



The Effect of Role-Playing Strategy on Arabic Speaking Skills among Students at Pondok Pesantren Modern Arafah, Sungai Penuh, Kerinci

أثر استراتيجية لعب الأدوار في تنمية مهارة الكلام لدى الطلاب

في معهد عصر عرفة، سوجي فينوه، كورنيجي

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effect of a role-playing strategy on the Arabic speaking skills of ninth-grade students at Pondok Pesantren Modern Arafah Sungai Penuh, Kerinci, Jambi. The study was motivated by observed difficulties in oral Arabic communication, including limited vocabulary, insufficient speaking practice, hesitation, fear of making mistakes, and learning activities that tended to be teacher-centered. A quantitative pre-experimental approach was employed using a one-group pretest-posttest design. The participants were all 10 ninth-grade students, selected through total sampling. Data were collected through an oral Arabic speaking test covering pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, the Shapiro-Wilk normality test, a paired-samples t-test, and normalized gain analysis. The mean pretest score was 64.90, while the mean posttest score increased to 80.10. The paired-samples t-test produced a significance value of 0.000, which was below 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores. The mean N-Gain was 0.4407, categorized as moderate. These findings indicate that role playing was associated with a significant improvement in students' Arabic speaking performance. The strategy provided structured opportunities for direct oral practice, interaction, vocabulary use, pronunciation practice, and greater participation. The study contributes empirical evidence concerning role playing in Arabic speaking instruction in an Islamic boarding-school context, while its small sample and one-group design require cautious interpretation.

Keywords: Arabic language teaching; oral communication; role-playing; speaking proficiency; Islamic boarding school.

مستخلص البحث

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى بحث أثر استراتيجية لعب الأدوار في تنمية مهارة الكلام باللغة العربية لدى طلاب الصف التاسع في معهد عصر عرفة سوجي فينوه، كورنيجي، جامبي. انطلقت الدراسة من ملاحظات ميدانية أظهرت وجود صعوبات في التواصل الشفهي باللغة العربية، منها محدودية المفردات، وقلة ممارسة الكلام، والتردد، والخوف من الوقوع في الخطأ، وميل بعض أنشطة التعلم إلى الأساليب التي تركز على المعلم. اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج الكمي ذي التصميم التجريبي القبلي والبعدي لمجموعة واحدة. وشملت العينة جميع طلاب الصف التاسع وعددهم عشرة طلاب. باستخدام أسلوب العينة الكلية. وجمعت البيانات من خلال اختبار شفهي في مهارة الكلام اشتمل على النطق، والمفردات، والدقة النحوية والطلاقة، والفهم. وحُللت البيانات باستخدام الإحصاء الوصفي، واختبار شايبرو ويلك للتوزيع الطبيعي، واختبارات للعينات المترابطة، وحساب الكسب المعياري. بلغ متوسط درجات الاختبار القبلي 64.90، ثم ارتفع متوسط درجات الاختبار البعدي إلى 80.10. وأظهر اختبار ت للعينات المترابطة قيمة دلالة قدرها 0.000، وهي أقل من 0.05، مما يدل على وجود فرق ذي دلالة إحصائية بين الاختبارين. كما بلغ متوسط الكسب المعياري 0.4407، وهو ضمن الفئة المتوسطة. وتشير هذه النتائج إلى أن استراتيجية لعب الأدوار ارتبطت بتحسين ذي دلالة إحصائية في أداء

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الطلاب في مهارة الكلام. وقد أتاحت الاستراتيجية فرصًا منظمّة للممارسة الشفهية المباشرة والتفاعل واستخدام المفردات والتدريب على النطق وزيادة المشاركة. وتقدم الدراسة دليلًا تجريبيًا حول استخدام لعب الأدوار في تعليم مهارة الكلام باللغة العربية في سياق المعهد الإسلامي، مع ضرورة تفسير النتائج بحذر بسبب صغر حجم العينة وغياب المجموعة الضابطة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تعليم اللغة العربية؛ التواصل الشفهي؛ لعب الأدوار؛ مهارة الكلام؛ المدرسة الداخلية الإسلامية.

INTRODUCTION

Arabic occupies an important position in Islamic education because it functions not only as a means of communication but also as the language of the Qur'an, Prophetic traditions, and a substantial body of Islamic scholarship. Arabic instruction in Islamic educational institutions therefore requires learning activities that develop learners' ability to use the language in meaningful communication. Contemporary language pedagogy treats oral communication as an essential dimension of language proficiency because learners need opportunities to transform linguistic knowledge into actual performance. In Arabic as a foreign or additional language, this requirement becomes especially important when learners have limited exposure to authentic communicative situations.

