



A Case Study of an EFL Teacher's Implementation of Role-Play Strategy in Teaching Speaking at a Junior High School

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026 - 06- 01	<i>This study examines how an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher implements role-playing strategies in speaking instruction at the junior high school level for the first time. By examining the experiences of a novice teacher, this study provides critical insights into how teachers adapt innovative strategies in real classroom contexts an essential dimension for understanding the development of sustainable teaching practices and serving as input for teacher training programs. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through classroom observations over three sessions and semi-structured interviews. The analysis revealed five sequential phases of implementation scenario planning, instruction, role assignment, facilitation, and feedback along with four pedagogical considerations: pronunciation development, student confidence, teacher readiness, and curriculum alignment. These findings indicate that the successful implementation of role-playing heavily depends on teachers' pedagogical readiness and adaptive decision-making, thereby providing concrete implications for the design of professional development programs that support novice EFL teachers in adopting communicative strategies. This study addresses a significant research gap by shifting the focus from learning outcomes to the implementation process itself, thereby contributing to a more contextually relevant EFL pedagogy in junior high schools in Indonesia.</i>
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1. Introduction

Teaching speaking skills in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) remains one of the most significant challenges faced by English teachers, especially at the junior high school level. In Indonesia, although the Merdeka Belajar

Curriculum emphasizes the development of communicative competence and meaningful language use, classroom realities show that many students still struggle to express themselves orally in English (Nazri, 2021).

Recent research reveals that EFL learners often face barriers to speaking due to limited vocabulary, inadequate mastery of grammar, speaking anxiety, low self-confidence, and a lack of exposure to authentic English language use in daily life (Khoudri, 2024; Alamer et al., 2025). In this context, teachers play a crucial role in creating a supportive learning environment and designing teaching strategies that encourage students to actively communicate orally using the target language (Christine C. M. Goh et al., 2021; Littlewood & Shufang, 2022).

One of the most widely recommended strategies for addressing these speaking challenges is role-playing. Role-playing is a communicative activity in which students take on specific roles in scenarios designed by the teacher, allowing them to practice speaking in contexts that resemble real-life situations (Harmer, 2007; Ladousse, 1987; Ishak & Abdul Aziz, 2022).

This strategy aligns with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes authentic communication and meaningful interaction as the primary goals of language learning Teh (2021). Various studies have shown that role-playing offers numerous benefits, including boosting students' confidence in speaking, reducing language anxiety, and supporting the development of pragmatic and discursive competencies that are difficult to cultivate through learning that focuses solely on language forms (Angelina Van Dyke1ORCID icon, 2023; Goram & Subekti, 2022; Goram & Subekti, 2022).

Nevertheless, most existing research still focuses primarily on end results, such as improvements in test scores or students' speaking skills. Very few studies have examined the actual implementation process specifically, how teachers plan, carry out, and adapt role-playing activities within the context of their respective classrooms or the pedagogical reasons underlying teachers' instructional decisions. Furthermore, the implementation of role-playing in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom in Indonesian junior high schools does not always proceed smoothly and is influenced by various contextual factors.

Large class sizes, limited instructional time, students' cognitive and emotional development, and teachers' pedagogical experience can all influence how role-playing is planned and implemented in actual classroom practice (Harefa et al., 2025; Sari and Zuhriyyah, 2023). This indicates that the effectiveness of role-playing cannot be separated from its complex implementation process and the specific context in which the strategy is applied.

One area that remains largely unexplored is how novice teachers who are implementing role-playing for the first time navigate this complex process and make instructional decisions. Understanding the experiences of novice teachers is crucial because their approaches to implementing strategies often reflect how teachers actually learn to adopt innovations in their practice, thereby providing

evidence for the design of effective professional development programs.

However, research specifically exploring how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers particularly those implementing role-playing for the first time plan, implement, and reflect on this strategy in the context of junior high schools in Indonesia remains very limited. Understanding the implementation process and the pedagogical considerations behind teachers' decisions is essential for developing sustainable and context-appropriate teaching practices.

