

# Improving Students' Speaking Skill Through Role Play Technique of a Vocational High School in Sungai Penuh

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>Classroom action research, role play, role play technique, speaking skill.</i></p> <p><b>DOI:</b> <a href="https://doi.org/10.22437/langue.v3i1.29783">https://doi.org/10.22437/langue.v3i1.29783</a></p> <p><b>Received:</b> December 03, 2023</p> <p><b>Reviewed:</b> December 17, 2024</p> <p><b>Accepted:</b> August 30, 2024</p>	<p><i>In international relations, English language skills are very important to be able to participate in the wider world of work. Speaking skills are measured by the ability to carry out conversations in the language. This fact makes teachers think that speaking skills must be mastered by their students. This research was designed in classroom action research. This aimed to improve students' speaking skills among vocational school students in Sungai Penuh. A total of twenty-eight (28) participants were involved and carried out through two cycles. Each cycle consists of three meetings. The first and second meetings of each cycle were used to implement role-play techniques. Meanwhile, the last meeting of each cycle is for the speaking test. During this research, the researcher was assisted by a collaborator. Collaborator is a teacher who teaches English at a vocational school in Sungai Banyak. The instruments of this research are questionnaires and speaking tests. The results of this study showed that students' speaking skills improved significantly. This is proven by the average student scores. In cycle I, student achievement was 70.14, cycle II 82.28. Before researchers conducted this research, the average student score was 60.78. These results indicate that role playing techniques can improve students' speaking skills. Improving students' speaking skills is influenced by several factors. Namely: components of effective learning, classroom management and student awareness themselves.</i></p>

## 1. Introduction

Helping students improve their speaking skills is important not only for passing exams but also for real-world communication. They may need to use English for further studies, work, or leisure. The goal is to ensure they are not among those who, after studying English for several years, are still unable to express their ideas effectively. Especially after graduating from vocational school, most students want to apply the knowledge they have acquired. To secure a job, they must meet certain requirements, one of which is having adequate foreign language skills—particularly in spoken English.

Based on information obtained from English teachers at a vocational high school in Sungai Banyak, it was found that many students still have difficulty speaking English. Following this, the researcher conducted preliminary observations in an English class. These observations revealed that most students lack confidence in speaking English due to limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and low comprehension. It was also found that students often become bored during English lessons, as they perceive the subject to be difficult.

Based on the statements above, English teachers must think critically to identify appropriate and effective teaching techniques. These techniques should actively engage students in the teaching and learning process, particularly in developing their speaking skills. Creative and student-centered approaches can help students view English as enjoyable, manageable, and accessible. As a result, they may feel more confident and happier when speaking English with their peers. Moreover, such techniques can help students participate more fully and understand the specific roles and contexts in various communicative situations.

The teaching and learning process should incorporate techniques that provide students with opportunities to speak and actively participate. One such technique is role-playing, which allows students to engage in conversational contexts by taking on specific roles. Through role-playing, students are given the chance to interact with their peers, practice speaking in English, and build their confidence in real-life communication scenarios. Based on this reality, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled "*Improving Students' Speaking Skills Through Role-Playing Techniques for Vocational School Students in Sungai Penuh.*"

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 The Concept of Speaking Skill**

The concept and definition of speaking have been discussed by several experts and researchers. Abrar (2019), for instance, describes speaking as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves the production, reception, and processing of information. Similarly, Pinatih et al. (2021) explain that speaking is one of the essential hard skills that students must master in learning English. In speaking classes, students often face several problems, such as low enthusiasm and motivation, as well as feelings of fear and shyness when speaking. These issues may arise due to various factors, including the teaching material, students' interest, and the techniques used in class. Furthermore, Nunan (2003) states that speaking involves the use of spoken language, often consisting of short or incomplete utterances. He emphasizes that pronunciation plays a crucial role in the interaction between speakers and listeners. Nunan also asserts that speaking is a skill that involves producing verbal expressions in a systematic way to convey meaning.

Based on the definitions above, the researcher concludes that speaking skill is the ability to express feelings, opinions, and ideas through articulated sounds in the form of words, phrases, or sentences. These expressions can be directly observed and interpreted by the listener. Speaking is also one of the primary forms of communication used to interact with others.

