

## The Effects of Role-Play on Students' Speaking Confidence in Asking and Giving Opinions

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### A B S T R A C T

Speaking confidence is a vital aspect in English learning because it affects students' willingness to participate actively in classroom interaction. However, many junior high school students still experience anxiety and hesitation when speaking English, particularly in asking and giving opinions. Role-play is considered beneficial because it provides meaningful and supportive opportunities for students to practice communication and express ideas with less fear of making mistakes. This current study aimed at revealing how the role-playing approach affected students' confidence in speaking. Employing a pre-experimental study, the writers involved the eighth-grade students from SMP Islam Simbang Wetan Pekalongan, Central Java, Indonesia. Data were collected through a role-play-based speaking test using an analytic speaking rubric. The findings revealed a statistically significant increase in students' speaking confidence in asking and offering opinions, with the mean score rising from 57.26 to 70.83. The study concluded that role-play effectively improved students' speaking confidence and encouraged active participation in English speaking activities.

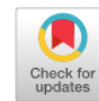
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### INTRODUCTION

Speaking is an important element for studying English as a foreign language (EFL) since it enables students to verbally communicate their ideas, opinions, and thoughts in everyday situations. In junior high school, students are expected to participate actively in speaking activities, including asking and giving opinions. However, speaking activities often involve spontaneous responses, which might impact students' confidence and motivation to communicate. Students in many EFL classes still struggle with anxiety, hesitancy, and a fear of making mistakes when speaking in English. This results in poor classroom involvement and few opportunities for speaking practice. Sudarmo (2021) explained that speaking is vital for communication because English is used to convey meaning and interact with people in regular situations. As stated by Santoso and Prasetyo (2024) role-playing exercises increased students' self-assurance when speaking and created a positive classroom atmosphere for speaking practice. Based on the findings from the research conducted by Veronika and Fahada (2024), role-play boosted students' confidence and classroom engagement in addition to their speaking skills. Furthermore, Panjaitan (2020) reported that role-play encouraged active participation and meaningful interaction in EFL classrooms by giving students opportunities to practice language in communicative situations.

Speaking confidence plays an important role in supporting students' oral performance and classroom interaction. Students with higher confidence tend to participate more actively and communicate their ideas more clearly during speaking activities. They are also more willing to respond to questions, express opinions, and interact with classmates in classroom discussions. On the other hand, students with limited speaking confidence tend to avoid

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speaking chances because they are afraid of making grammatical or pronunciation mistakes. As a result, they may become passive learners and receive limited opportunities to practice speaking. Rahmadani and Etfita (2022) stated that speaking anxiety may negatively affect students' willingness to interact orally even when they have adequate language proficiency. Andriani et al. (2024) also explained how psychological elements like worry, fear, and lack of confidence affect how well students talk in class. Oktavira and Santoso (2025) discovered a strong positive link between students' confidence in communicating in English and their perceived speaking performance, suggesting that students who have a high opinion of their speaking abilities typically speak with more confidence. Kinanti et al. (2025) also explained that during oral communication exercises, students who are more self-assured typically participate more actively in replying and expressing their opinions. Therefore, confidence becomes an important factor influencing students' participation and speaking development in EFL learning.

This problem was also found at SMP Islam Simbang Wetan Pekalongan, where many students showed low confidence and reluctance to speak English during classroom interaction, particularly in activities requiring spontaneous responses. One speaking activity closely related to speaking confidence was asking and giving opinions. This activity requires students to express personal ideas, respond to others' statements, and maintain interaction using appropriate expressions. Therefore, students need both speaking ability and confidence to participate effectively in such activities. Asking and giving opinions also encourages students to communicate meaningfully because they are required to share thoughts and respond directly during interaction. Sulistyorini (2021) explained that asking and giving opinions is an interactive speaking activity that encourages students to express ideas orally during classroom communication. Supporting this view, Istiadi et al. (2025) found that students who practiced giving and asking opinions through interactive speaking activities demonstrated better speaking performance and greater participation during classroom interaction.