Arabic language learning generally involves four interrelated skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Speaking has a distinctive position because it requires learners to produce language in real time. Speaking performance involves more than recalling vocabulary or grammatical rules. Learners must select appropriate words, construct understandable utterances, pronounce sounds clearly, maintain fluency, and respond to interlocutors. Hermawan (2018) and Effendy (2017) emphasize the importance of systematic practice and communicative activities in Arabic instruction. Tarigan (2015) similarly describes speaking as a productive language skill that develops through continuous practice. Hamid (2010) notes that assessment of Arabic proficiency should attend to observable language performance rather than linguistic knowledge alone.

Despite this emphasis, oral Arabic practice can remain limited in classroom settings. Learners may understand vocabulary and grammatical explanations but hesitate when asked to speak spontaneously. Horwitz et al. (1986) identified foreign language classroom anxiety as a factor that can interfere with learners' willingness to communicate. MacIntyre et al. (1998) further conceptualized willingness to communicate as a situational phenomenon related to learners' confidence and the communication context. These perspectives are relevant to Arabic speaking instruction because a learner-centered environment needs to reduce excessive dependence on explanation and provide

repeated opportunities for meaningful oral production.

One instructional strategy that can provide such opportunities is role playing. Huda (2013) describes role playing as a learning model in which students enact particular roles in realistic or simulated situations. The activity can engage students in communication, interaction, cooperation, and problem solving. Silberman (2013) places role playing within active learning because students learn through direct participation rather than through listening alone. Joyce et al. (2016) likewise explain that teaching models can organize learning experiences so that learners actively process content through structured classroom activities.

In Arabic language education, role playing has a direct connection with speaking because the activity requires students to use language while performing a communicative role. A student may introduce himself, ask for information, respond to a teacher, interact with a peer, or describe an everyday situation. Such tasks create a reason to speak and can integrate pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehension in one activity. Recent studies have reported positive outcomes associated with role-playing activities in speaking instruction. Abdulhafid et al. (2024) reported improvement in Arabic speaking skills through role-play activities. Albana et al. (2023) examined the effectiveness of role play for Arabic speaking skills, while Basri et al. (2024) discussed role playing in relation to maharah kalam. Luthfi et al. (2024) also used role playing to support Arabic speaking practice among Islamic junior high school students.

The present study was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Modern Arafah Sungai Penuh, Kerinci, Jambi. Initial observation indicated that ninth-grade students still faced difficulties in speaking Arabic. The observed problems included limited vocabulary, insufficient opportunities to speak, hesitation, fear of making mistakes, and limited active participation during learning activities. The learning environment provided an important context for investigating whether a more interactive strategy could support oral performance. The study therefore focuses specifically on the effect of role playing on Arabic speaking skills among ninth-grade students.

Previous research has provided useful evidence, but important contextual and methodological gaps remain. Some studies have focused on English speaking, while others have used qualitative or classroom action research designs. Research on Arabic speaking in Islamic boarding-school settings using a quantitative pretest-posttest

analysis remains comparatively limited. The present study addresses this gap by examining changes in Arabic speaking scores before and after role-playing instruction in one intact ninth-grade group. The study asks three questions: What were the students' Arabic speaking scores before the intervention? What were their scores after the intervention? Was there a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores?

The objective of the study is to describe students' initial Arabic speaking performance, identify their performance after role-playing instruction, and determine whether the change between the two measurements is statistically significant. The study is also intended to contribute practical evidence for Arabic teachers who need interactive activities that place learners in direct speaking situations. The findings are interpreted within the limits of the one-group pretest-posttest design and the small sample size.

The research problem can therefore be understood from three connected perspectives. First, students need greater opportunities to transform linguistic knowledge into oral performance. Second, speaking activities need to provide sufficient structure so that learners can participate without being overwhelmed by completely spontaneous communication. Third, Arabic instruction in boarding-school settings benefits from repeated communicative practice that is connected with the learners' immediate social environment. Role playing addresses these three needs by providing a defined situation, a communicative purpose, and direct interaction. The present study tests this instructional logic through pretest and posttest measurement of students' speaking performance.

The present study also extends previous research by focusing on a small intact class in an Islamic boarding-school context and by combining descriptive and inferential analysis. Earlier studies have demonstrated the relevance of role playing to speaking instruction, but differences in educational level, research design, sample size, and assessment criteria make direct comparison difficult. The current study does not attempt to generalize its findings beyond the accessible group. Instead, it documents the change observed in the same ten students and examines whether the difference between the two measurements is statistically significant. This focus provides a concrete classroom-based account of how role playing was associated with changes in Arabic speaking performance.