### **2.2 The Concept of Teaching Speaking**

To make the teaching and learning of speaking skills easier, the researcher presents several key terms related to teaching speaking. This aims to help teachers effectively teach speaking skills based on expert guidance. According to Brown (2004, p. 140), there are five basic types of speaking:

#### **2.1.1. Imitative**

Imitative speaking refers to the ability to repeat or parrot back a word, phrase, or sentence. This type of speaking focuses mainly on the phonetic level of oral production. However, it may also include elements of prosody, vocabulary, and grammar.

### 2.1.2. Intensive

The second type of speaking is *intensive* speaking, which is commonly used in assessment contexts. It involves producing short stretches of oral language to demonstrate elements such as intonation, stress, rhythm, and juncture. Although the speaker must understand the meaning of what is being said, interaction with a listener or test administrator is minimal.

### 2.1.3. Responsive

*Responsive* speaking includes both interaction and comprehension, but at a limited level involving brief exchanges. This type typically consists of short conversations, standard greetings, small talk, simple requests, and comments. The stimulus is almost always a spoken prompt to maintain authenticity.

### 2.1.4. Interactive

The difference between *responsive* and *interactive* speaking lies in the length and complexity of the interaction, which may involve multiple exchanges and/or participants. Interactive speaking often includes extended conversations that require deeper engagement. This interaction can take the form of transactional language, which serves the purpose of maintaining social relationships.

### 2.1.5. Extensive (monologue)

Extensive oral production tasks include speeches, oral presentations, and storytelling. These tasks require the speaker to produce longer stretches of spoken language. Opportunities for oral interaction from listeners are either very limited, such as non-verbal responses, or completely absent.

## 2.3. The Concept of Role Play Technique

In daily life, many events, whether psychological or social, can be difficult to express in words. Therefore, these events should be dramatized, or students should be involved in participating in social activities to improve their speaking skills. Pinatih (2021) explains that speaking is a hard skill that students must master in learning English. However, in speaking classes, students often face several problems, such as low enthusiasm and motivation, fear, and shyness. These issues may be caused by factors such as the teaching materials, students' interests, and the techniques used in the classroom.

Role play is an effective teaching technique for teaching speaking in English. It stimulates students to communicate with their partners in a meaningful way. According to Brewer in Gusmuliana et al., (2021), role play creates a positive and supportive atmosphere in the classroom. Students involved in role play take on specific roles in the target language and experience realistic speaking situations. In some cases, this technique helps individuals become more confident and develop a sense of mastery.

Brewer, as cited in Gusmuliana et al., (2021) explains that role-playing as an educational tool offers students several advantages. It increases student motivation and fosters the development of creativity. Role-playing is enjoyable for students and actively involves them, which enhances their learning outcomes. Additionally, it improves social understanding, critical thinking, and the ability to express viewpoints. This technique also teaches empathy and helps students appreciate diverse perspectives. Moreover, role-playing

enhances communication and interpersonal skills, allowing students to express their personality, humor, and unique communication style.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This research was designed as classroom action research. According to Arikunto (2012), the term can be understood by breaking it into three components:

- a) *Classroom* refers to a group of students who, at the same time, receive the same lesson from the same teacher.
- b) *Action* refers to activities conducted intentionally to achieve specific goals.
- c) *Research* involves a systematic investigation using particular methods and rules to gather data or information that can improve the quality of something considered important by the researcher.

By combining these definitions, Arikunto (2012) further explains that classroom action research is "a scrutiny of learning activities in the form of an action, which is deliberately carried out and takes place within the classroom." Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that classroom action research is a research design used to solve problems that arise within the classroom setting.

#### **3.2 Participants**

This research used purposive sampling as a sampling technique. According to Sugiyono (2016), purposive sampling is a technique in which samples are selected based on specific considerations. In this study, the sample consisted of twenty-eight eleventh-grade students from the Wood Construction Engineering (Teknik Konstruksi Kayu) program at SMK Negeri 2 Sungai Penuh.

#### **3.3 Instruments**

The speaking test and observation checklist were used as research instruments. These instruments served to measure the extent of improvement in students' speaking skills. In addition, they were used to determine students' achievement throughout the teaching and learning process.