To support students in speaking activities, teachers need teaching methods that create meaningful and supportive communication situations. One method commonly used in speaking instruction is role-play. Role-play is a teaching activity where students take assigned roles and act them out in simulated contexts that resemble real-life communication situations (Bajis et al., 2021). In EFL speaking instruction, role-play provides meaningful chances for students to practice communication and engage actively in classroom interaction. According to Harmer (2007), speaking activities should facilitate opportunities for learners to use language in meaningful and interactive situations. Similarly, Richard (2008) stated that communicative speaking activities help learners develop language use through authentic interaction. In addition, Livingstone (1983) stated that role-play, as opposed to memorization of isolated statements, enables students to practice language in authentic communicative circumstances. Role-play is considered beneficial because it creates supportive situations that may reduce anxiety and encourage students to speak more confidently. By using role-play, students are given opportunities to express ideas and communicate in less stressful classroom situations. Nation and Newton (2008) explained that speaking practice through interaction supports learners in developing communication skills and confidence. In addition, Ur (1996) argued that supportive classroom situations may foster students' active involvement in speaking activities. Brown (2000) further stated that interactive speaking activities offer learners opportunities to negotiate meaning and enhance their oral communication skills. Byrne (1976) explained that speaking activities such as role-play encourage students to participate actively and practice communication in meaningful situations. Therefore, role-play is considered appropriate for improving students' speaking confidence as it enables students to develop communication in a more enjoyable and interactive environment.

Previous research has shown that using role-play in language education produces positive results. According to Angelica and Wulandari (2025), role-play improved classroom engagement and decreased students' speaking fear. Similarly, role-play greatly increased students' self-confidence in speaking exercises, according to Rampeng et al. (2025).

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Furthermore, Rizqiyah (2025) demonstrated how role-play improved student participation and speaking fluency while also fostering a more dynamic classroom environment. Fiani and Nahak (2025) revealed that role-play significantly enhanced students' speaking skills and classroom engagement, while Putra et al. (2024) also revealed gains in students' speaking self-confidence following role-play activities.

However, several differences can be identified among previous studies. Putra et al. (2024) concentrated on vocational high school students, whereas Angelica and Wulandari (2025) employed a qualitative approach involving university students. In addition, Aini (2023) along with Khasbani and Seli (2021) focused on speaking performance rather than speaking confidence. Furthermore, Rizqiyah (2025) used a qualitative case study approach to investigate students' experiences.

Additionally, previous studies mainly focused on speaking anxiety, classroom interaction, speaking performance, or general speaking competence. While several studies have demonstrated the positive effects of role play on students' confidence, limited research has specifically examined speaking confidence in asking and giving opinions. Moreover, evidence from junior high school students remains limited, particularly in schools with limited learning resources. Therefore, this research aimed to fill this gap by investigating the effects of the role play technique on eighth-grade students' speaking confidence in asking and giving opinions at SMP Islam Simbang Wetan Pekalongan.

## METHOD

The research examined the impact of the role-playing strategy on students' speaking confidence in asking and expressing ideas using a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental one-group pre-test as well as post-test design. The research was conducted at SMP Islam Simbang Wetan, Pekalongan, Central Java, Indonesia, from March to April 2026. Since the study's goal was to compare students' speaking confidence before and after the role-playing method was applied, a quantitative approach was deemed appropriate.

## Respondents

Twenty-three female eighth-grade students in Class 8B at SMP Islam Simbang Wetan Pekalongan, Central Java, Indonesia, who were between the ages of 13 and 14, participated in this study. The participants were selected because they shared similar characteristics relevant to the study, including being at the same grade level, studying English as a foreign language, and having similar classroom learning experiences. This research involved every student in the target group as participants. This technique was selected since the population was limited to one class with a small number of students, which made it possible to include every student in the study. By utilizing the entire population, the researchers aimed to obtain data that accurately represented the characteristics of the class and minimize sampling bias. In addition, the participants were selected because they showed challenges related to speaking confidence and participation during English classroom activities.

