

Improving High School Students' English Speaking Skills Through the Use of Role Play

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ABSTRAK

Di antara berbagai keterampilan berbahasa Inggris, keterampilan berbicara dianggap sebagai salah satu yang paling penting. Meskipun demikian, para guru bahasa Inggris, khususnya di Indonesia, sering menghadapi kesulitan dalam mengajarkan siswa untuk berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan metode dan strategi yang efektif untuk mendukung pengajaran keterampilan berbicara bahasa Inggris, salah satunya melalui penggunaan *role play* (bermain peran). Program Studi Bahasa Inggris Universitas Bunda Mulia melaksanakan sebuah program di SMA Fons Vitae 1 yang berfokus pada penggunaan *role play* untuk meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara siswa. Berbagai topik dan situasi digunakan dalam kegiatan tersebut, seperti meminta petunjuk arah, menanyakan produk dan layanan, melakukan reservasi hotel, wawancara kerja, dan lain sebagainya. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan bahwa melalui *role play*, para siswa mampu berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris dengan cukup baik pada berbagai situasi *role play* yang diberikan. Selain itu, secara umum para siswa juga memiliki pandangan yang positif terhadap penggunaan *role play* sebagai metode untuk meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara mereka.

Kata kunci: *role play*, keterampilan berbicara, siswa SMA

ABSTRACT

Among the various English language skills, speaking is considered particularly important. Nevertheless, English language teachers, particularly in Indonesia, often encounter difficulties in teaching students to speak English. Therefore, effective methods and strategies are needed to facilitate the teaching of English speaking skills, one of them is the use of role play. The English Study Program at Bunda Mulia University conducted a program at Fons Vitae 1 Senior High School in which the focus is on the use of role play to improve the students' speaking skills. Various topics and situations were used such as asking for directions, asking about products and services, making hotel reservations, job interviews, etc. The findings reveal that through role play, the students were able to speak in English quite well in the various role play situations. The students also generally had a positive view regarding the use of role play to improve their speaking.

Keywords: *role play*, speaking skills, high school students

1. INTRODUCTION

English language proficiency is one of the essential skills that plays a significant role in enhancing the competitiveness of the younger generation at both the national and global levels. Even in Indonesia, students are expected to be proficient in English so that they can compete at a global level (Santoso & Kinasih, 2022). In addition, a person with high English proficiency is most likely to have a higher chance of finding work compared to others with low English proficiency (Junita & Nurdiana, 2019).

Among the various English language skills, speaking is considered particularly important. Nevertheless, English language teachers, particularly in Indonesia, often encounter difficulties in teaching students to speak English due to students' lack of interest in learning the language (Maulana & Lolita, 2023). This is especially concerning given that, in the era of globalization, English serves as the primary language of international communication (Kostyrya et al., 2022).

Teaching English, particularly speaking, is a challenging task (Roengrit et al., 2023) because speaking involves not only the use of vocabulary but also complex cognitive processes (Ahmada & Munawaroh, 2022). Therefore, effective methods and strategies are needed to facilitate the teaching of English speaking skills. For example, using technology has been found to be effective for instructors and students to support teaching-learning activities (Tanihardjo & Jovianto, 2023). Another approach is role play, which creates a dynamic and interactive learning environment by allowing students to assume different roles in a variety of situations and scenarios. Through role-play activities, students' interest in learning English can be enhanced, which in turn contributes to the development of their English language proficiency, particularly their speaking skills (Sarifudin & Setyawan, 2025).

Based on the background described above, the Community Service Team from the English Study Program of Universitas Bunda Mulia organized a community engagement program entitled "Enhancing Oral Communication Skills through English Role Play for Senior High School Students" at Fons Vitae 1 Senior High School. This program is aimed to improve students' English-speaking abilities, particularly in various practical contexts and real-life situations they may encounter in the future, such as purchasing items in a store, booking a hotel room, and other everyday scenarios. In addition to providing theoretical knowledge, the training also emphasized the development of practical communication skills through simulations and competency-based evaluations.

This program is expected to improve students' oral communication skills in English, particularly in a variety of specific real-world situations. In the long term, it is also expected to foster an active and creative learning culture, in line with the objectives of Indonesia's national education development.