##### **3.3.1. Speaking Test**

The students performed their roles in front of the class, while the researcher recorded their performances for further analysis. The results were then confirmed with the collaborator. The speaking test scores were assessed using the *Oral Proficiency Scoring Categories* developed by Brown (2004, p. 172). The scoring criteria are presented in the table below:

Table 3.1. Oral Proficiency Scoring Categories by Brown (2001) in Brown (2004:172)

<b>CATEGORIES</b>	<b>CRITERIA / INDICATORS</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
<b>PRONUNCIATION (P)</b>	- Frequent phonemic errors and foreign stress and intonation patterns that cause the speaker to be unintelligible	<b>1</b>
	- Frequent phonemic errors and foreign stress and intonation patterns that cause the speaker to be occasionally unintelligible	<b>2</b>
	- Some consistent phonemic errors and foreign stress and intonation patterns, but the speaker is intelligible	<b>3</b>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Occasional non-native pronunciation errors, but the speaker always intelligible</li> <li>- Equivalent, consistent and fully accepted</li> </ul>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>5</b></p>
<b>FLUENCY (F)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Speech is so halting and fragmentary or has such a non-native flow that intelligibility is virtually impossible</li> <li>- Numerous non-native pauses and/or a non-native flow that interferes with intelligibility</li> <li>- Some non-native pauses but with a more nearly native flow so that the pauses do not interfere with intelligibility</li> <li>- Speech is smooth and effortless, closely approximating that of a native speaker</li> <li>- Has complete fluency in the language such that his speech is fully accepted</li> </ul>	<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>5</b></p>
<b>COMPREHENSION (C)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Within the scope of his very limited language experience, cannot understand simple questions and statements</li> <li>- Can get the gist of most conversations of non-technical subjects</li> <li>- Comprehension of quite complete normal rate of speech</li> <li>- Can understand any conversation within the range of his experience</li> <li>- Equivalent to that of an educated native speaker</li> </ul>	<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>5</b></p>
<b>VOCABULARY (V)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Speaking inadequate vocabulary to express anything</li> <li>- Able to speak the language with less vocabulary</li> <li>- Able to speak the language with sufficient vocabulary to participate effectively</li> <li>- Has speaking vocabulary sufficient to express himself simply with some circumlocutions</li> <li>- can understand and participate in any conversation within the range of his experience</li> </ul>	<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>5</b></p>
<b>GRAMMAR (G)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Errors in grammar are frequent, responded cannot understand</li> <li>- Errors in grammar are frequent, but it can be understood by responders</li> <li>- Can usually handle elementary construction quite accurately but does not have thorough or confident control of the grammar</li> <li>- Control of grammar is good, able to speak language with sufficient structural accuracy to participate effectively in most informal conversation on practical</li> <li>- Able to use the language accurately, control grammar is good at elementary level and errors in grammar are quite rare</li> </ul>	<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>5</b></p>

### 3.3.2. Observation Checklist

Observation checklist implemented to observe the the students' activity. The form of observation checklist following below:

Table 3.2. Observation Checklist

Participants' Code	Students' Activity			
	Students show enthusiasm in participating in lessons	Students speak English to ask question	Students speak English to respond question	Students show his/her courage to present in front of the class
A				
↓				
BB				

### 3.4 Procedures of the Research

In applying role play techniques to address students' problems, the research followed the procedures of classroom action research. This ensured that the desired outcomes of the study could be achieved. According to Suharsimi (2012, p. 117), classroom action research consists of four main stages: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. These stages form a continuous cycle of problem-solving activities in the classroom. If the first cycle does not show significant improvement, the process is repeated in a second cycle. Suharsimi (2012) further explains that each of these four stages plays a crucial role in achieving instructional improvement. The steps are illustrated in the figure below.