The literature also suggests that the effectiveness of speaking activities depends on the quality of the learning environment. Umasugi and Mustar (2024) describe

language environment as a factor that can encourage habitual language use, while Wahab et al. (2025) highlight the importance of regular speaking activities, vocabulary support, supervision, and opportunities for daily communication. These observations strengthen the rationale for designing role-playing activities around familiar contexts. Situations such as introducing oneself, discussing school activities, asking for information, and communicating with peers are close to students' everyday experiences. Familiar contexts can make it easier for learners to connect previously learned vocabulary with an immediate communicative need.

Another relevant consideration is the relationship between classroom climate and participation. Foreign language learners may avoid speaking when they anticipate embarrassment or fear that their errors will be judged negatively. Horwitz et al. (1986) identify language classroom anxiety as a factor associated with language learning experiences, while MacIntyre et al. (1998) explain willingness to communicate as sensitive to situational and confidence-related conditions. Role playing does not automatically remove anxiety, and the present study did not measure anxiety as an independent variable. Nevertheless, a clearly defined role can provide learners with a communicative identity that is separate from their ordinary classroom identity. The learner is not simply asked to speak without preparation. The learner is asked to perform a specific situation with a specific communicative purpose.

The communicative nature of role playing is also consistent with the social character of speaking. A speaking event normally involves at least two participants who alternate between speaking and listening. The learner must not only produce an understandable utterance but also interpret the partner's response and decide how to continue the interaction. This feature distinguishes speaking from isolated vocabulary memorization. The present study therefore treats pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehension as related dimensions of oral performance. A learner who knows many words but cannot organize them into an understandable response still faces a speaking problem. Similarly, accurate grammar without sufficient fluency may not result in effective communication.

The structure of a role-playing task can be adapted to different levels of learner readiness. At the beginning, the teacher can provide a small set of vocabulary items and useful expressions. Students can then practice a short model dialogue before performing the situation themselves. As familiarity increases, the teacher can remove some of the

linguistic support and ask students to respond more spontaneously. This gradual reduction of support is important because speaking development is not achieved simply by increasing the difficulty of tasks. Learners also need sufficient preparation to participate successfully. The role-playing strategy therefore becomes more useful when it is implemented as a sequence of preparation, performance, feedback, and repetition rather than as a single performance activity.

Role playing can also be understood as a bridge between controlled practice and freer communication. In a traditional exercise, students may repeat vocabulary or complete written sentences without needing to decide what to say in a real communicative situation. In an open conversation, however, students may experience difficulty because the communicative demands are not clearly defined. Role playing occupies an intermediate position. The teacher provides a context, assigns a role, and establishes a communicative purpose, while students remain responsible for producing the language needed to complete the situation. This balance can reduce the cognitive burden associated with completely spontaneous speaking while still requiring learners to make meaningful linguistic choices.

Recent discussion of Arabic language education also shows that instructional innovation should remain connected to sound pedagogy. Raswan et al. (2025) report that technology can expand access to learning resources and improve learning efficiency, but they also identify limitations related to human interaction and complex language contexts. Although their study focuses on artificial intelligence rather than role playing, the finding is relevant to the present study because speaking is inherently interactive. Oral proficiency requires learners to respond to another person, interpret meaning, adjust an utterance, and participate in a social exchange. A classroom strategy that places students in direct interaction therefore remains important even when digital tools are available. Role playing provides one structured way to preserve this human and communicative dimension of Arabic learning.

The need for repeated communicative practice is particularly relevant in Islamic boarding-school settings. Wahab et al. (2025), in their study of Arabic speaking skills in a modern Islamic boarding school, found that students' speaking difficulties were associated with limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and habits of using Indonesian or regional languages. Their study also describes muhadatsah activities as a means of developing daily speaking practice. These findings do not establish the effectiveness of role playing by themselves, but they show that speaking development requires more

than knowledge of vocabulary. Learners need a learning environment and activities that encourage them to use the vocabulary they have learned. Role playing responds to this need by combining vocabulary, expressions, interaction, and situational communication in one classroom activity.