Teachers' cognition is also an important perspective for understanding decision-making in learning. Borg (2015) defines teachers' cognition as the beliefs, knowledge, experiences, and thought processes that shape teachers' instructional practices in the classroom. Teachers' pedagogical decisions are influenced not only by curriculum requirements or classroom conditions but also by how they interpret the teaching and learning processes based on their prior experiences and professional knowledge. Therefore, examining teachers' cognition can provide deeper insights into the pedagogical considerations underlying the use of role-playing in EFL classrooms.

Given this gap in the literature, this study aims to explore the use of role-play strategies by an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher in teaching speaking skills at the junior high school level, guided by two research questions: (1) How do EFL teachers use role-play strategies in teaching speaking skills at the junior high school level? (2) What pedagogical considerations influence EFL teachers' use of role-play strategies in speaking instruction? The uniqueness of this study lies in its focus on the implementation process and professional decision-making of novice EFL teachers who are using role-playing for the first time a perspective that has not been extensively researched in the context of junior high schools in Indonesia thereby providing insights that can inform EFL pedagogy and teacher professional development initiatives.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design that focuses on the practices of an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher in teaching speaking skills to eighth-grade students at a public junior high school in Karawang Regency, West Java, Indonesia. This case study design was chosen because it allows the researcher to investigate contemporary phenomena in depth within a real-world context, specifically how a teacher implements role-play strategies and the pedagogical considerations underlying their decisions (Yin, 2018; Poth, 2018).

The design is descriptive-exploratory: descriptive because it details the process of implementing role-playing from the planning stage to the feedback stage, and exploratory because it examines the teacher's pedagogical considerations as well as the contextual factors that influence her teaching practices (Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, 2016).

The participant in this study was an English teacher who actively taught eighth-grade students and had never previously applied role-playing strategies in speaking instruction, even though she understood these strategies in theory. The participant was selected using purposive sampling based on criteria relevant to the study's objectives: a teacher who actively teaches English to eighth-grade junior high school students, who had never used role-playing in speaking instruction, possessed sufficient teaching experience, and was willing to be observed and interviewed (Patton (2014)).

Students were not included as research participants because the focus of this study was on the teacher's practices and considerations, not on student learning outcomes or perceptions. However, interactions between the teacher and students during the learning process were still observed as part of the context in which the strategy was implemented. The participant's identity and the school's name were kept confidential, and the participant was given a pseudonym in all data presentations and analyses.

Data were collected using two main techniques: non-participatory classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. Observations were conducted during three sessions aligned with the school's speaking instruction schedule. The observation checklist, developed based on the theoretical frameworks of Harmer (2007) and Ladousse (1987), contains indicators that measure the phases of implementation (scenario preparation, explicit instruction, role assignment, facilitation, and feedback provision), while narrative notes captured contextual nuances and teacher-student interactions that could not be fully represented by the checklist alone. During the observation process, the researcher documented all learning activities and interactions.

The semi-structured interview guide, which was based on Borg (2015) concept of teacher cognition and the qualitative interview methodology of Brinkmann & Kvale (2015), included open-ended questions designed to explore: (a) teachers' beliefs regarding speaking instruction and the effectiveness of role-playing, (b) their planning and adaptation strategies, (c) their perceptions of students' responses and challenges, and (d) contextual factors influencing their instructional choices.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted after all observation sessions were completed so that the researcher could ask more specific questions based on findings from the classroom. All interviews were conducted in Indonesian so that participants could express their ideas more freely and in greater depth; the interviews were recorded with the participants' consent and then transcribed verbatim. Relevant excerpts were translated into English by the researcher for reporting purposes, while the original transcripts in Indonesian are included in the appendix.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model proposed by (Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, 2014), which consists of four stages: data

collection, data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification. Participant checking was conducted by presenting preliminary findings to the participants for validation, to ensure that the interpretations accurately reflected their experiences and perspectives. Data triangulation was achieved by comparing observations, interview data, and the researcher's reflective notes to enhance credibility (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

All research ethics procedures were adhered to from the outset, including obtaining permission from the school, explaining the research objectives to participants, having them sign consent forms, and ensuring the confidentiality of participants' identities and their right to withdraw at any time without negative consequences.

