

## ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITIES USING ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS TO ENHANCE ENGLISH SPEAKING

Reggy rennata Abigail<sup>1</sup>  
Muhammad rafi'i<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara

[Reggyzen10@gmail.com](mailto:Reggyzen10@gmail.com)  
[muhammadrafi@umsu.ac.id](mailto:muhammadrafi@umsu.ac.id)

**Abstract:** For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, speaking fluency is still a significant obstacle, especially in situations where exposure to real-world communication is scarce. This study looks into how well role-playing exercises integrated into Islamic educational settings might improve students' English-speaking abilities. It is anticipated that learners will feel less anxious, be more engaged, and perform better orally when communication activities incorporate well-known religious and moral themes. In this study, secondary EFL students took part in structured role-playing sessions over the course of one academic term using a quasi-experimental methodology. Speaking assessments, observation checklists, and learner reflections were used to gather data. The results show that students who participated in role-playing exercises with an Islamic setting significantly improved their fluency, vocabulary utilization, and communicative confidence. According to the study's findings, culturally sensitive role-playing is a successful teaching method for enhancing speaking proficiency while being true to students' identities and values.

**Keywords:** According to the study's findings, culturally sensitive role-playing is a successful teaching method for enhancing speaking proficiency while being true to students' identities and values.

### Introduction

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) situations, the ability to speak English is often considered to be an important measure of total language skill. Speaking is frequently seen as the most difficult of the four language skills to acquire since it calls for students to develop language on their own while also controlling syntax, vocabulary, pronunciation, and sociocultural appropriateness. Many EFL students still struggle to communicate successfully in spoken English even after years of formal training, especially in educational settings where English is not utilized outside of the classroom.

There are a number of reasons why students struggle to improve their speaking abilities. Major barriers include poor self-confidence, fear of making grammar or pronunciation mistakes, teacher-centered learning approaches, and limited opportunity for actual oral practice.

### Literature Review

#### Speaking English in EFL Situations

Speaking is a useful language ability that necessitates the integration of several elements, such as social awareness, cognitive processing, and linguistic understanding. Learners must be able to retrieve relevant vocabulary, use grammatical structures correctly, articulate sounds fluently, and arrange concepts logically in a condensed amount of time in order to communicate

effectively. Speaking requires instantaneous language production, unlike receptive abilities like reading and listening, which makes it especially difficult for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners who have little exposure to real spoken English.

The development of speaking proficiency is a significant challenge for EFL learners, according to numerous prior research. Speaking anxiety, which frequently results from a concern of receiving a poor grade from peers or professors, is one of the most frequently mentioned difficulties. Students may be concerned about making grammatical errors, mispronouncing words, or having trouble articulating their thoughts. Additionally, learners may pause, talk slowly, or refrain from communicating at all due to a lack of vocabulary and inadequate automaticity in language use. Low involvement and little vocal engagement in the classroom are frequently the outcome of these affective and language limitations. Additionally, in many EFL classrooms, traditional teaching methods place more emphasis on written tasks and grammar explanations than on communicative practice. As a result, even if they may have theoretical mastery of the language, pupils may not be able to use it successfully in spoken conversation. Therefore, interactive and learner-centered approaches that offer lots of practice opportunities, promote meaningful contact, and foster a positive learning environment are necessary for effective speaking education. Improving speaking abilities in EFL environments requires teaching techniques that lower fear, boost confidence, and involve students in real-world conversation.

### **Using Role-Playing to Improve Communication**

A popular teaching method in the context of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is role-playing. In order to participate in simulated communicative scenarios that mimic real-life encounters, students must adopt particular roles. Students are encouraged to utilize language for meaningful reasons through role-playing, such as negotiating meaning, expressing viewpoints, making requests, or working together to solve problems. With this method, the emphasis of training is shifted from accuracy to communicative efficacy.

An increasing amount of research has shown that role-playing exercises improve students' speaking abilities. According to studies, role-playing can improve fluency by promoting continuous speech and impromptu language use. As students practice speaking in context, it also helps with pronunciation and intonation. Additionally, role-playing helps students develop pragmatic competence, which enables them to utilize language correctly in communicative contexts and in accordance with social norms

Role-playing has been shown to promote student autonomy, motivation, and engagement in addition to its linguistic advantages. Engaging in role-playing exercises makes students more accountable for their own education and more daring when utilizing the target language. Role-playing fosters social learning and peer interaction due to its collaborative nature. Crucially, role-playing helps lessen speaking anxiety because students speak through characters they have been assigned rather than as themselves, which establishes psychological distance and lessens the dread of being judged.

### **Language Learning in Cultural and Religious Contexts**

The significance of matching educational strategies with students' cultural origins, identities, and beliefs is emphasized by culturally responsive teaching. Since language reflects the social conventions, attitudes, and practices of its users, learning a language is intrinsically linked to culture. Students are more likely to feel at ease, motivated, and involved in the learning process when their cultural identities are recognized and respected in the classroom.