The importance of sustained oral practice is also reflected in recent studies of Arabic learning environments. Umasugi and Mustar (2024) explain that an Arabic-speaking environment can function as a learning resource because language development is closely related to repeated communication and habitual use. Their discussion emphasizes that knowing grammatical rules does not automatically mean that learners can communicate orally with confidence. Learners need opportunities to hear and use Arabic in meaningful situations. This point is relevant to the present study because role playing can create a small-scale communicative environment inside the classroom. Even when the wider learning environment does not provide continuous Arabic interaction, a role-playing task can temporarily establish a situation in which students have a clear reason to speak.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative pre-experimental method with a one-group pretest-posttest design. The design consisted of one group that completed an oral speaking pretest, received instruction using a role-playing strategy, and then completed an oral speaking posttest. The design can be represented as $O1 \times O2$, where $O1$ denotes the pretest, X denotes the role-playing treatment, and $O2$ denotes the posttest. The design was selected because the study sought to identify changes in students' speaking performance after the instructional treatment within the existing class. Experimental and quasi-experimental methodology requires careful interpretation of such designs because changes cannot be attributed exclusively to the treatment when no control group is included (Shadish et al., 2002).

The population and sample comprised all 10 ninth-grade students at Pondok Pesantren Modern Arafah Sungai Penuh, Kerinci, Jambi. Because the number of students in the target class was small, the study used total sampling. Thus, the sample represented the entire accessible population of the ninth-grade class. The study was conducted in the natural instructional setting of the institution. The use of an intact class allowed the treatment to be implemented without separating students from their regular learning context.

Data were collected through an oral Arabic speaking test. The assessment focused on five dimensions of oral performance: pronunciation accuracy, vocabulary mastery, grammatical accuracy, speaking fluency, and comprehension. The test included direct oral question-and-answer activities and role-playing tasks. Individual tasks required students to perform a simple communicative role without reading a prepared text. Pair activities required students to respond to one another in short dialogues. The topics included self-introduction, school life, asking about activities, and everyday interaction. The posttest used equivalent task difficulty and assessment criteria while varying question order, role cards, and pairings to reduce simple memory effects.

The instrument was reviewed before use. The thesis reports item-level validity evidence based on Pearson correlations, with the ten speaking-related items meeting the stated validity criterion, and a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.961 for the relevant instrument. The assessment rubric used a four-point scale for each oral dimension. The maximum total score across five dimensions was 20 before conversion to the final assessment scale. The assessment procedure was conducted orally, with the examiner recording performance directly on the scoring sheet.

Data analysis consisted of descriptive statistics, a normality test, a paired-samples t-test, and N-Gain analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation of the pretest and posttest scores. Because the sample contained 10 students, the Shapiro-Wilk test was used to examine normality. The thesis reports Shapiro-Wilk significance values of 0.497 for the pretest and 0.969 for the posttest, both above 0.05. The paired-samples t-test was then used to test the difference between pretest and posttest scores. Finally, N-Gain was calculated to estimate the magnitude of improvement relative to the possible score range. The mean N-Gain was interpreted using the categories applied in the thesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Results

The descriptive results show a clear increase in the central tendency of students' speaking scores after the role-playing treatment. The pretest mean was 64.90, with a minimum of 55 and a maximum of 75. The posttest mean was 80.10, with a minimum of 65 and a maximum of 96. The mean difference was therefore 15.20 points. The standard deviation increased from 7.125 on the pretest to 9.689 on the posttest, indicating greater dispersion of posttest performance. The school's minimum mastery criterion reported in

the thesis was 65. The posttest minimum of 65 therefore reached the stated criterion, whereas the pretest mean remained below it.

Measure	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	10	55	75	64.90	7.125
Posttest	10	65	96	80.10	9.689

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of students' Arabic speaking scores

Source: Researcher's analysis of pretest and posttest data.

Normality Test

The Shapiro-Wilk results indicated that both score distributions met the normality assumption. The pretest significance value was 0.497, while the posttest significance value was 0.969. Both values exceeded 0.05. This result supported the use of the paired-samples t-test for comparing the two related sets of scores. The normality result should be understood in relation to the small sample size. It supports the statistical procedure used in this study but does not by itself establish the effectiveness of the treatment.

Test	N	Shapiro-Wilk Statistic	Sig.
Pretest	10	0.935	0.497
Posttest	10	0.981	0.969

Table 2. Shapiro-Wilk normality test

Source: SPSS output reported in the research data.

Paired-Samples t-Test

The paired-samples t-test produced a significance value of 0.000. Because the value was lower than the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis of no mean difference was rejected in the statistical test. The analysis therefore indicates a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest speaking scores. The mean paired difference was 15.200 points, with a standard deviation of 8.496 and a t value of 5.658 with 9 degrees of freedom. The result provides statistical evidence that students' scores changed after the role-playing treatment.

Comparison	Mean Difference	SD	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest - Posttest	15.200	8.496	5.658	0.000

Table 3. Paired-samples t-test results

Source: SPSS output reported in the research data.

