the components of speaking are organized and developed based on the needs of the listener. Therefore, speaking occurs when speakers and listeners interact to convey intentions, ideas, thoughts, and feelings in a structured way so that the intended meaning can be understood.

The speaking assessment framework integrates five linguistic components: receptive competence (comprehension), grammatical proficiency, lexical knowledge (vocabulary), phonological accuracy (pronunciation), and discourse fluidity (fluency) (Irawan et al., 2022). Teachers look for appropriate techniques to motivate students to

master speaking skills. Students should feel that practicing is necessary for improvement, so they should try speaking in every situation.

Role Play Technique

Role play derives its theoretical basis from the field of psychodrama. Cohen et al. (2018) stated role play is a spontaneous, dramatic, creative teaching strategy in which individuals overtly and consciously assume the roles of others and considered as an effective learning strategy because it encourages participants to consider the perspective of the person whose role they assume. Role play is a teaching strategy that immerses learners in real or imaginary situations, allowing them to assume roles and use context-appropriate language beyond the classroom setting (Harefa et al., 2025).

According to Krebt (2017), role plays have three types: fully scripted, semi-scripted, and non-scripted. In his research, fully scripted role-play refers to a conversation that uses a complete script from a textbook prepared and controlled by the teacher. The textbook uses easy-to-understand and familiar vocabulary so students can practice easily. Semi-scripted refers to a conversation that does not use a script from a predetermined textbook. The teacher only provides the missing words; the students must fill in the specific material according to the conversation. The last one is non-scripted, a type of role-play where students are only given keywords or situations and create their own conversations.

The role play technique that the researcher used is authentic script role play, which is speaking practice with real-life simulation. With authentic script role play, students particularly demonstrate their ability to speak by following real-life situations, for example the scenario between a teacher and their students or conversations among students. During the meetings, they were directed to perform non-scripted role plays in front of the class. Speaking skills will be practical when the simulation or the practice is similar to real-life communication. According to Maulana et al. (2018), speaking is a fundamental skill widely used in communication, enabling people to share information effectively while providing a more natural pathway to learn English through spontaneous interaction.

Context of the study: Moving Class as a Classroom Model for Enhanced Competence

Indonesian Educational system has changed every five years. The current curriculum is called Merdeka Curriculum. In this curriculum, students may select their potential and talents based on their topic interests. One part of the Merdeka Curriculum is the Moving Class program, which is implemented throughout Indonesia with the Merdeka curriculum system. Students can choose subjects that are their talents or interests to develop in college. This program allows students to channel their preferences in specific fields.

In moving-class learning, students are guided to develop their potential by playing an active role during learning. Moving Class is a learning model designed to support active and creative learning, in which students can develop their potential according to their interest (Telaumbanua et al., 2024). English literature is a specialization subject offered as part of the Moving Class program in SHS Tanjungpinang, an initiative of the Merdeka Curriculum. There are nine classes, enabling students to choose four subjects per week. The Moving Class schedule in SHS Tanjungpinang consists of five weekly lesson hours. The material covered in the Moving Class is more advanced than the regular class. For English Literature, the material is *Bahasa Inggris Tingkat Lanjut* (Advanced English).

METHOD

Research Design

Quantitative research takes an organized and methodical approach to studying things. Creswell and Creswell (2023) points out that when researchers use quantitative methods, they gather numbers, make sense of them, and then write up what they found. The beauty of working with numerical data is that researchers can run various statistical tests and look at variables objectively. It is like having a structured roadmap for answering research questions, where the numbers do much of the talking. While quantitative methods include survey and experimental approaches, this study utilized an experimental research design.

In this pre-experimental study, there are two types of variables: independent and dependent variables. The role-playing model is the independent variable (the researcher

manipulates). At the same time, speaking abilities function as the dependent variable, which is measured to observe the effects of the manipulation. The researcher used this design to determine the impact of the role-playing technique on the entire class both before and after the treatment.

Data Sources

The researcher obtained approval from thirty students to conduct the research. The sample was selected using purposive sampling techniques, which consist of one class with a total of thirty students. In purposive sampling, researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample based on their judgment of their typicality or possession of a particular characteristic being sought (Cohen et al., 2018).

Data Collection Procedure

Before collecting the data, the researcher conducted an expert judgment process by consulting three English teachers to ensure that the speaking assessment was valid for use. For the reliability test, interrater reliability was employed using Cohen's kappa coefficient to determine the level of agreement between two raters in assessing the speaking rubric. Interrater reliability was used to measure the degree of consistency between two independent raters who evaluated the same performance using the same scoring criteria. The interpretation of the kappa value was based on the classification proposed by Landis and Koch (1977), which remains widely used in reliability studies, and was supported by more recent methodological references.

The raters consisted of qualified English teachers and English education practitioners who had expertise in English language assessment. This level of interrater reliability established the reliability of the measurement instrument and ensured consistent evaluation standards throughout the study. The interpretation of the kappa coefficient was based on the classification proposed by Landis and Koch (1977), which is still widely used in interrater reliability study like in the Table 1.