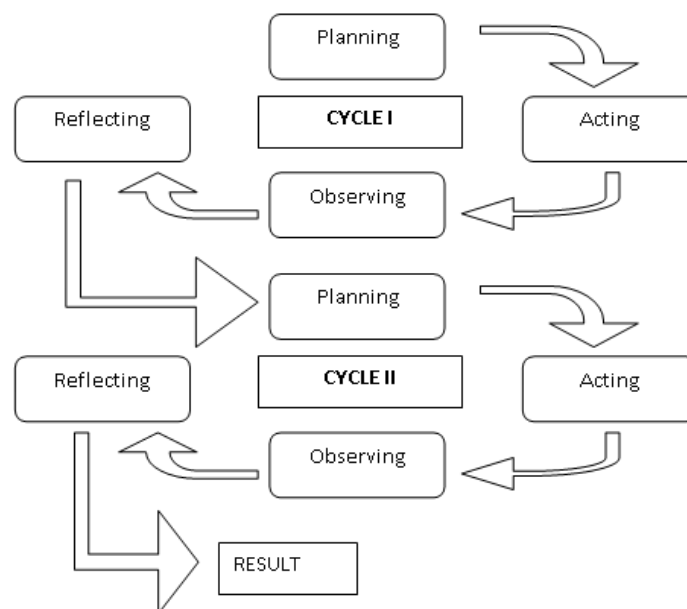


Figure 3.1. The Cycle of Problem-Solving Activities

Based on the figure above, this classroom action research consisted of two cycles. Each cycle was conducted over three meetings. The research was carried out using the following procedures:

a. Planning

At this stage, all learning tools, such as the curriculum and lesson plan, were prepared in advance. The lesson plan was developed based on the curriculum and syllabus of SMK Negeri 2 Sungai Penuh and was discussed with the English teacher for validation.

b. Acting

The lesson plans were implemented in the learning process using role play technique. The teaching of speaking skills followed several structured steps to support student engagement and language practice. The process began with greetings, followed by brainstorming activities to motivate the students. Then, the teacher divided the students into pairs or small groups and assigned them specific roles. Guided by the teacher, each group created a short conversation based on their assigned roles. After preparation, the students performed their role plays in front of the class. Finally, the teacher provided feedback and conducted an evaluation to assess their speaking performance

c. Observing

At this stage, the learning process was observed by the collaborator. An observation checklist and field notes were used during the observation. These tools documented all activities of both the teacher and students throughout the lesson.

d. Reflecting

Students were given a speaking test at the last meeting of each cycle to assess their gradual improvement in speaking skills after using the role-playing technique. The researcher and collaborator reflected on the learning process based on observations and field notes. This reflection aims at identifying areas for improvement to be applied in the next cycle. The results of the reflection were used to revise the plan for the second cycle if the outcomes were not satisfactory. The second cycle followed the same four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Generally, few changes were made in this cycle, although the learning materials presented were different from those used in the first cycle.

### **3.5 Data Analysis Procedures**

#### **3.5.1. Qualitative Data**

To analyze the qualitative data, this study followed the six steps proposed by Gay and Airasian (2006) as a guideline. First, data management involved creating and organizing all data collected during the study, especially from observations. Second, reading or memoing required the researcher to thoroughly read the collected data to gain a deeper understanding. Third, description was conducted to provide an accurate overview of the setting and events, helping to understand the context in which the study took place. Fourth, classifying involved breaking the data into smaller units, determining their importance, and grouping them into interpreted forms. Fifth, interpreting connected common aspects and links among the data to draw general conclusions. Finally, writing the report described the research findings, where all data were examined, analyzed, and used to plan for the next cycle.

#### **3.5.2. Quantitative Data**

Quantitative data in this research were used to determine student grades and assess their achievement in the teaching and learning process. According to Gay and Airasian (2006), quantitative data represent beliefs or assumptions about a relatively stable, uniform, and coherent world that can be measured, understood, and generalized. This perspective, commonly adopted in the natural sciences and education, assumes that the world and its

governing laws are predictable and can be examined scientifically. In this study, quantitative data were collected through a speaking test and analyzed using specific assessment criteria. The analysis employed Brown's oral proficiency assessment categories, which include five key components: grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and pronunciation. Students were recorded and then analyzed to obtain quantitative data. To calculate the average score, the data were analyzed using the formula suggested by Gay and Airasian (2006), as follows:

performances

$$X = (\sum X) / N$$

X = Mean

$\sum x$  = The Sum of Score

N = Number of Class

After scoring, the test results were converted into standard or raw scores to describe student achievement. SMK Negeri 2 Sungai Penuh typically uses a scoring range from 0 to 100. To simplify calculations, the researchers converted the scores to a 100-point scale by multiplying the students' raw scores by 4. According to Ainur in his article *Techniques for Giving Scores and Test Results*, there are two common assessment approaches used by teachers: (1) Norm-Referenced Assessment (PAN) and (2) Criterion-Referenced Assessment (PAP). This study adopted the PAP approach because it compares students' scores against predetermined theoretical scores, which represents the maximum score if all test items are answered correctly. Additionally, PAP was chosen because the test is a standardized instrument with established reliability and validity, ensuring accurate measurement of student learning achievement. Convert mastery level students with the following guidelines.

