

Students' Perception of Role-Playing Pedagogy in Developing Speaking Skills in a Bilingual Elementary Classroom

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Abstract: *Speaking skills are fundamental in language learning, However, for elementary level this type of skill still find difficulties in actively using these skills during classroom activity. Therefore, teacher need a method that encourage active engagement of student in classroom activity. This research aimed to examine students' perception of the use of the role-play method in the teaching and learning process to improve their English-speaking skills. This Study employed a qualitative research approach, with classroom observation as the main data collection technique, supported by direct questioning fifth-grade elementary school students about their experiences using role-play in English learning activities. Based on the analysis of the observations and the students' responses, the Improvement of student's participations in classroom activity improve significantly, at range 90% students engaged to the activity. The majority of students greatly enjoyed the role-play method, and their increased activeness in speaking indicated that the method successfully created an engaging and active learning atmosphere. In conclusion, role-play method is an effective teaching method to improve student participation in speaking class for elementary student by creating an engaging and active learning environment.*

Keywords: *role-playing, speaking skills, students' perception, elementary classroom*

Introduction

For the elementary school level of student, learning language is very important things to do, and at this phase is children tend to have high level acquirement of knowledge. Elementary student tends to have easiness in learning language, and their reception toward learning language slightly better than the adults (Butler, 2022), It is easier for them to learn new



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vocabulary and sentence structure because at this age they still have high sensitivity against new sound, or form of language, that make them easier to learn (Lightbown, & Spada, 2021). However, Teaching English for elementary level is not as easy as they said, because teaching children especially elementary level student need more efforts. It is not only about transferring knowledge but also involves developing or making a learning-activities that can make them more engage, enjoy, meaningful, and appropriate for their emotional and cognitive development (Suryanto & Brawijaya. 2024). The reason of this because for children especially in elementary school, they are always having short span of attention to something, they tend to get distracted to something that make them bored, un-attractive, or not enjoyable.

The process of teaching and learning activity in elementary school is not something easy to, variables like emotion, mood, and behavior becomes part of the situation than can make learning activity becomes difficult. For teacher, this type of situation becomes their challenge to select appropriate method or model to use in learning and teaching activity that can support their emotional and cognitive knowledge at the same time. At this point they are required to be more creative and adaptable to situation in order to develop learning and teaching activity that can be enjoyable and meaningful at same time. Choosing an inappropriate method may result in a learning process that is less effective, causing students to feel bored, anxious, or even afraid of using English, this problem will affect their capability in speaking English (Horwitz. 2023).

Several difficulties occurred because the lack of vocabulary, fear of miss-pronunciation, miss grammatical context, confidence and fear to make mistake while speak in English. Those types of problems become significant for elementary school students, because they are still developing their self-esteem or confidence and may feeling embarrassed when talking in English in front of their friends. This type of problem and situation that always lead to passive learning situation for student, they tend to have silent activity rather than involve directly toward learning and teaching activity. This type of things is an absolute challenge for elementary student that still need to learning about the basic foundations of the language especially English. Therefore, for teacher, they need to provide an environment of learning and teaching activity that they can enjoy to express themselves and not harmful for them. Encouragement, positive feedback, and meaningful interaction play a crucial role in helping students gain confidence in speaking English.

Choosing method in learning and teaching activity can a stressful situation for teachers, because they need to be critical. Many aspects can be problem when choosing a method such as, compatibility, understanding, mental behavior of student, and their background. So, when choosing method those aspects should be considered carefully (Cpland, Garton, & Burn. 2022). There is a method called role-play, it is one of the methods used in language learning where students take on specific roles and perform actions or dialogues based on given situations. This method allows students to use English in simulated real-life contexts, making the learning process more meaningful and enjoyable. Role-play is effective in enhancing language proficiency because it encourages students to actively use the target language rather than merely learning it passively (Wulansari & Apsari, 2019).

Role-play method can give student more opportunity to be active in learning activity because they are given opportunity to practice speaking English in more natural interactive way situation. This type of method makes them to take on a role or character to express themselves. This helps students relate the language to real-life situations and understand how English is used in everyday communication. Role-play can improve fluency in producing English words for students whose first language is not English, as it allows repeated practice in a meaningful context (Batubara & Ariani. 2022).