Once the instrument was deemed valid and reliable, the pretest was administered. The researcher administered the test orally and asked students to perform a speaking task in front of their friends in the classroom. Students demonstrated their speaking ability for two minutes in front of the class. The researcher administered treatment using impromptu role-play to improve students' speaking skills. The treatment process was conducted in five meetings.

Table 1. Kappa Interpretation Score

Kappa Value	Level of Agreement
< 0.00	Poor
0.00 – 0.20	Slight
0.21 – 0.40	Fair
0.41 – 0.60	Moderate
0.61 – 0.80	Substantial
0.81 – 1.00	Almost perfect

Source: Adapted from Landis and Koch (1977)

In the final meeting, students were administered a post-test to measure their speaking skills after the treatment. The post-test was recorded for one to three minutes. Students were asked to play a role in front of the class without a scenario or non-scripted, demonstrating impromptu speaking abilities. The researcher analyzed students' speaking abilities regarding pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was applied systematically to describe and evaluate information. This study analyzed the information/data using the t-test formula. After collecting the data, the researcher analyzed the test results using speaking performance criteria. Data were collected through tests and analyzed using quantitative analysis and statistical calculations using SPSS to test hypotheses. For data analysis, researchers used a speaking ability profile adapted from Harris (1969), which combines pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension to produce a rating classification.

After collecting the data, the researcher used descriptive test to describe and summarize the basic features of a dataset. Before running a hypothesis test, researcher used normality test to check if data follows a normal distribution. With decision making: (1) If the significant value (Sig) > 0.05, then the research data is normally distributed, and H_a is accepted. (2) If the significant value (Sig) < 0.05, then the research data is not normally distributed, and H_0 is accepted. This study employed a paired sample t-test with the following decision-making criteria: (1) If the sig. value (2-tailed) < 0.05, then H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted (2) If the sig. value (2-tailed) > 0.05, then H_0 is accepted and H_a is rejected.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**Findings****Table 2. Student Pre-test and Post-test Scores**

STUDENTS	SCORE	
	Pre-test	Post-test
S1	54	74
S2	54	75
S3	74	82
S4	76	85
S5	62	81
S6	60	82
S7	77	89
S8	78	90
S9	59	75
S10	57	77
S11	74	84
S12	61	81
S13	60	74
S14	70	80
S15	63	82
S16	53	75
S17	60	75
S18	75	83
S19	53	72
S20	82	89
S21	81	89
S22	51	77
S23	76	81
S24	53	72
S25	64	78
S26	70	82
S27	64	80
S28	73	85
S29	63	80
S30	63	78

The researcher collected the data from students' pre-tests and post-tests (see Table 2). The test was administered orally to assess the students' speaking skills. This research collected data from a sample of thirty students. A pre-test was carried out on the class

before the impromptu role-play treatment class was applied. The post-test aimed to explain the level of students' improvement in speaking skills taught by using the role-play technique. The students' post-test scores were classified based on the same criteria as the pre-test: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

Descriptive Test

The data was measured by using maximum, minimum, mean, and standard deviation (see Table 3). The data collected from the pre-test and the post-test assessed students' speaking skills. The descriptions are below:

Table 3. The Descriptive Test Result

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	30	51	82	65.33	9.389
Posttest	30	72	90	80.23	5.124

Source: SPSS 26 version

Normality Test

Table 4. Normality Test

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pretest	.156	30	.059	.933	30	.061
Posttest	.113	30	.200*	.953	30	.202

Source: SPSS 26 version

The Shapiro-Wilk test results (see Table 4) show that p pre-test = 0.061 and p post-test = 0.202, which means p pre-test > 0.05 and p post-test > 0.05. Therefore, the distribution of pre-test and post-test is normal.

Paired Sample T-Test

Table 5 Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-14.900	5.365	.980	-16.903	-12.897	-15.212	29	.000

Source: SPSS 26 version

The decision-making was if the sig. Value (2-tailed) < 0.05, then H₀ is rejected, H_a is accepted, and if the sig. Value (2-tailed) > 0.05, then H₀ is accepted, and H_a is

rejected. From the paired sample T-test in Table 5, the Sig. (2-tailed) value is $0.000 < 0.05$. Therefore, H_0 is rejected, and H_a is accepted. Thus, there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test, which means there is an improvement in students' speaking skills before and after the treatment.

Discussion

This research aimed to examine the effectiveness of students' speaking skills through impromptu role-play techniques in an English literature moving-class of SHS Tanjungpinang. The researcher administered pre-tests and post-tests to measure students' performance before and after the treatment. The goal was to determine whether there was a significant improvement in students' speaking skills following the implementation of impromptu role-play techniques.

Students' Initial Speaking Proficiency

The findings of the pre-test indicated that the students' initial speaking proficiency was still at a low level, with an average score of 65. This condition might be attributed to their limited opportunities to practice speaking in direct and meaningful contexts. It indicates that the students experienced considerable difficulty in producing clear, accurate, and fluent spoken English. This finding is in line with Karmida et al. (2024) who stated that speaking is difficult for students who are reluctant to practice. Therefore, an interactive and spontaneous speaking activity such as impromptu role-play was needed to increase students' confidence in speaking.

