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The Improvement of English Speaking Skills for Elementary School Students Through the Role Play Method: A Study at a Course Center in Sidrap Regency

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ABSTRACT: English is an essential skill in the era of globalization, supporting students' academic development and communication abilities from an early age. However, teaching English to elementary school children still faces several challenges, including the lack of engaging and effective teaching methods. This study aims to improve students' English-speaking skills through the implementation of the role-play method at a language course in Sidrap Regency. This research employs a descriptive approach, involving elementary school students as subjects. The training sessions were conducted in multiple phases, designed to be interactive and enjoyable, with role-playing scenarios based on real-life contexts. Evaluation results indicate that the role-play method significantly enhances students' motivation to learn English, their vocabulary comprehension, and their ability to construct and pronounce simple sentences. The study concludes that the role-play method can be an effective teaching strategy to improve English-speaking skills among elementary school students. The findings of this research are expected to serve as a reference for educators and educational institutions in developing creative and applicable teaching methods.

Keywords: Speaking Skills, English, Elementary School Students, Role-Play Method, Sidrap.

INTRODUCTION

English has become a primary necessity in the era of globalization, serving as a bridge for international communication and a tool for accessing global information. Mastery of English from an early age can have a positive impact on children, both in education, social spheres, and their future careers. In the context of primary education, speaking skills are one of the crucial aspects that support students' direct communication abilities. However, English language learning at the elementary school level often faces various obstacles, such as limited learning time allocation, less interactive teaching methods, and insufficient supporting facilities. This situation

is further exacerbated by limited access to quality English education for some children, especially in areas like Sidrap Regency. Elementary school children in this region often face challenges in obtaining quality English education(Fadilah, 2021; Hamad, 2017).

One method proven to be effective in improving English speaking skills is the role play method. This method not only provides a fun learning experience but also motivates students to actively participate in learning activities. Through role play, students are encouraged to communicate in real-life contexts, helping them develop vocabulary, pronunciation, and confidence in speaking English(Dogan, 2018; Hasan & Samad, 2017). This study aims to explore and analyze the effectiveness of the role play method in enhancing the English speaking skills of elementary school children in a course center in Sidrap Regency. Additionally, this research is expected to contribute to the development of more interactive and applicable English teaching methods, particularly in areas with limited educational access.

Speaking skills are a crucial aspect of English language learning, functioning as an active communication tool. According to Brown (2007), speaking is a productive skill that involves articulation, intonation, and the delivery of meaningful messages. For elementary school children, speaking skills provide a strong foundation for developing interpersonal communication abilities, both in academic and social contexts. In Indonesia, English language learning at the elementary school level remains a challenge because many schools do not make English a compulsory subject. Cameron (2001) stated that foreign language learning for children should be designed with methods that are engaging and appropriate for their characteristics to ensure the effectiveness of the learning process.

Role play is one interactive learning technique that allows students to practice English language skills in real-life contexts. This technique involves students in conversation simulations or relevant scenarios, helping them develop speaking skills naturally. According to Harmer (2007), role play provides an opportunity for students to use the target language directly and increases their confidence. This method also creates a fun learning atmosphere and motivates students to be more active in the learning process(Arslan & Bağlama, 2019). Chen (2005) added that role play can enhance student engagement and deepen their understanding of language use in various life contexts.

Elementary school children are at an ideal cognitive development phase for learning a new language. Piaget (1977), in his theory of cognitive development, stated that children at this age can understand abstract concepts with the help of concrete and fun media and methods. In the context of English language learning, engaging learning methods like role play can be an effective tool to address learning challenges, including students' lack of motivation and confidence(Alizadeh, 2019; Situmorang, 2021). Additionally, research by Littlewood (1981) showed that the use of interactive methods such as role play significantly improves language skills in students with varying abilities.

Sidrap Regency is one of the regions in South Sulawesi that faces specific challenges in providing English education for elementary school students. Most of the course centers in this area serve

as supplements for children who do not receive formal English education in schools. Therefore, the application of creative teaching methods, such as role play, in course centers is an essential solution to effectively improve students' speaking skills (Putri, 2022; Yulianti, 2021).

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the effectiveness of the role play method in improving English speaking skills among elementary school children at a course center in Sidrap Regency (Jannah & Sari, 2019). The research location was purposively selected based on the relevance of the course center as an institution that supports English language learning for children. The research subjects were elementary school students who actively attended the course, aged 7–12 years, had motivation to learn English, and were willing to follow all the stages of training designed by the researcher. The research process began with preparation, which included an initial observation at the research site to understand the students' learning needs and the teaching methods previously used. This observation also involved direct communication with the instructors to gather information about the challenges faced by students in learning English. Based on the observation results, the researcher developed training materials suited to the students' skill levels and provided learning media such as flashcards, visual aids, and role play props to support the interactive learning process.

In the implementation phase, the role play method was applied through several learning sessions. Each session started with an introduction to vocabulary and English expressions based on a specific theme, such as daily activities or the school environment. After the introduction of the material, students were asked to practice role play in small groups with scenarios prepared by the instructor. These scenarios were designed to be relevant to real-life situations, such as conversations at a market or in a classroom, so that students would find it easier to understand and use English contextually. During the implementation, the instructor provided guidance and feedback to improve the students' pronunciation, intonation, and accuracy in using the language (Mardliyah, 2021).