Role playing method is common method that used in learning and teaching activity because it is one of the methods that can enhance the effectiveness of speaking instruction (Arfani & Sulisty, 2019). It is also implied with role play method, helps student to learn language effectively because active communication. Role will give student more freedom to learn language because of its nature that focus on collaboration and active participation. Furthermore, it can also help to reduce their fear of performing and their anxiety. This type of manner will benefit student more in developing their emotional and personal character. Role-play also encourages empathy, as students need to understand and portray the perspectives of different characters.

As conclusion, teaching English in elementary school needs more consideration than teaching higher level of student because the teacher needs to consider about student emotional and character development while also focus on students' needs of learning. Creating activity that can provide better environment in learning speaking is the important things to do especially for elementary students. Role-play is one of the methods that can establish a good environment in learning activity for speaking

English. This type of method creates a fun, active, and meaningful activity for student to enjoy their learning and teaching activity.

Based on the background before, the problems at SDIT Al-Muzzammil in bilingual class is the is the lack of motivation and familiarity in speaking English within class activity. In fact, the bilingual class in this school focus in using English but they still have problem with it. From the pre-liminary observation towards the class activity only 32% students get engaged to class activity. It means only 10 students from 31 student in both of class. The method that used in the class activity is a conventional method like asking student to come into front of class and speak. This type of activity makes the environment remain passive and they tend to keep silent and stand still without doing anything. Another reason is because this bilingual class can be considered as new class because it just established in recent years. So, it is still in a transitional period for fully implementing English as the main language in learning activity. Their motivation also one the problem because sometimes they just don't take much attention to the class activity, especially English class. The use of role playing expectedly can help and solve this problem. Applying role play in learning activity especially Speaking class to see their reaction and response towards the use of it. So, this research focus on what are student perception toward role play method in speaking class? As this research focus in on to see student's reception on the use of role-play method.

Method

This was a Descriptive qualitative study. Qualitative study was chosen for this study because it focused only on student reception toward the use of Role-play method. Descriptive qualitative is research in which the results are presented in a narrative form based on field phenomena and supported by relevant sources (Creswell & Poth, 2021). This method is highly suitable for this study in relation to the objectives that the research aims to achieve.

The data for this study obtained through observation of learning activity. The observation happens in two meeting of Speaking subject. The other data gathered from student answer about their reception and opinion about their learning activity. Those data were gathered at the same time and analyzed using library research method to describe the result and their relevance towards appropriate references (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

This study used two instrument such as observation sheet and interview. Observation sheet used because this type of instrument is appropriate with method, and this kind of instrument could gather the data about phenomenon or activity that happened. Observation sheet indicator can be seen below.

Table 1. Observation sheet indicator

No.	Indicators
1	Understading about the roles
2	Active Participation from student in role play activity
3	Student's Courage in talking English
4	Collaboration with each other
5	Responds towards two-way communication between students
6	Active environment and Enjoyable situation
7	Interaction between students
8	Showing confidence in activity
9	Speak clearly and understandable
10	They don't scare to make mistake

For the interview happened after the class activity, each student was asked several questions related to their felling and understanding towards learning activity that already happen. For the indicators in the interview can be seen below.

Table 2. Indicator in the interview

No.	Indicators
1	Student's understanding about Role-Play
2	Student's experiences in Role-play activity
3	Their Encouragement towards speaking English in Role Play

This study was conducted at SDIT Al-Muzzammil in the bilingual classes, specifically grade 5. The data sources were classes 5C and 5D. The data consisted of the teaching and learning activities and the results of Interview with the students related to their perception. Data were collected using observation and interview techniques. Classroom observations is the primary data. A total of 30 students participated in the process, with 15 students in each class.

This study was conducted over two sessions in period of 5th – 20th November 2025, where the first session in 5 November focused on the learning process using conventional methods, and the second session in

20 November apply the role-play method. The data analysis process involved elaborating on the results of the observations based on real situations in the field, supported by students' responses regarding the teaching and learning process.