It has been demonstrated that integrating cultural and religious aspects into English language training in Islamic educational contexts increases student acceptability and engagement. Themes pertaining to moral behavior, ethical decision-making, social responsibility, everyday religious practices, and courteous communication are examples of Islamic-contextualized materials.

Instead of having to struggle to relate to unfamiliar or culturally distant subject, these tools give learners familiar and relevant situations so they may concentrate more confidently on language use.

According to research, including Islamic beliefs into EFL instruction promotes language development by fostering an emotionally and culturally friendly learning environment rather than impeding it. Islamic-contextualized resources can reinforce moral instruction and character development while providing rich linguistic input. The educational objectives of Islamic institutions, which seek to foster both intellectual proficiency and moral behavior, are in line with this dual focus.

### **Research Deficit**

The usefulness of role-playing as a communication technique and the function of culturally sensitive or religiously oriented pedagogy in language learning have both been studied separately in the past, but little study has looked at the combination of these two methods. Empirical research explicitly examining how role-playing exercises created in Islamic educational settings affect EFL learners' English-speaking abilities is conspicuously lacking.

The majority of current research ignores interactive speaking techniques and instead concentrates on the overall advantages of role-playing in EFL classes or the incorporation of Islamic values in language instruction. Studies that empirically examine the combined impact of role-playing and Islamic educational environments on speaking development are therefore still needed. In order to close this gap, this study looks at how role-playing exercises with an Islamic setting affect students' speaking abilities, self-assurance, and involvement in EFL classes.

### **Method**

#### **Approach to Research Design**

This study used a one-group pre-test and post-test methodology in a quasi-experimental research design. This design was chosen to investigate how well Islamic-contextualized role-playing exercises improve students' English-speaking abilities in a typical classroom environment. It was not possible to randomly allocate individuals to experimental and control groups due to institutional and practical limitations. As a result, the experimental group consisted of a single intact set of students.

The post-test was given after the instructional therapy was finished, whereas the pre-test was given before the intervention to ascertain the students' initial speaking proficiency. The researcher was able to determine how the role-play intervention affected the students' speaking performance by comparing the pre-test and post-test findings. When measuring instructional efficacy is the main objective of classroom-based educational research, this design is thought to be suitable.

### **Participants**

Thirty EFL students from an Islamic secondary school participated in this study. To guarantee consistency in instructional exposure, the kids were chosen based on their enrollment in the same English class and grade level. Prior to the study, all of the participants had comparable educational backgrounds and had mostly received standard teacher-centered English instruction.

Based on their prior academic records and instructor ratings, the pupils showed similar levels of English proficiency. Prior to the intervention, none of the participants had been exposed to role-play-based instruction or communicative speaking exercises. This uniformity made it possible to evaluate the effects of role-playing exercises with an Islamic background on speaking development more precisely.

### **Tools**

In this study, a number of research tools were used to gather both quantitative and qualitative data.

### **Test of Speaking**

The main tool utilized to evaluate students' English-speaking abilities both before and after the intervention was a speaking test. Fluency, vocabulary utilization, pronunciation, and coherence are the four main aspects of speaking ability that were assessed. Speaking exercises pertaining to both ordinary and educational settings were expected of the students. To guarantee uniformity and dependability in the evaluation process, a consistent scoring rubric was employed.

### **Checklist for Observations**

During the role-play sessions, students' involvement, participation, and interaction were measured using an observation checklist. Indicators including desire to speak, involvement frequency, peer collaboration, and responsiveness during role enactment were the main focus of the checklist. Throughout the intervention period, classroom observations were made to track behavioral and affective changes in students' speaking abilities.

### **Reflection sheets for students**

At the conclusion of the intervention, student response papers were given out to collect qualitative information about how students felt about the role-playing exercises. Through these reflections, students were able to share their thoughts about the value, fun, and cultural significance of the role-play sessions with an Islamic framework. Additionally, the reflections shed light on the students' views toward speaking English and their degree of confidence.

### **Method**

Over the course of eight weeks, the educational intervention was implemented. As part of their normal English sessions, students took part in one role-playing session every week during this time. Islamic educational topics, such as ethical discussions, school-life scenarios, societal obligations, cooperation, and polite communication, were incorporated into each role-playing session.

There were four primary stages in the systematic order that each session followed. First, during the preparation stage, students were introduced to the topic, key vocabulary, and expressions relevant to the role-play scenario. The teacher provided guidance and modeled sample dialogues when necessary. Second, in the role enactment stage, students worked in pairs or small groups to perform the role-play activities. Third, during the feedback stage, the teacher and peers provided constructive feedback on language use, pronunciation, and communicative effectiveness. Finally, in the reflection stage, students discussed their experiences and challenges, either orally or in written form, to promote self-awareness and continuous improvement.

### **Analysis of Data**

Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used to examine the data gathered for this study. To evaluate students' performance before and after the intervention, quantitative data from the speaking examinations were examined using descriptive statistics, such as mean scores and percentage improvements. The goal of this analysis was to find general patterns and advancements in speaking proficiency across all evaluated components.