The evaluation phase was conducted to measure the impact of the role play method on students' speaking skills. The evaluation included oral tests to assess the students' ability to produce simple sentences and engage in conversations based on the theme. In addition, performance observations were made to assess aspects of fluency, activity, and students' confidence in speaking English. Data from the evaluation were supplemented with interviews with students and instructors to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences during the training(Rahayu, 2021; Sugandi & Astuti, 2019). The collected data were analyzed qualitatively through steps of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was performed to filter out relevant information, while data presentation was organized in the form of descriptive narratives to provide a detailed overview of the research results. Conclusion drawing was carried out by linking the evaluation data and interviews to determine the effectiveness of the role play method in improving students' English speaking skills. The results of this study are expected to

contribute to the development of creative and applicable English teaching methods for elementary school students.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals that the application of the role play method in English language learning at a course center in Sidrap Regency has had a significant positive impact on the speaking skills of elementary school students (Kartika, 2022; Mulyani, 2020; Sari, 2018). Based on the results of evaluations conducted through oral tests, observations, and interviews with students and instructors, the main findings are as follows:

1. Improvement in Speaking Skills: The majority of students showed improvements in their English speaking skills, particularly in terms of pronunciation, intonation, and the formation of simple sentences. Students became more confident in speaking English, both in individual conversations and in groups. The use of role play, which requires students to speak in real-life situations, made them more familiar with the language used in everyday life.
2. Improvement in Vocabulary Understanding: The role play method was effective in enhancing students' vocabulary understanding. Role play scenarios related to real-life situations, such as at the market, in school, or when talking to friends, helped students understand how vocabulary is used in a more natural context(Kusnierek, 2019). This approach allowed students not only to memorize vocabulary but also to use it accurately in conversation.
3. Increased Motivation and Engagement: The use of the interactive and fun role play method encouraged students to be more active in following lessons. Many students who were previously passive in English learning became more engaged and eager to speak. Their motivation to learn English increased, as reflected in their enthusiasm during each role play session.
4. Increased Confidence: One of the positive impacts observed was the increased confidence of students. Role play provided students with the opportunity to speak without fear of making mistakes. Speaking in unstructured scenarios with direct supervision from the instructor helped boost students' courage to speak more in English.

The improvement in English speaking skills observed in the students at the course center is in line with the research findings showing that the role play method is effective in developing English speaking skills in elementary school children (Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum, 2020). These results are consistent with existing theories, which suggest that interactive and fun teaching methods significantly help improve English speaking skills (Boudreault, 2018; Çiftçi & Kocaman, 2018). According to Harmer (2007), role play can boost students' confidence as they feel freer to express their ideas and emotions in the language they are learning. In this research context, students felt more comfortable speaking English in situations relevant to their daily lives, such as shopping at a market or talking to friends at school. This aligns with Cameron's (2001) view that children learn foreign languages effectively when provided with enjoyable experiences that align with their world.

The improvement in vocabulary understanding found in this study also supports Chen's (2005) view, which states that role play deepens students' understanding of how language is used in various life contexts. Through role play scenarios, students not only learn new vocabulary but also understand how that vocabulary is used in everyday conversations.

However, despite the effectiveness of the role play method in improving speaking skills, there are some challenges that need to be considered(Oktaviani & Mandasari, 2020; Puspita & Amelia, 2021). One major challenge is the limited time available for conducting role play sessions. Due to the constraints of the course's learning schedule, some students did not have enough opportunities to fully practice their speaking skills. Therefore, structured teaching with adequate time for speaking practice is essential.

Additionally, although students' motivation increased, there were still a few students who felt shy or lacked confidence when speaking in front of their peers. Instructors need to provide more support and encouragement for these students to ensure they do not feel burdened during role play sessions. A more personal approach and positive reinforcement from the instructor could help students overcome their shyness and become more confident in speaking.

Overall, the results of this study show that the application of the role play method at the course center in Sidrap Regency is highly effective in improving English speaking skills for elementary school students. With creative teaching and a supportive environment, students can more easily develop their English language skills, which in turn helps them better face the challenges of an increasingly globalized world.The role play method has proven to be effective in improving English speaking skills in elementary school children in Sidrap Regency. The application of this method not only improves speaking skills but also helps enhance vocabulary understanding, motivation, and confidence. This study contributes to the development of more interactive and applicable English teaching methods, and is expected to serve as a reference for teachers and educational institutions in creating more enjoyable and effective learning experiences for students.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the role play method is effective in improving English speaking skills among elementary school children in Sidrap Regency(Istiqomah, 2020; Nanda, 2019). The implementation of this method has a positive impact on enhancing students' ability to speak, understand vocabulary, and increase their motivation and confidence in using English. Through role play scenarios that are relevant to everyday life, students are able to practice speaking in more natural and enjoyable contexts, which encourages them to be more active and enthusiastic in the learning process.

The role play method has proven not only to improve speaking skills but also to create an interactive and supportive learning environment, which is crucial for English language learning at the elementary school level. Therefore, this study recommends that English teaching at

elementary schools, particularly in regions with limited access such as Sidrap Regency, integrate the role play method as part of a more creative and applicable teaching approach (Maleki, 2018).

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