Table 3. Classroom observation and interview

1	First Meeting	Learning with the conventional method: an elaboration of the learning process and the students' responses.
2	Second meeting	Learning with role playing method.

The data were analyzed using a descriptive approach, based on the findings obtained from classroom observations and interviews. The results are presented in a narrative format, systematically interpreted and supported by relevant literature and references.

Results

The teaching and learning activities were conducted over two sessions, with a one-week interval between each session, and each session lasting 60 minutes. Based on the findings derived from the observations of these two sessions, the following conclusions can be drawn:

First meeting

In the first session, the learning process began in the usual manner. It started with a prayer and attendance check, followed by a review of the material covered in the previous week as a form of reinforcement. Afterward, the lesson focused on developing speaking skills. During this process, students were called individually to speak freely about any topic they wished to discuss.

Based on the observations, both classes showed similar responses and levels of engagement. The majority of students appeared quiet, fearful, and nervous when it was their turn, resulting in many of them being unable to speak effectively in front of the class. Some even seemed to avoid participation and tried not to come forward. This situation prompted the teacher to take a more assertive approach with these students.

Second meeting

The second session was conducted one week after the first. In this session, the focus remained on speaking skills. The lesson initially

followed the conventional procedure; however, a modification was introduced in the teaching and learning process. The teacher divided the students into five groups, each consisting of three members. The students were instructed to select their designated areas and prepare various items to be placed at their assigned spots. The teacher then provided detailed instructions on the role-play method, in which students were required to assume the roles of sellers and buyers. A rotational system was implemented, whereby representatives from each group took turns acting as buyers and engaging in communication with sellers from the other groups.

At the first, the activity progressed at a slow pace; however, after several rotations, it became more dynamic, and the students' responses and emotional engagement showed considerable improvement. The students participated in transactional communication, including bargaining, and the interactions were conducted effectively for the elementary school level. They appeared to enjoy the activity as well as their assigned roles. A significant motivational factor was the teacher's instruction that the student who sold the most items would be considered the winner, which substantially increased their enthusiasm. A noteworthy positive outcome observed in this second session was the active participation of all students in the teaching and learning process, with no signs of shyness or nervousness.

Based on the observation result in both of class most of student were enjoyed their activity. The observation results were collected using observation sheet with checklist about the activity that happen in the class with list of students who active in class. Those results were explained; in Grade V class C there were 15 students', the result said 14 students actively involved in learning activity from the beginning until the end while the other one still involved but not much. Furthermore, in Class D the involvement was also high, from 16 students, there were 12 students were highly involved and 2 students just involved.

Table 4. The observation results

Indicators	Class C	%	Class D	%
Highly Involved	14	93%	14	88%
Involved	1	7%	2	12%
Not involved	0	0%	0	0%

Those results above explained that from 31 students in both of class 28 is very excited and take more interest in role play method because their

engaged and involved more in the activity. Means that 90% student is active in the class. this result means really high improvement than before, where only 32% rate involvement and then rise to 90% rate of involvement.

Following the completion of the teaching and learning activities, the students were interviewed individually to gather their impressions of the learning process. Out of the 31 students interviewed, 30 students showed a high level of satisfaction with this method, means that 97% students like the method. While their reasons varied, the majority indicated that they enjoyed the activity because it felt more like playing than formal learning. They particularly appreciated the role-play exercise, especially the “Market Interaction” activity, as they found the buying-and-selling concept highly engaging.

Based on the students’ responses, it can be concluded that the implementation of role-play, specifically the “Market Interaction” activity, constitutes an effective and engaging instructional strategy for fifth-grade elementary students, enhancing both their motivation and English-speaking skills.

Discussion

The implementation of the role-play method in the teaching and learning process for elementary school students played a crucial role in enhancing both motivation and instructional effectiveness, particularly in the “Speaking” subject (Kurniawati & Sari, 2021). For elementary level learning activity is not only focus on developing cognitive knowledge but also emotional and character knowledge. Furthermore, those type requirements should be accommodated by learning activities that applied by the teacher in class. By the design purpose role-play is a method that appropriate to use because this type of method provides fun and engaging activities that mostly involve in active communication. With role-play student become more actively involve in class activity, and it also provide a dynamic situation within learning and teaching activity that makes learning more flexible and enjoyable.