## Instruments

A speaking task based on role-playing was used in this study, and it was administered across both the pre and post-test sessions. An analytical speaking rubric comprising pronunciation and clarity, fluency, interaction, use of opinion statements, and speaking confidence was used to assess the speaking skills of students. Content validity was ensured by matching the speaking tasks and rubric criteria with the learning objectives, while reliability was maintained through inter-rater scoring consistency.

## Procedures

Data collection was conducted in three stages, including the pre-test, treatment, and post-test. The pre-test was given to evaluate students' natural speaking confidence prior to

the implementation of the role-play method. The treatment involved role-play activities focusing on asking and giving opinions through simulated classroom situations. Following the treatment, a post-test was given using comparable speaking tasks to identify possible differences in students' speaking confidence.

During the treatment sessions, students performed several role-play activities related to asking and giving opinions in daily-life situations, such as discussing school activities, expressing agreement and disagreement, and responding to classmates' opinions. The teacher guided students during the preparation stage and encouraged them to use appropriate opinion expressions during interaction. These activities were implemented collaboratively to build a supportive classroom environment and encourage students' involvement in speaking activities.

### Data Analysis

Statistical techniques were used to analyse the pre-test and post-test data. While inferential statistics compared the outcomes of the two examinations, descriptive statistics explained the speaking confidence scores of the students. Before doing a hypothesis test, a normality test was used to look at the data's distribution. Students' speaking confidence before and after the role-playing method was implemented were compared using a paired sample t-test. The purpose of the analysis was to ascertain whether the improvement in students' speaking confidence following the intervention was statistically significant. To facilitate the discussion of the research findings, the analysis results were presented in tables and qualitatively characterized. The results were subsequently analyzed to determine how the role-playing technique affected students' speaking confidence while posing questions and offering opinions.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Pre-test and post-test speaking evaluations that were carried out prior to and following the role-play intervention produced the results shown in this section. The data were analyzed to examine the influence of the role-play method on students' speaking confidence, particularly in asking and expressing opinions. The analysis focused on changes in classroom participation, speaking performance, and self-confidence following the treatment. Ultimately, the statistical relevance of the role-play method in boosting students' speaking confidence was ascertained using both inferential and descriptive techniques. In addition, the discussion section interpreted the findings by relating them to previous studies and relevant theories concerning speaking confidence and role-play in EFL classrooms.

### Research Question 1: How Does the Implementation of the Role-Play Method Affect Students' Speaking Confidence in Asking and Giving Opinions?

Pre-and post-test scores were used to analyze how the role-playing technique affected students' speaking confidence when posing questions and expressing opinions. The findings showed that students' speaking confidence varied prior to and following the time when role-playing exercises have been put into effect. To examine the effects of the treatment, students' scores obtained before and after participating in role-play activities were compared and analyzed.

Table 1. Outcomes of Students' Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Students' Number	Pre-Test	Post-Test
S1	80	95
S2	59	68
S3	45	60
S4	40	58
S5	56	70
S6	71	85
S7	40	65

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S8	85	90
S9	49	60
S10	89	95
S11	40	50
S12	46	61
S13	50	58
S14	64	79
S15	74	82
S16	59	75
S17	60	80
S18	50	61
S19	70	85
S20	65	82
S21	44	50
S22	40	65
S23	41	55
Mean	57.26	70.83

\*S = students.

Students' pre- and post-test outcomes before and after role-playing exercises are applied are displayed in Table 1. According to the results, most students' post-test scores were higher than their pre-test scores. After engaging in role-playing exercises, students' speaking confidence increased, as seen by the average score rising from 57.26 on the pre-test to 70.83 on the post-test. Students' speaking abilities improved after participating in role-playing exercises.

### Research Question 2: What Are the Differences in Students' Speaking Confidence Before and After Participating in Role-Play Activities?