N-Gain Analysis

The N-Gain analysis produced a mean value of 0.4407. Based on the categorization used in the thesis, this value falls into the moderate category. The result means that the observed improvement represented a moderate proportion of the available score gain. The N-Gain result complements the significance test because statistical significance and magnitude of improvement answer different questions. The paired-samples t-test

indicates whether the mean scores differed statistically, whereas N-Gain describes the degree of improvement relative to the possible gain.

The improvement should therefore not be interpreted as evidence that all students reached a high level of mastery. The posttest minimum was 65, which reached the school's stated minimum mastery criterion, but individual performance still varied. The moderate N-Gain also indicates that there remained room for further development. This interpretation is consistent with the thesis limitation that the intervention involved only one group of ten students.

Finally, the findings contribute to the broader discussion of innovation in Arabic education. Raswan et al. (2025) emphasize that innovation should remain connected to pedagogical effectiveness and human learning needs. In the context of speaking instruction, innovation does not necessarily require sophisticated technology. It can also involve redesigning classroom interaction so that learners become active users of Arabic. Role playing represents this form of pedagogical innovation because it changes the distribution of classroom activity. Students are not only recipients of linguistic information. They become participants who use Arabic to perform communicative functions. This shift from explanation toward purposeful language use is central to the instructional value observed in the present study.

The study also suggests that future implementation should combine role playing with other communicative practices. A single strategy is unlikely to address all dimensions of language proficiency. Dialogue, information-gap activities, guided conversation, vocabulary rehearsal, pronunciation practice, and language-environment programs can be used alongside role playing. The goal is to create a sequence of learning experiences in which students repeatedly hear, understand, produce, and negotiate meaning in Arabic. Such an integrated approach is consistent with the environmental perspective discussed by Umasugi and Mustar (2024) and the emphasis on sustained speaking practice reported by Wahab et al. (2025).

The findings therefore support a view of role playing as a structured communicative strategy rather than simply a classroom performance technique. Its instructional value comes from the combination of context, interaction, repetition, and purposeful language production. This interpretation is compatible with Huda's (2013) description of role playing, active learning principles discussed by Silberman (2013), and the broader teaching-model perspective of Joyce et al. (2016). The recent Arabic-speaking studies cited in this article further indicate that role playing has been used across

different learner groups. The present study adds evidence from a small ninth-grade Islamic boarding-school class and demonstrates the value of examining both statistical difference and magnitude of gain.

Another practical implication concerns learner differentiation. Students do not enter a role-playing activity with identical vocabulary, confidence, or speaking experience. Students with limited vocabulary may require a short vocabulary bank or sentence starters. Students who hesitate may benefit from pair rehearsal before individual performance. Students with stronger speaking ability can receive roles that require longer responses, follow-up questions, or problem solving. This differentiated approach can prevent the activity from becoming too difficult for less confident learners or too simple for more proficient learners. It also allows the teacher to maintain a common communicative objective while adjusting the level of support.

The assessment procedure also deserves attention. The speaking test measured pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. These criteria reflect the practical nature of oral communication because students must combine linguistic resources rather than demonstrate isolated knowledge. The use of an oral rubric can also provide teachers with diagnostic information. If a student receives a lower score in pronunciation but performs relatively well in vocabulary and comprehension, the teacher can provide targeted pronunciation practice. If fluency is weak, the teacher can increase opportunities for repeated dialogue. Thus, the assessment does not only measure learning outcomes. It can guide subsequent instruction.

The small sample provides another reason for cautious interpretation. The study involved ten students from one ninth-grade class. The sample was appropriate for the accessible population and total sampling was used, but the number of participants limits statistical generalization. At the same time, the small class allowed the teacher or researcher to provide direct observation and individualized feedback during oral tasks. This feature is valuable for classroom practice, even though it does not replace evidence from larger samples. Replication in several schools, with larger groups and comparison conditions, would help determine whether the observed pattern is stable across different educational settings.

The present results should nevertheless be interpreted carefully because the design cannot isolate role playing from all other influences. Students may improve because of repeated exposure to the language, regular classroom instruction, familiarity

with the assessment format, or other experiences occurring during the research period. Shadish et al. (2002) identify such issues as important considerations when interpreting one-group experimental designs. The statistically significant difference is therefore best described as evidence of change between the two measurements during the intervention period. It should not be presented as definitive proof that role playing alone caused the entire improvement.

The role of human interaction should also be emphasized. Raswan et al. (2025) report that technological tools can improve access to resources and learning efficiency but may remain limited in human interaction and complex language contexts. In speaking instruction, interaction is not an optional addition. Students need interlocutors who provide responses that require them to listen, interpret, and react. Role playing creates this interaction through peer-to-peer or teacher-student exchanges. It therefore offers a pedagogical option that emphasizes the interpersonal dimension of language learning. Digital tools may still be used for vocabulary preparation, pronunciation models, or supplementary practice, but they do not remove the need for meaningful human communication.