Thematic analysis was used to examine qualitative data from student reflection sheets and observation checklists. In order to find recurrent themes and patterns pertaining to student participation, confidence, anxiety reduction, and views of the role-play exercises, the researcher methodically examined the data. A more thorough knowledge of how well Islamic-contextualized role-playing exercises improve English-speaking abilities was made possible by the merging of quantitative and qualitative data.

### **Result and Discussion**

Outcomes The results show a discernible improvement in students' speaking abilities following the introduction of role-play games with an Islamic background. Increased fluency, more acceptable vocabulary use, and cleaner pronunciation were all evident in the post-test results. Higher levels of participation and decreased speaking anxiety were seen in observational data. Furthermore, student reflections revealed that speaking assignments were more meaningful and comfortable when they included well-known Islamic concepts. Conversation The findings confirm that role-playing is a successful interactive teaching method in EFL classrooms. By lowering psychological and cultural obstacles, integrating Islamic educational environments seems to increase students' self-assurance and readiness to talk. These results support culturally sensitive pedagogy and are consistent with communicative language instruction concepts, which place an emphasis on meaningful contact. Instead of restricting language inventiveness, the incorporation of Islamic ideals offered a comfortable framework that made speech easier. This implies that learning a language can be value-oriented and communicative without sacrificing academic rigor

### **Conclusion**

According to the study's findings, role-playing exercises included into Islamic educational settings significantly improve EFL students' English-speaking abilities. The results suggest that students who engaged in role-playing exercises with an Islamic context significantly improved their fluency, vocabulary utilization, pronunciation, and general communicative coherence. These enhancements imply that role-playing can be a successful teaching method for fostering oral communication skills in EFL classes provided it is carefully planned and culturally appropriate.

The findings also show that including Islamic educational concepts into speaking exercises boosts students' self-assurance and desire to engage in oral communication. Learners felt less nervous and more at ease speaking in English when speaking assignments were placed in well-known religious and moral contexts.

Active participation and a more optimistic outlook on speaking practice were promoted by this encouraging learning atmosphere. Learners were able to acquire language skills without feeling cut off from their identities and beliefs because to the integration of culturally responsive pedagogy with communicative language teaching concepts.

The results emphasize the value of culturally appropriate education in raising learning outcomes from a pedagogical standpoint. Teachers in Islamic schools are urged to use role-playing exercises that represent the social, cultural, and religious reality of their students.

These methods not only aid in language acquisition but also strengthen moral instruction and character development, two of Islamic education's main objectives. By using this method, educators can design meaningful, interesting, and value-based English-speaking lessons that meet students' linguistic and affective needs.

This study has limitations despite its contributions. The study's single-group quasi-experimental approach and somewhat small sample size may have limited how far the results can be applied. As a result, it is advised that future studies include control or comparison groups, larger and more varied participant groups, and longer intervention durations. The efficacy of Islamic-contextualized role-playing exercises in various skill levels, educational phases, or cultural contexts may also be investigated in future research. Further insights into this approach's relative efficacy might come from comparison studies that compare it to other instructional or communication strategies.

Despite its merits, this study has drawbacks. The results' applicability may have been constrained by the study's single-group quasi-experimental design and very small sample size. Future research should therefore incorporate comparison or control groups, larger and more diverse participant groups, and longer intervention periods. Future studies may further examine the effectiveness of Islamic-contextualized role-playing exercises in different skill levels, educational stages, or cultural contexts. Comparative studies comparing this method to other educational or communication tactics may provide more information about its relative effectiveness.

## References

- Brown, H. D. (2019). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. Pearson.
- Ellis, R. (2020). *Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford University Press.
- Harmer, J. (2018). *How to Teach English*. Longman.
- Kramsch, C. (2019). *Language and Culture*. Oxford University Press.
- Larsen-Freeman, D., & Anderson, M. (2021). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Littlewood, W. (2020). *Communicative Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C. (2019). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Tomlinson, B. (2021). *Developing Materials for Language Teaching*. Bloomsbury.
- Widodo, H. P. (2020). Cultural practices in EFL pedagogy. *Asian EFL Journal*, 24(3), 45–62.
- Yusoff, M. A., & Rahman, N. A. (2022). Integrating Islamic values in EFL classrooms. *Journal of Islamic Education Studies*, 7(2), 101–115.
- Al-Issa, A., & Dahan, L. S. (2021). English language teaching and Islamic values: A culturally responsive pedagogical approach. *Journal of Language and Education*, 7(4), 56–68.
- Byram, M. (2021). *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Multilingual Matters.
- Goh, C. C. M., & Burns, A. (2019). *Teaching Speaking: A Holistic Approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sahragard, R., Razmjoo, S. A., & Baharloo, A. (2020). Learners' perceptions of role-play in EFL speaking classrooms. *System*, 89, 102201.
- Zainuddin, Z., & Keumala, C. M. (2022). Integrating religious values into English language learning: Students' engagement and speaking development. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 12(1), 89–101