Descriptive and inferential statistics approaches were applied to determine the variations in students' speaking confidence prior to and after role-playing exercises were implemented.

Table 2. Descriptive Stats Pre-test and Post-Test Results

Test	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum Score	Maximum Score
Pre-test	23	57.6	15.268	40	89
Post-test	23	70.83	13.992	50	95

The mean result rose from 57.26 in the initial test to 70.83 in the post-test, as Table 2 shows. The post-test scores varied from 50 until 95, whilst the pre-test scores ranged from 40 until 89. The increase on both the mean score and the minimum score suggests that students demonstrated better speaking confidence after participating in role-play activities. In addition, the descriptive statistics indicate that students became more active and confident during speaking activities following the implementation of the treatment.

Table 3. Results of Normality Test

Variable	Shapiro-Wilk Sig.	Result
Pre-test	.054	Normal
Post-test	.171	Normal

Table 3 indicates these values exceed 0.05. Therefore, the dataset was normally distributed, and fulfilled the assumptions required for parametric tests. Since the assumption of normality was met, the paired sample t-test was able to be conducted.

Table 4. Paired Sample t-test Outcomes

Mean Difference	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Cohen's d
-13.565	-11.990	22	<.001	2.50

Table 4 shows that the p-value was below 0.05 ( $p < .001$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not supported while the alternative hypothesis was supported. This result showed that the pre- and post-test results differed statistically significantly. As shown in Table 4, the Cohen's d value of 2.50 demonstrates that the role-playing approach had a significant impact on students' speaking confidence. As a result, the increase in students' speaking confidence demonstrated both statistical and practical importance.

These findings suggest that role-play provided substantial benefits in helping students participate more confidently in asking and giving opinions activities. The increase in students' post-test scores suggests that role-play activities may offer meaningful opportunities for students to develop their speaking skills in interactive classroom situations. During the activities, students were encouraged to express opinions, respond to classmates, and communicate more actively using English expressions. These repeated speaking practices may help students reduce hesitation and become more familiar with oral communication in the classroom.

### Research Question 3: What Are Students' Responses and Engagement in Role-Play Activities Related to Asking and Giving Opinions?

During the implementation of role-play activities, students showed more active participation and interaction during classroom speaking activities. Many students appeared more willing to express opinions, respond to classmates' statements, and participate in asking and giving opinion activities compared to the pre-test session. Students also demonstrated greater confidence in using English expressions during classroom interaction.

The findings of this study are in line with the findings of the research conducted by Sahlan (2022) and Putra et al. (2024) in the way that the role-play enhanced students' speaking performance and confidence and allowed students to actively engage. Additionally, the current study findings also strengthen the findings of the research conducted by Rizqiyah (2025) along with Angelica and Wulandari (2025) which discovered that role-play produced a fun and dynamic learning environment that raised student participation and engagement. All things considered, these studies indicate that role-play is a useful method for improving students' speaking performance, confidence, and engagement in the classroom through purposeful learning opportunities.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to examine the effect of the role-playing technique on the speaking confidence of Grade VIII students at SMP Islam Simbang Wetan Pekalongan in asking questions and expressing opinions. The findings showed that role-play significantly improved students' speaking confidence, as indicated by the increase in the average score from the pre-test to the post-test. Statistical analysis also confirmed a significant difference between the two tests, demonstrating the effectiveness of role-playing in enhancing students' confidence. In addition, students became more willing to express their opinions, participated more actively, and engaged more confidently in classroom interactions after participating in role-play activities. These findings suggest that role-play creates a supportive and interactive learning environment that encourages students to communicate more confidently in English. Pedagogically, English teachers are encouraged to integrate role-play into speaking instruction, particularly for activities involving asking and giving opinions, to promote confidence, participation, and oral interaction. Future research should involve larger samples, control groups, and diverse speaking contexts to provide stronger evidence of the effectiveness of role-play.

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