

STUDENTS' SPEAKING PERFORMANCE THROUGH ROLE PLAY: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY AT BRITANIA SCHOOL OF ENGLISH

Andi Dimas Angraeni^{1*}, Jusmaniar Nonci², Dahniar³

Received: March 19, 2026; Accepted: April 18, 2026; Published: May 1, 2026

^{1,2,3}English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training, Education and Literature, Universitas Islam Makassar, Indonesia

^{1*}Corresponding author, email: andidimasangraeni1999@gmail.com

Abstract: This study aimed to describe students' speaking performance during role play activities at Britania School of English. The research employed a descriptive qualitative design involving ten intermediate-level students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through structured classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. The analysis used data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that students' fluency and vocabulary use were at a moderate level. While most students were able to communicate basic ideas, hesitation and limited lexical range were still evident. Confidence varied among learners, with several students showing nervousness during performance. Spontaneity emerged as the weakest aspect, as many students relied on memorized expressions and required additional time to respond to unexpected questions. Overall, role play provided a supportive communicative environment that encouraged participation and natural language use, although continued practice is needed to enhance spontaneous speaking ability.

Keywords: Confidence, Speaking performance, Role play, Fluency, Vocabulary

1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a fundamental skill in English language learning because it enables learners to express ideas and interact in real-time communication. In EFL contexts, however, many students face difficulties in speaking due to limited vocabulary, hesitation, anxiety, and insufficient communicative practice. Traditional classroom approaches that emphasize grammar drills and memorization often fail to develop communicative competence.

According to H. D. Brown & Abeywickrama (2004) speaking performance should be assessed based on learners' actual language use in meaningful contexts. Speaking involves both linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. Linguistic aspects include fluency and vocabulary, while non-linguistic aspects involve psychological and behavioral elements such as confidence and spontaneity. These components interact dynamically during real communication.

Role play is widely recognized as a communicative technique that simulates real-life situations and encourages students to use language meaningfully. Through role play, learners engage in interactive dialogue, negotiate meaning, and respond spontaneously. Previous studies have demonstrated that role play can improve speaking ability and increase students' participation. However, most research focuses on measuring improvement quantitatively rather than describing how students actually perform during role play activities, particularly in non-formal English course settings.

Preliminary observation at Britania School of English indicated variation in students' fluency, vocabulary use, confidence, and spontaneity during role play sessions. Some

students spoke smoothly, while others relied on memorized dialogues or hesitated when responding to unexpected questions. Therefore, this study aims to describe students' speaking performance through role play activities, focusing on fluency, vocabulary, confidence, and spontaneity.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Speaking Performance

Speaking performance refers to learners' ability to produce spoken language effectively in real communicative situations. According to J. D. Brown & Hudson (1998) speaking assessment should measure actual language use rather than memorized responses. They classify speaking performance into linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. Linguistic aspects include fluency and vocabulary. Fluency refers to the ability to produce speech smoothly with minimal hesitation, while vocabulary refers to lexical range and appropriateness in expressing ideas. Non-linguistic aspects include confidence and spontaneity, which influence learners' willingness and ability to communicate naturally. Spontaneity, in particular, requires real-time language processing. According to Levelt (1989) spontaneous speech involves rapid conceptualization, formulation, and articulation under time pressure. This makes spontaneity one of the most challenging components for second language learners.

2.2. Role Play in Teaching Speaking

Role play is a communicative activity in which students simulate real-life situations. According to Ladousse (1987) role play allows learners to experiment with language creatively in a safe environment. It reduces anxiety because students perform as characters rather than as themselves. Similarly, Jeremy Harmer argues that role play promotes authentic communication by encouraging learners to use language meaningfully rather than mechanically. Previous studies have shown positive effects of role play on speaking performance. For example, Khasbani & Seli (2021) found improvements in fluency and confidence, while Elfajri & Tiarina (2022) reported increased student participation. However, most of these studies focus on measuring improvement quantitatively. Limited research provides a qualitative description of how students actually demonstrate speaking performance during role play activities, especially in non-formal English course contexts. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by describing students' speaking performance during role play at Britania School of English.

3. METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method. The research aimed to describe students' speaking performance as it naturally occurred during role play activities without manipulating the classroom setting. The research was conducted at Britania School of English in Makassar, Indonesia. The participants consisted of ten intermediate-level students selected through purposive sampling. The intermediate level was chosen because students at this level have sufficient basic knowledge of English but still experience challenges in developing spontaneous speaking ability. The data were collected through classroom observation, field notes, and semi-structured interviews. The researcher observed students' speaking performance during role play

sessions using a structured observation checklist. The instrument consisted of sixteen indicators representing four aspects of speaking performance: fluency, vocabulary, confidence, and spontaneity. The data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles & Huberman (2021) which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, the researchers selected and categorized relevant data based on the four aspects of speaking performance. In the data display stage, the findings were organized into descriptive tables and narrative explanations. Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified by comparing observation data with interview results to ensure consistency and validity. Through these procedures, the study provided a comprehensive description of students' speaking performance during role play activities.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Fluency

The observation results show that students' fluency was generally at a moderate level. Six out of ten students were able to deliver their speech smoothly with minimal pauses. However, four students frequently hesitated when expressing ideas. Pauses commonly occurred when students searched for appropriate vocabulary or organized their thoughts. Some students maintained the flow of conversation effectively, while others required additional time before continuing their responses. Although none of the students completely stopped speaking, interruptions and fillers were still noticeable during the performances.