The findings also have implications for the design of Arabic-speaking environments in boarding schools. Wahab et al. (2025) show that structured language programs, vocabulary provision, supervision, and daily practice can contribute to speaking development, while Umasugi and Mustar (2024) emphasize the role of a supportive Arabic-speaking environment. Role playing can connect classroom instruction with these broader environmental practices. Teachers can design scenarios based on situations that students encounter in dormitories, classrooms, prayer areas, libraries, dining rooms, and other school settings. When the scenario reflects a real communicative need, students may find it easier to transfer expressions from the classroom to daily interaction.

The role-playing strategy may also be particularly useful when tasks are sequenced from familiar to more complex situations. Students can begin with short personal introductions and simple questions. They can then move to school routines, asking for information, expressing preferences, or solving a simple problem through dialogue. More advanced tasks can require follow-up questions and longer responses. This progression allows the teacher to increase communicative demands without removing support too quickly. It also corresponds with the principle that speaking opportunities should be repeated and gradually expanded. The strategy can therefore be

incorporated into a series of lessons rather than being limited to one treatment session. The moderate gain may be related to the multidimensional nature of speaking ability.

Pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehension do not necessarily develop at the same rate. A student may improve vocabulary rapidly but still need more time to develop fluency. Another student may speak more confidently while continuing to make grammatical errors. Because the present study analyzed the overall speaking score, it cannot identify which dimension contributed most strongly to the increase. Future studies should analyze each component separately and report component-level changes. Such analysis could show whether role playing has a stronger relationship with fluency and interaction than with grammatical accuracy, or whether improvement occurs across all dimensions.

The moderate N-Gain value of 0.4407 should also be considered alongside the statistically significant t-test. These statistics answer different questions. The t-test shows that the mean pretest and posttest scores differed statistically within the observed group. N-Gain indicates the proportion of possible improvement that was achieved. A moderate gain suggests that the intervention was associated with meaningful progress, but it did not produce complete mastery. This distinction is important for interpreting the results responsibly. The findings support the use of role playing as one instructional strategy, but they do not justify treating it as a sufficient solution for all aspects of Arabic speaking development.

The results further suggest that role playing can support the integration of receptive and productive processes. Although the main outcome in this study was speaking, students must listen to questions or responses before producing their own utterances. They need to understand the communicative situation and then formulate a response. In pair activities, this process occurs repeatedly because each learner alternates between speaking and listening. Such interaction is consistent with the social character of oral communication described in Arabic speaking literature. The activity therefore creates a learning cycle in which comprehension supports production and production creates a need for further comprehension.

The role of the teacher is especially important in making this process effective. Role playing should not be treated as an activity in which students simply perform a script while the teacher observes. Before the performance, the teacher needs to establish the communicative goal, clarify unfamiliar vocabulary, and model the expected

interaction. During the performance, the teacher can observe pronunciation, vocabulary use, grammar, fluency, and comprehension. After the performance, feedback should identify specific strengths and areas for improvement. This sequence makes the activity part of instruction and assessment rather than a separate entertainment exercise. It also helps ensure that increased participation is accompanied by measurable language development.

The findings are also consistent with the concerns identified by Wahab et al. (2025). Their study reports that difficulties in Arabic speaking can involve limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and the continued use of Indonesian or regional languages. These problems have a direct connection with the conditions observed in the present study, particularly limited vocabulary and hesitation to speak. Role playing provides a practical response because students must use vocabulary for a specific communicative function. For example, a learner who plays the role of a student asking about a school activity needs to retrieve words and expressions that are immediately useful for that situation. The task therefore connects vocabulary knowledge with communicative action.

The relationship between the present findings and the Arabic-speaking environment literature is also important. Umasugi and Mustar (2024) argue that learners need an environment that encourages repeated use of Arabic because classroom instruction alone may not provide sufficient time for the development of active speaking habits. In the present study, role playing can be viewed as a temporary communicative environment. Each task establishes participants, a topic, a purpose, and a sequence of interaction. Students therefore receive a bounded opportunity to practice Arabic in a way that resembles everyday communication. The activity does not replace the wider language environment, but it can complement it by concentrating oral practice within the lesson.