Based on the observation data there are improvement in the involvement of student in learning activity on second meeting. The improvement was showed in their willingness to participate in learning activity, they feel enthusiast when the teacher decides the role that they going to play. This type of method make student more active in the learning activity. Meanwhile, for the meeting that use traditional approach for learning activity, they tend to passive in process of learning. From that result also show that student canter activity like role-play become

important part of learning activity in order to improve the environment of class, this type of activity make student more engage in classroom activity and boost their mood (Alasmari & Khan, 2021).

From the finding, this role play method make student more engage with the learning activity, they become more active and they also show more expression in class. This result show that the use of role-play in classroom instruction can effectively enhance student participation and reduce speaking anxiety (Serrano, 2021), especially for student who learning English as foreign language. To have fluent speaking ability, the student also needs to overcome their anxiety problem in speaking. Fear of making mistakes, being laughed at by peers, or receiving negative feedback often prevents students from participating. The data also show that role-play helps to solve this problem, because this method allowed student to become something that they like, in this case they become buyer and seller. Those situations make them more enjoy in the class, they become able to express the words more freely without fear of making mistake. As it shows in the activity their collaboration becomes more-friendly toward each other rather than vicious to each other.

Moreover, it is also showed in the result that role play can enhance student confidence, because the nature of role-play that focus on interactive and playful activity, make them can express their freedom when using foreign language. In role-play student are encourage to express themselves or experiment with language (Yanti & Hasanah, 2021). Student tend to try new expression to communicate without fear of making mistake because it can be considered as the natural part of learning activity.

The increase on student engagement and responsiveness during learning activities were showed in the observation result. They actively involved in every form of communication. They listened and responded to their friends. Given the fact on the first meeting, they mostly acted passive toward the learning activity, and in the second they became more active and showed positive attitude in learning activity. This change can be considered as benefit using role-play because not only about knowledge learning but also improve their emotion or attitude toward learning English activity (Alasmari & Khan, 2022).

Another benefit of Role-play method is improving speaking fluency and frequency. In learning activity that happen student almost speak for entire time. They really engaged with the situation that they were in. making conversation as buyer and seller really made them enthusiast and enjoy the activity. It was shown in result of their observation, they were really active, and argue with their friends. Furthermore, from their response when they were asked about their experiences about this type of activity, most of them was enjoyable, and feel comfortable. Many of them said that they prefer role-play rather than traditional speaking activity. Role-play made them have more freedom in expressing, because they were allowed to act and play while engaged with learning activity.

the implementation of the role-play method in teaching speaking skills to elementary school students has proven to be highly effective in enhancing motivation, confidence, and communicative competence. Role-play creates an engaging and supportive learning environment that encourages active participation and reduces speaking anxiety (Alasmari & Khan, 2022). The observed improvements in students' enthusiasm, verbal output, and self-confidence demonstrate the value of this method in foreign language instruction. Therefore, role-play can be considered a powerful instructional strategy that supports both linguistic and affective aspects of language learning (Syafi'i & Fauzi, 2023), making it particularly suitable for elementary-level English education.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and analyses presented previously, the improvement of student involvement in learning activity were raised significantly to 90%. Their motivation also improved so well from their response that they said they really enjoy the activity and wanted to do again. it can be concluded that role-playing constitutes an effective instructional method for enhancing students' Motivation and involvement in learning English, particularly in the development of speaking skills. The implementation of role-playing, specifically the "Market Interaction" activity, contributes to a more dynamic and engaging teaching and learning environment.

This method is also preferred by students, as it allows them to feel comfortable and freely express themselves, making the activity appear more like play rather than formal instruction. The outcomes of this approach extend beyond providing students with a sense of ease; it also positively impacts their emotional development, particularly by enhancing self-confidence. In the context of speaking skills, students demonstrated greater willingness to engage in extended verbal communication. For overall, integrating role-play method in classroom activity, highly improved student's motivation and participation, also their confidence in classroom activity especially speaking class. Therefore, role play method is strongly recommended to create an engaging and meaningful learning environment.

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