4.2. Vocabulary

In terms of vocabulary, seven students used words that were appropriate to the role play context. They were able to express basic ideas clearly. However, the range of vocabulary was limited, and several students repeated similar expressions throughout their performance. Three students occasionally struggled to find suitable words, which led to brief pauses or the use of simple and general vocabulary. Despite these limitations, most students were able to convey their intended meaning.

4.3 Confidence

Students' confidence levels varied. More than half of the participants demonstrated adequate confidence by speaking clearly and maintaining interaction with their partners. They continued speaking even after making minor grammatical errors. However, some students appeared nervous, avoided eye contact, or spoke with low voice projection. A few students required encouragement before initiating their responses. These behaviors indicated that anxiety still influenced speaking performance.

4.4 Spontaneity

Spontaneity was identified as the weakest aspect of students' speaking performance. Although most students did not read from written scripts, many appeared to rely on memorized sentences. Only four students responded immediately to unexpected questions from their partners. The remaining students needed additional time before answering, indicating limited real-time language processing ability. When the conversation moved beyond prepared content, hesitation became more frequent.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that students' speaking performance during role play was generally moderate across the four observed aspects. In terms of fluency, hesitation was primarily caused by difficulty in retrieving vocabulary and organizing ideas. This supports the framework proposed by H. D. Brown (1997) who state that fluency reflects the smoothness and continuity of speech production. The presence of pauses suggests that students' automatic language processing is still developing.

Regarding vocabulary, although students were able to communicate basic ideas, limited lexical variety restricted their expressive capacity. According to Brown and Abeywickrama, vocabulary control is essential for effective speaking performance. The repetition of simple expressions observed in this study indicates that students' productive vocabulary remains limited. Confidence appeared to influence overall speaking performance. Students who demonstrated higher confidence tended to maintain conversation flow more effectively. This finding is consistent with the view that psychological factors significantly affect oral performance. Role play helped reduce anxiety to some extent, as students performed within assigned roles rather than speaking purely as themselves.

Spontaneity emerged as the most challenging component. The reliance on memorized sentences indicates that students were not fully comfortable with spontaneous communication. Brown and Abeywickrama emphasize that effective speaking performance requires the ability to respond naturally in real time. The delay in responding to unexpected questions suggests that students still depend on prepared language rather than spontaneous formulation. Overall, the four aspects were interconnected. Limited vocabulary contributed to hesitation, which affected fluency. Reduced fluency influenced confidence, and low confidence further limited spontaneity. Although role play created a communicative environment that encouraged participation, additional practice focusing on unscripted interaction is necessary to enhance students' real-time speaking ability.

6. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to describe students' speaking performance through role play activities at Britania School of English. Based on the findings, students' overall speaking performance can be categorized as moderate across the four observed aspects: fluency, vocabulary, confidence, and spontaneity. In terms of fluency, most students were able to maintain speech continuity, although hesitation and pauses were still evident when organizing ideas or searching for appropriate vocabulary. Vocabulary use was generally appropriate to the context; however, lexical variety remained limited. Confidence levels varied among students, with some demonstrating clear voice projection and active participation, while others showed signs of nervousness. Spontaneity was identified as the weakest aspect, as many students relied on memorized expressions and required additional time to respond to unexpected questions. The findings indicate that role play provides a supportive communicative environment that encourages students to participate and practice speaking in meaningful contexts. However, to enhance real-time speaking ability,

greater emphasis on unscripted interaction and spontaneous response activities is recommended. Future research may explore different proficiency levels or compare structured and unstructured role play formats to examine their impact on speaking performance more comprehensively.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The researchers would like to express sincere gratitude to the supervisor for valuable guidance, constructive feedback, and continuous support throughout the completion of this journal. Appreciation is also extended to the students and the management of Britania School of English for their cooperation and participation in this research.

REFERENCES

- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (4th ed.). Longman.
- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (2nd ed.). Longman.
- Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching languages to young learners*. Cambridge University Press.
- Creswell, J. W., & Guetterman, T. C. (2019). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (6th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Doff, A. (1998). *Teach English: A training course for teachers*. Cambridge University Press.
- Elfajri, F., & Tiarina, Y. (2022). An Analysis of Students' Speaking Skill through Role-play Technique in New Normal Era at SMPN 13 Padang. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.24036/jelt.v11i4.119627>
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of English language teaching* (4th ed.). Pearson Longman.
- Khasbani, I., & Seli, F. Y. (2021). The Impact of Role-Play on Students' Speaking Performance. *Linguists: Journal of Linguistics and Language Teaching*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.29300/ling.v7i1.4146>
- Ladousse, G. P. (1987). *Role Play: Resource Books for Teachers*. Oxford University Press.
- Levelt, W. J. M. (1989). *Speaking: From Intention to Articulation*. MIT Press. <https://archive.org/details/speakingfrominte0000leve>
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (2021). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nunan, D. (2011). *Teaching English to young learners*. Anaheim University Press.
- Oktavia, D., Mukminin, A., Fridiyanto, Hadiyanto, Marzulina, L., Harto, K., Erlina, D., & Holandiyah, M. (2022). Challenges and strategies used by English teachers in teaching English language skills to young learners. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 12(2), 382–387. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1202.22>
- Rahmawati, D. (2020). Teachers' strategies in teaching English vocabulary for

- elementary students. *Indonesian Journal of English Education*, 7(1), 25–38.
- Richards, J. C., & Farrell, T. S. C. (2005). *Professional development for language teachers*. Cambridge University Press.
- Schmitt, N. (2008). Review article: Instructed second language vocabulary learning. *Language Teaching Research*, 12(3), 329–363.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168808089921>
- Ur, P. (2012). *A course in English language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Wright, A., Betteridge, D., & Buckby, M. (2005). *Games for language learning* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.