The descriptive improvement deserves further interpretation because the change occurred across several parts of the score distribution. The pretest range was 55 to 75, whereas the posttest range was 65 to 96. The increase in the minimum score is important in relation to the learning context because the school's minimum mastery criterion was 65. The pretest mean of 64.90 was slightly below that criterion, while the posttest mean of 80.10 was clearly above it. The posttest minimum also reached 65. This does not mean that every learner achieved the same level of proficiency, but it indicates that the observed change was educationally relevant within the stated school criterion as well as

statistically significant in the paired comparison.

Discussion

The increase from a pretest mean of 64.90 to a posttest mean of 80.10 indicates that students performed better after the role-playing instruction. The improvement was not limited to a change in one descriptive statistic. The minimum score increased from 55 to 65, and the maximum score increased from 75 to 96. These changes suggest that both lower and higher performers showed movement in the posttest distribution. Nevertheless, because the study did not include a control group, the observed change should be described as a statistically significant pretest-posttest difference rather than as definitive proof of a causal effect that excludes all alternative explanations.

The finding is consistent with the instructional logic of role playing. Speaking skills develop through opportunities to produce language, receive interactional responses, and repeat communicative functions. Role playing creates a structured reason for students to speak. Instead of responding only to teacher explanations, students perform roles that require them to formulate and interpret utterances. This structure can increase the amount of meaningful oral practice within a lesson. Huda (2013) describes role playing as a model that allows learners to enact situations, while Silberman (2013) connects role playing with active learning. These principles provide a theoretical basis for the use of role playing in speaking instruction.

The present finding also aligns with research on Arabic speaking. Abdulhafid et al. (2024) reported improvement in Arabic speaking skills through role-play activities. Basri et al. (2024) examined role playing in Arabic speaking instruction and identified its relevance to maharah kalam. Albana et al. (2023) also reported evidence concerning the effectiveness of role play for Arabic speaking skills. Luthfi et al. (2024) used role-playing activities in Arabic speaking training for Islamic junior high school students. Taken together, these studies support the relevance of interactive oral activities in Arabic learning, although differences in samples, designs, instruments, and settings mean that their results should not be treated as identical to the present study.

The role-playing strategy may also have supported students' willingness to speak. The thesis identified fear of mistakes, limited vocabulary, and low participation as practical problems in the initial learning situation. A role-based activity can provide a defined communicative purpose and a bounded situation. Students know what role they are performing and what type of information they need to communicate. This structure

can make oral practice more predictable than completely open-ended conversation. MacIntyre et al. (1998) argue that willingness to communicate is influenced by situational and confidence-related factors. In this sense, repeated structured speaking opportunities may help learners participate more actively, although the present study did not independently measure willingness to communicate or anxiety.

Pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehension were assessed as connected components of speaking performance. This is important because a gain in speaking ability should not be reduced to vocabulary recall alone. Tarigan (2015) emphasizes the productive nature of speaking, while Hermawan (2018) places language skills within a broader instructional framework. The role-playing tasks used in this study required students to select words, organize sentences, pronounce them, and respond to a partner or examiner. Consequently, the treatment was aligned with the multidimensional nature of oral performance.

The moderate N-Gain value of 0.4407 provides an important qualification. The strategy was associated with meaningful improvement, but the level of improvement was not in the high category. Several factors may explain this result. First, the intervention involved a small number of students and a limited instructional period. Second, speaking proficiency requires repeated practice over time. Third, learners enter the intervention with different vocabulary resources, pronunciation habits, and levels of confidence. Fourth, role playing is an instructional strategy, not a complete language curriculum. Its impact depends on task quality, teacher guidance, feedback, repetition, and opportunities for continued use of Arabic.

The result also has implications for teachers. Role playing can be integrated into regular Arabic speaking lessons through short individual and pair tasks. Teachers can begin with familiar contexts such as self-introduction and school routines. They can then increase the complexity of roles and interaction. Assessment should use clear criteria so that students know which aspects of speaking they need to improve. The present rubric, which considered pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehension, provides a practical structure for such assessment. Feedback should focus on specific observable performance rather than general judgments.

The study also contributes to the discussion of Arabic speaking instruction in Islamic boarding schools. Such institutions can provide a supportive language environment, but the existence of an Arabic-oriented environment does not automatically guarantee high oral proficiency. Students still need planned opportunities

to use Arabic. Role playing can complement other activities such as dialogue practice, information-gap tasks, guided conversation, and communicative games. The central principle is that learners should receive repeated opportunities to produce language for a clear communicative purpose.

From a methodological perspective, the findings illustrate both the usefulness and the limitations of a one-group pretest-posttest design. The design makes it possible to document change within the same students and is practical in a small classroom. However, maturation, repeated testing, instructional history, and other contextual factors may also influence scores. Shadish et al. (2002) emphasize the need to consider threats to internal validity when interpreting experimental and quasi-experimental evidence. Future studies should therefore use a larger sample, include a comparison group where feasible, apply longer interventions, and examine whether improvements remain after the treatment ends.