Therefore, two research questions are formulated for the current study as follows:

1. How is role play implemented to improve the students' English speaking skills?
2. What are the students' perspectives regarding the use of role play to improve their speaking?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Role Play

Role play is a natural part of everyday human behavior, although people are often unaware of it. For instance, individuals who aspire to become public speakers may imagine themselves in that profession by adopting the role and behaving as though they are speaking in front of an audience. While

role-playing occurs naturally in daily life, its application in English language classrooms serves a more structured educational purpose.

In language education, role play has been recognized as an effective instructional strategy for promoting students' language development through authentic and meaningful interactions. It provides learners with opportunities to experience real-life situations while simultaneously supporting their social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development. As noted by Nihazram & Masnan (2020), role play is particularly beneficial for children learning English as a second language because it encourages active participation and contextualized language use. Similarly, CJ (2018) explains that role play allows learners to practice speaking by assuming different identities, improvising conversations, and simulating authentic communication in a variety of real-world contexts.

The effectiveness of role-play activities depends largely on the teacher's ability to design meaningful and engaging learning experiences. Teachers should provide scenarios that are relevant to students' interests and everyday lives so that learners become more motivated to participate. Presenting different viewpoints or conflicting perspectives within role-play activities can further stimulate critical thinking, encourage discussion, and enable students to demonstrate their understanding of the assigned roles. Throughout the activity, however, teachers need to facilitate the interaction carefully by ensuring that discussions remain focused on the intended learning objectives while still allowing students sufficient freedom to express their ideas creatively. Effective guidance helps maintain a balance between creativity and instructional goals, thereby maximizing the educational benefits of role play.

Language teachers should also seek to diversify their instructional approaches

to maintain students' interest and engagement. Role play offers additional opportunities for learners to express their creativity, collaborate with peers, and communicate from different perspectives. Teachers may develop role-play scenarios based on current events, news reports, magazine articles, or popular topics circulating on social media to increase the authenticity and relevance of classroom activities. From a language acquisition perspective, speaking is generally developed after listening, making it essential for teachers to select appropriate speaking materials and instructional techniques that effectively facilitate students' oral communication development.

3. METHODOLOGY

The source of data is from the implementation of the role play in the various meetings at Fons Vitae 1 Senior High School. A total of six meetings were held starting from 11 September 2025 to 13 November 2025. Approximately 19 students from grades X to XII participated in the six meetings. Each meeting has a specific topic which is explained in more detail in the next section.

To answer the second research question regarding the students' perspectives on the usage of role play, after each meeting the students were asked to fill out a questionnaire. The result of the questionnaire is also presented in the next section.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A total of six meetings were conducted in which the students were asked to be involved in role play activities that could improve their overall speaking skills. The table below summarizes these six meetings.

Table 1. Summary of the Six Meetings

No.	Topic	Date
1	Asking for Direction, Preposition of Place, and Cultural Exploration	11 Sept 2025
2	Shopping	18 Sept 2025
3	Making Hotel Reservations	02 Oct 2025
4	Handling Complaints: Services, Facilities, etc.	09 Oct 2025
5	Job Interview	06 Nov 2025
6	Final Test	13 Nov 2025

The description of the implementation of role play in each meeting is described below.

Meeting 1

The topic of the first meeting mainly deals with asking for directions, but it also includes explanations about prepositions of place as well as some terms related to cultural exploration. There are two instructors for this first meeting, namely Putri Rindu Kinasih and Junita. A total of 15 students participated in this first meeting.

To start off, the students were shown several videos related to giving directions and explaining about tourist destinations. The students were also given explanations about the proper language expressions that are normally used when asking for and giving directions, including how to use prepositions of place such as the expressions *go straight*, *turn left on xxx street*, *the building is next to xxx*, etc. They were also given various explanations about specific terms and vocabularies related to culture and various tourist attractions.

Figure 1. Photo of Meeting 1

After all of the materials have been delivered, the students were finally given the opportunity to practice what they have learned through role play. More specifically, the students had to role play various situations such as being a tourist that is lost and asks for directions, as well as being a tour guide that explains about a tourist attraction. The students were put into groups and were told to practice speaking in English in those situations. The activity itself was also done in the form of a small project where they were asked to make a sort of short film. Figure 1 above shows how one of the instructors is explaining about the activity that the students had to do.

Overall, the students were pleased with the materials and activity in this first session. They were all enthusiastic in doing the activities, and they were also able to practice what they have learned. They were able to role play being tourists or tour guides quite well using the language expressions and vocabularies that were previously explained.