- 90 – 100 = Excelent
- 80 – 89 = Very well
- 70 – 79 = Good
- 60 – 69 = Enough
- 00 – 59 = Less / Poor

#### 4. Findings

The findings of this research are based on the results of the students' speaking tests and observation checklists. The researcher will provide a detailed discussion of these findings. For this purpose, the following sections present a thorough explanation of the results.

##### 4.1. Speaking Test

The table below showed that the mean score of the students' speaking test in each cycle.

Table 4.1. Mean Score in cycle I

The Students' Mean	SPEAKING SKILL INDICATORS				
	Pronunciation	Fluency	Comprehension	Vocabulary	Grammar
	11,71	10,14	13,57	15,07	18,14

Table 4.2. Mean Score in cycle I

The Students' Mean	SPEAKING SKILL INDICATORS				
	Pronunciation	Fluency	Comprehension	Vocabulary	Grammar
	14,57	13,57	16,57	18,57	19

#### 4.2. Observation Checklist

The researcher was assisted by a collaborator in collecting the data. The collaborator helped ensure the accuracy of the observations. The results from the observation checklist are presented in the table below.

Table 4.3. Results of Cycles

Indicators	Percentage in Cycle I	Percentage in Cycle II
Students show enthusiasm in participating in lessons	98%	100%
Students try to speak English to ask question	60%	80%
Students try to speak English to respond question	55%	75%
Students show his/her courage to present in front of the class	45%	80%

### 5. Discussion

Basically, imitation is the fundamental type of speaking in language learning. It involves imitating words, phrases, or sentences. In role-playing techniques, students are asked to imitate the discourse of a specific event by expressing their ideas based on a script. This allows them to imagine the social situations that occur and actively play a role in them. As a result, students know what to say and engage in meaningful dialogue. Moreover, students can experience events related to the topic, even if they have never encountered them before. The teaching and learning process of speaking skills through role-playing techniques runs according to the plan and expectations, providing students with ample time and opportunity to speak. In addition, the factors that influence changes in students' speaking skills in vocational high school students in Sungai Penuh are as follows:

#### 5.1. Components of effective learning.

In implementing the teaching and learning process, effective learning components are closely related to students' learning achievement. In this study, the researcher identified factors that influenced improvements in students' speaking skills, which align with Djamarah's statement. According to Djamarah (2006:41), the teaching and learning process consists of several components, including goals or targets, teaching materials, teaching and learning activities, methods or techniques, tools and resources, and evaluation.

#### 5.2. Classroom Management

Classroom management was carried out effectively. The researcher treated all students fairly, ensuring that no one felt isolated. This approach helped to build students' confidence and motivation. Each student was assigned a role and assisted by the researcher in creating

conversations, which were then written into scripts. Additionally, the researcher paid attention to classroom conditions such as cleanliness, the learning atmosphere, and student grouping.

Classroom management aims to create a conducive learning environment so that learning objectives can be achieved efficiently and effectively. According to Djamarah (2006), the factors influencing classroom management are divided into two groups: internal and external factors related to students. Internal factors involve emotional, cognitive, and behavioral issues, while external factors include the learning environment, student placement, grouping, class size, and similar aspects.

### 5.3. Awareness of Students Themselves

Apart from the factors described above, students also play a crucial role in achieving the goals of teaching and learning. When students are interested in the learning process, they follow instructions and actively engage with full awareness and willingness. This self-awareness is essential for the effective implementation of the role-playing technique to achieve the expected results. In this study, the researcher was able to motivate the students, helping them become more self-aware and actively involved in the learning process.

## 6. Conclusion

Based on the application of role-playing techniques to improve students' speaking skills in English teaching and learning, it can be concluded that role play provides students with opportunities to communicate with their partners, which in turn enhances their speaking abilities. This improvement is supported by the increase in average student scores from 68.64 in Cycle I to 82.28 in Cycle II. The effectiveness of role play in the classroom is influenced by several factors, including clear learning objectives, appropriate teaching materials, engaging learning activities, suitable methods and techniques, adequate tools and resources, evaluation processes, effective class management, and self-awareness.

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