In addition, students who struggle to practice speaking, both inside and outside the classroom, tend to have low confidence in speaking. As Alfiana and Wijirahayu (2024) noted, speaking English will be easier if students deliver their speech without being afraid of making mistakes. Unfortunately, many students feel uncomfortable expressing their ideas in English due to anxiety about making mistakes and their lack of vocabulary.

Likewise, although classroom learning enables students to acquire more knowledge and understand English more easily, direct practice is still needed as a meaningful way to develop their speaking ability. Through meaningful and spontaneous practice, students are able to speak more naturally, which is an essential aspect of language learning.

The Effect of Impromptu Role-Play on Students' Speaking Performance

After the oral post-test was administered, the average score increased to 80. This result indicates that impromptu role-play facilitates spontaneous communication and improves students' speaking skills. Through this activity, students were able to express their ideas to their friends more easily. Spontaneous speaking is crucial for students because it reflects real communication in various situations. As Lahbib and Farhane (2023) mentioned, successful speaking depends on how speakers convey their message clearly without being misunderstood.

Furthermore, students often feel that their vocabulary is limited because they get stuck and are confused about what they are supposed to say. However, through impromptu role-play, students not only relied on memorizing notes or conversations but also acquired new vocabulary during the practice. This finding is in line with Ishak and Aziz (2022), who revealed that role-play activities enhance oral proficiency, grammatical accuracy, articulation, and vocabulary, which is an essential part of language learning.

Moreover, building confidence is as challenging as facing the problem itself. Students often experience fear before they develop the courage to speak and feel anxious when everyone is watching them. Students who are shy and hesitant to speak prefer to remain silent during the class. On the other hand, when practicing impromptu role-play, students have no choice but to participate in the conversation. Performing direct speech in front of the class immediately encourages students to develop their confidence. This finding is in line with Rojas and Villafuerte (2018), who stated that role-play as a learning method increases students' fluency in speaking in front of the class.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, impromptu role-play is effective in improving students' fluency in speaking English. Namaziandost et al. (2020) stated that fluency is a key component in mastering English. Through repeated role-play practice with their friends, students were able to develop their speaking fluency. During the sessions, the students were divided into several groups and performed role-plays based on their assigned themes. This activity encouraged them to express their ideas using appropriate vocabulary and gradually speak more fluently through continuous practice.

In addition, impromptu role-play motivated students to interact more actively compared to conventional strategies in which students only listened to the teacher and completed exercises. Through role-play activities, students were able to engage in

meaningful interaction with their peers during the learning process. Nikmah and Zami (2019) stated that role-play not only improves students' speaking ability but also transforms a passive classroom situation into an active learning environment in which students become the center of the instruction. This condition supports the development of speaking skills because language is learned more effectively through active use in meaningful communication.

These findings imply that English teachers need to implement interactive speaking activities, such as impromptu role-play, in order to create student-centered learning and provide greater opportunities for meaningful communication in the classroom. Impromptu role-play not only provides students with opportunities to practice speaking English but also encourages them to become more active and confident while developing their speaking ability to a higher level. Wael et al. (2018) revealed that communicative language learning is one of the most effective ways to improve students' speaking skills. This is in line with the use of impromptu role-play, in which students not only receive the material and discuss it but also practice the language in real communication. By giving students more opportunities to speak directly in the classroom, teachers can help them use the target language in meaningful contexts. Therefore, impromptu role-play can be considered an effective pedagogical strategy for teaching speaking because it promotes active participation, builds learners' confidence, and facilitates meaningful communicative practice in the EFL classroom.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

This study was carried out to investigate the effect of impromptu role-play on students' speaking performance. The findings revealed that impromptu role-play significantly improved students' speaking skills, as reflected in the higher post-test performance compared to the pre-test. Through spontaneous and meaningful communication, students became more confident, more fluent, and more active in participating in classroom interaction. The activity also helped students develop their vocabulary and express their ideas more naturally in English. Therefore, impromptu role-play has important pedagogical implications, as it can be implemented by English teachers as an alternative strategy to create meaningful communication, encourage active

interaction, and build learners' confidence in speaking. Thus, impromptu role-play can be considered an effective strategy for enhancing students' speaking performance in the EFL classroom.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, English teachers are recommended to implement impromptu role-play as an alternative strategy in teaching speaking because it provides students with opportunities to use English in meaningful and communicative contexts. This activity can promote active participation, increase learners' confidence, and improve their fluency through spontaneous interaction in the classroom. In addition, teachers are encouraged to create supportive learning environments that allow students to practice speaking without fear of making mistakes. This study may serve as a useful reference for further research on the use of role-play in language learning. The findings are expected to contribute to a better understanding of the implementation of role-play in educational contexts and to encourage further innovation in this area. Future studies are recommended to investigate the application of role-play at different educational levels, such as junior high school and elementary school, in order to examine its impact on younger learners' language development. Future studies may also combine impromptu role-play with other teaching techniques or apply it using different research designs to enrich the findings related to the development of students' speaking performance.

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