The findings also suggest a direction for future research. Researchers could compare role playing with other communicative strategies, examine different proficiency levels, and separate the effects of role playing on pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehension. Mixed-method research could add classroom observations or student interviews to explain why some learners benefit more than others. Longitudinal designs could determine whether gains persist. These approaches would provide stronger evidence about the conditions under which role playing supports Arabic speaking development.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, the findings reinforce the view that speaking proficiency is closely connected to opportunities for meaningful language use. Knowledge of vocabulary and grammar provides an important foundation, but oral proficiency also requires learners to mobilize that knowledge during interaction. Role playing connects linguistic form with communicative purpose because learners must use language to complete a role-based task. The finding is therefore compatible with active learning and communicative language teaching perspectives. It also provides a contextual example of how an active learning strategy can be adapted to Arabic speaking instruction rather than being restricted to English language classrooms.

From a practical perspective, teachers can organize role-playing activities in manageable stages. The first stage can introduce the vocabulary and expressions needed

for the situation. The second stage can demonstrate a short dialogue or model interaction. The third stage can assign roles to individuals or pairs. The fourth stage can allow students to perform without reading a full script. The final stage can provide focused feedback on pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehension. This sequence can help prevent role playing from becoming an activity in which students perform without developing measurable language competence.

The classroom context also matters. Students with limited vocabulary may need word banks before performing a role. Students who are hesitant to speak may benefit from pair work before individual performance. More proficient students can receive roles that require longer responses, follow-up questions, or problem solving. The teacher can gradually reduce scaffolding as students become more comfortable. Such differentiation is consistent with the finding that posttest performance varied among students. A single activity does not necessarily provide the same level of support for every learner.

The present study also indicates that assessment should remain aligned with the learning objective. If the objective is speaking development, assessment should include observable oral criteria. In this study, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehension were treated as components of speaking performance. This approach can help teachers identify specific areas of improvement instead of relying only on a single global impression. Repeated assessment can also provide learners with information about which aspects of speaking require further practice.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. The sample included only 10 students from one ninth-grade class, so the results should not be generalized automatically to other schools, age groups, or proficiency levels. The absence of a control group also limits causal interpretation. In addition, the study measured performance immediately through pretest and posttest procedures, so it cannot determine whether the observed improvement would remain over a longer period. The research also focused on overall speaking performance and did not statistically isolate the contribution of each speaking component. These limitations do not invalidate the observed pretest-posttest difference, but they define the scope of the evidence.

The broader implication is that speaking development requires a learning environment in which students are expected and supported to use Arabic actively. Recent studies emphasize the importance of habitual communication, vocabulary

support, and a supportive language environment in developing Arabic speaking skills (Umasugi & Mustar, 2024; Wahab et al., 2025). Role playing can contribute to this environment by creating structured communicative situations within formal lessons. At the same time, the findings of Raswan et al. (2025) remind educators that instructional innovation should be evaluated according to pedagogical needs and the quality of human interaction. These principles provide a basis for combining role playing with other classroom and environmental language practices.

In practical terms, the result indicates that role playing can be incorporated into regular Arabic speaking instruction when the activity is carefully prepared. The strategy can provide students with repeated opportunities to use vocabulary and grammatical structures in situations that require actual communication. The findings also show the value of aligning instructional activities with observable speaking criteria. Because the assessment in this study considered pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehension, future classroom implementation can use the same dimensions to monitor progress over time.

CONCLUSION

The study found a statistically significant difference between students' Arabic speaking scores before and after role-playing instruction. The mean score increased from 64.90 on the pretest to 80.10 on the posttest, while the paired-samples t-test produced a significance value of 0.000. The mean N-Gain of 0.4407 fell within the moderate category. The findings therefore provide empirical evidence that students' speaking performance improved during the period in which the role-playing strategy was implemented. The strategy offered structured opportunities for oral practice, interaction, vocabulary use, pronunciation practice, and participation.

The findings should be interpreted within the study's methodological limits. The sample consisted of only 10 ninth-grade students from one institution, and the study used a one-group pretest-posttest design without a control group. The results therefore document a significant change in this group but do not establish that role playing alone caused every observed improvement. Future studies should involve larger samples, comparison groups, longer interventions, and more detailed analysis of individual speaking components. Within these limits, the study supports the practical use of role-playing activities as one option for increasing opportunities for Arabic oral practice in Islamic educational settings.

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