Meeting 2

The second meeting was held on 18 September 2025 with two instructors, namely Agustine Andriana Ayu Mahardika and Rex Stardy. The topic is about shopping. There were 17 students who joined this session.

The meeting started with some warm up activities to make the students more motivated to participate in today's session. After the warm up, the instructors delivered the materials related to

shopping, such as how to ask questions about certain products, negotiating discounts, etc. Various idiomatic expressions and language features were also highlighted to enrich the students' knowledge regarding how to become a good customer or seller.

Figure 2. Photo of Meeting 2



Once all of the materials have been explained by the instructors, the students were asked to form groups and start doing the role play. Some students became the customers while others became the sellers. After all of the groups performed, they were also asked to evaluate their friends' performances. Figure 2 above shows when the students worked in groups to prepare their role play.

As a whole, the students were able to role play as customers and sellers quite well. They were able to ask various questions regarding the products they wanted to buy, and as the sellers they were also able to explain their products in detail and persuade the customers to buy the products.

Meeting 3

The third meeting which was held on 2 October 2025, had the topic related to making hotel reservations. The two instructors were Magdalena Kartikasari Tandy Rerung and Murniati, and a total of 11 students participated.

The session started with an ice breaking activity related to types of hotels and hotel origins. Afterwards, the materials related to today's topic were

explained by the instructors. The students were taught various language expressions and vocabularies related to various activities in hotels such as making reservations, checking in and out, asking questions about hotel facilities, etc. They were also told to watch a video that shows how these expressions are commonly used in hotel contexts and situations. Figure 3 below shows one of the istructors delivering the materials to the students.

Figure 3. Photo of Meeting 3



After the students were given the explanations and examples about the language expressions and vocabularies related to making hotel reservations, the students were asked to role play but in the form of a game that involves finding out who the impostor is with regards to their various roles in hotels such as the receptionist, room service, etc.

In the end, the students enjoyed this session very much as they were given the opportunity to not only practice role playing various positions or occupations in a hotel context, but also to do it in a creative and interesting way. This activity not only focused on the language skills but on their critical thiking skills as well since they had to identify who the impostor was.

Meeting 4

Meeting four was held on 9 October 2025 with a total of 19 students who joined this session. The two instructors were Yohanes Maria Restu Dian Raharjo and Christopher Setiadi. the topic is about handling complaints and talking about services and facilities.

For starters, the students were given an ice breaking game similar to Tic Tac Toe. After the opening activity, the materials were delivered to the students. The students were taught various language expressions and vocabularies related to making complaints and explaining about services and facilities. However, the students did not only listen to the instructors explaining the materials, but they were also asked to be involved in discussions, for example regarding situations that people commonly complain about or based on their own experiences. That way, all of the language expressions and vocabularies can be more relatable since they may have experienced it before, although perhaps not in English. Moreover, the students were also asked to discuss what are the appropriate ways and languages that should be used when complaining.

Figure 4. Photo of Meeting 4



Once the instructors finished delivering the materials and all of the discussions were also done, the students were given the opportunity to practice making and handling complaints as well as explaining various services and facilities. Most of the activities were done in pairs with one students role playing as a customer who is complaining about a product or service, and the other student is role playing as the staff who is trying to handle the complaints. Figure 4 above shows a pair of students currently doing the role play.

In general, the students were very excited about doing the activities related

to making complaints. Seeing as this might be a very common situation that they might face in the future, they were really enthusiastic about playing their roles, especially the students who did the complaining. Overall, they were able to perform quite well and were able to make and handle complaints using the proper expressions and vocabularies while still trying to be polite and civil.

Meeting 5

For the fifth meeting, it was held on 6 November 2025, with two instructors, namely Suwarni Wijaya Halim and Putu Sita Witari. There were 17 students who attended this meeting. The topic is about job interviews.

To start the meeting, a brainstorming session was held to find out the students' ideas about what should be prepared before an interview, and what should be done during and after an interview. After the students shared their thoughts, the instructors reviewed and discussed their answers. Following that, the instructors delivered the materials and explained about how to do a proper interview, both from the perspective of the interviewer and interviewee. The students were also shown a video as an example of how interviews are commonly done in English.

Figure 5. Photo of Meeting 5



After the materials were delivered, the students were asked to form groups of three or four to do the role play. One student role plays as the one being interviewed while the others role play as

the interviewee. As can be seen from Figure 5 above, the students practiced applying the language expressions and vocabularies related to job interviews that they have just learned. In the figure above, the three interviewers are asking various questions related to work experience, expected salary, etc. The interviewee had to answer all of the questions and convince them to hire him.

As a whole, the session went well and the students had a good time role playing as the interviewee and interviewer. They were able to implement the various language expressions and vocabularies that are commonly used during interviews. The students also gave feedback on their friends' performances, so that they can learn from their mistakes and improve their speaking skills further.

Meeting 6

The final meeting was held on 13 November 2025 with a total of 19 students who joined. The two instructors who were responsible for this final meeting was Jonathan Tanihardjo and Ardi Nugroho. This final meeting is used for taking scores on the students' speaking based on all of the topics that they have learned in the previous meetings.

The session began with a brief ice breaking activity to lighten up the mood and make the students less nervous before taking the scores. After this activity, the students were asked choose a friend that would become the speaking partner. The students were then told to spin the wheel and whatever topic they received, the students were given around 2 minutes to prepare a brief role play on the selected topic. The topics were all of the topics taught in the previous meetings, starting with asking for directions up until job interviews.

Figure 6. Photo of Meeting 6



After preparing for two minutes, the pairs had to perform their role play while the two instructors evaluated their performances based on various criteria such as fluency, proper use of language expressions and vocabularies, gesture and body language, etc. Figure 6 above shows one of the pairs doing a role play and the instructors assessing their performance. After each performance, the students were also given feedback from the instructors on what they did well or what they could have improved.

The following table summarizes the results of the speaking or role play test. The final score is the average from both instructors. Although no pretest was conducted to see whether the students' speaking skills actually improved, the result shows that the students generally were able to perform well in their role plays. Even though they were given only two minutes to prepare, they were eventually able to speak fluently and use the proper language expressions and vocabularies for the situations they were randomly assigned.

Table 2. Summary of the Test Results

No.	Student	Score
1	Student 1	83
2	Student 2	65
3	Student 3	93
4	Student 4	85
5	Student 5	60

6	Student 6	73
7	Student 7	73
8	Student 8	73
9	Student 9	85
10	Student 10	80
11	Student 11	78
12	Student 12	70
13	Student 13	75
14	Student 14	78
15	Student 15	85
16	Student 16	78
17	Student 17	75
18	Student 18	80
19	Student 19	70

As can be seen from Table 2 above, the lowest score is 60 and the highest score is 93. The overall average score is 76.79. In other words, it can be said that the students generally performed quite well in their role play. From the previous meetings that were held, the students were able to apply what they have learned and were able to speak in English properly in various situations.

Last but not least, to answer the second research question regarding the students' perspectives of the use of role play to improve their speaking skills, a questionnaire was delivered to the students after each meeting. The summary of the questionnaire results can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Summary of Questionnaire Results

No.	Component	Average Score
1	Educative	3,43
2	Objective	3,39
3	Accountable	3,48
4	Transparent	3,47
Total Average		3,44

From this table, it can be seen that there are various aspects that are asked in the questionnaire such as how educative the sessions were. The overall average is 3,44 from a maximum of 4, meaning that it can be concluded that the students were quite pleased with the program overall. In other

words, they generally had a positive perspective or opinion regarding the use of role play to improve their speaking.

5. CONCLUSION

Speaking skill is an essential skill to have for our daily lives. However, with regards to speaking in English, it is found that high school students generally still struggle with this, and teachers also face challenges in trying to improve their students' speaking abilities. One method that is found to be quite successful in improving speaking is through the use of role play.

Based on the program that was conducted at Fons Vitae 1 Senior High School by the Community Service Team from the English Study Program of Universitas Bunda Mulia, it was found that the use of role play can indeed help improve students' speaking skills overall. Through various activities where the students had to role play various daily life situations such as buying a product at a store, making reservations at a hotel, interviewing potential employees, etc., the students were able to speak in English using the proper language expressions and vocabularies. It was also found that in general, the students had a positive view regarding the use of role play to improve English speaking skills. The results of the current study reveals one main pedagogical implication, namely that role play can be considered as a good alternative to improve speaking skills since it provides the opportunity for learners to practice speaking in various situations using the appropriate language expressions and vocabularies, while still having fun in the process since the learners are given the freedom to be as creative as possible.

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