3. Result

This study reports on five phases of implementation and four pedagogical considerations that illustrate how an EFL teacher at a public junior high school in Karawang Regency implemented role-play strategies in speaking instruction for the first time. Data were collected through observation checklists, field notes, and semi-structured interviews, which were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by (Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, 2014).

Theme 1: Flexible, student-centered planning replaces pre-written scripts.

The teacher did not prepare a script or written scenario; instead, the teacher gave students the freedom to develop their own dialogues within the framework of topics aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum. The communicative objectives were explicitly set from the start: students were required to use English and demonstrate oral interaction skills. The teacher stated:

"To see how they speak, especially regarding their pronunciation, the key is speaking." (T)

The teacher prepared materials independently using books, the internet, and educational apps, and developed an interactive PowerPoint presentation. Interestingly, the teacher reported that preparing these materials took less time than preparing for a typical lesson, suggesting that a student-centered approach actually reduces the teacher's preparation workload.

Theme 2: Interactive instruction and active scaffolding as primary facilitation strategies.

The instruction phase was conducted interactively through question-and-answer sessions, during which the teacher wrote students' responses on the board and guided the class in collectively defining "role-play." The teacher also provided a demonstration before students began practicing and allocated structured preparation time. During the practice session, the teacher maintains an active facilitative role by moving around the classroom, monitoring each group's

performance, and recording scores and speaking performance for each student. Three forms of scaffolding are consistently applied: enforcing rules for English language use, providing vocabulary support when students encounter difficulties, and using nonverbal gestures to aid understanding. The teacher states:

"I observe them, record points and scores, help them expand their vocabulary, and encourage them to stay motivated." (T)

Theme 3: Role assignments reflect the principle of student autonomy.

Rather than specifying roles and characters, the teacher divided students into groups based on existing formations to ensure an even distribution, while the assignment of roles was left entirely to the students. The teacher explained:

"I don't assign roles because the students themselves know their abilities best." (T)

Classroom observations showed that students actively negotiated and chose their own roles within their respective groups. During the preparation phase, some students discussed which characters they felt most comfortable playing, while others voluntarily swapped roles after considering their speaking abilities. In the second observation session, some groups independently modified their dialogues by adding expressions and responses that were not explicitly provided by the teacher. These adjustments demonstrate the students' willingness to take the initiative in the activity and adapt the dialogues to their own communicative preferences.

The subsequent narrative notes that students required only minimal intervention from the teacher during the role-selection process, indicating that they were able to make decisions collaboratively within their respective groups. This approach reflects the principle of self-directed learning in the Merdeka Curriculum. The reasons given by the teacher demonstrate her understanding that students' self-assessment of their abilities can guide their selection of appropriate roles, which has the potential to reduce anxiety about speaking while fostering a sense of responsibility for their own learning outcomes.

Theme 4: Corrective feedback and comprehensive reflection conclude the implementation cycle

The third session was entirely dedicated to evaluation, covering aspects of the system, structure, readiness, pronunciation, and dialogue construction. Feedback was delivered constructively, balancing corrections with positive reinforcement. Students who appeared less confident received special attention in the form of appreciation and encouragement. The narrative notes from the third session record:

"Students asked to perform again appeared shy and lacked confidence, but the teacher continued to motivate them and emphasized that their first attempt was worthy of appreciation." (NN-3)

The reflection session concluded with the teacher's commitment:

"I will try to design it better to make it more interactive." (T)

Theme 5: Four pedagogical considerations underpin teachers' implementation decisions.

Four key pedagogical considerations were identified from interview data triangulated with observations.

Pronunciation Development as a Linguistic Priority

"More specifically, it's pronunciation. We can see how well they pronounce the words." (T)

This consideration was reflected throughout the implementation process. During classroom observations, the teacher consistently monitored students' oral performance and recorded their speaking scores. Special attention was paid to students' pronunciation during role-playing activities, indicating that pronunciation accuracy was one of the main indicators the teacher used to evaluate students' speaking performance.

Student Self-Confidence as an Affective Challenge

The narrative notes from the second and third observation sessions consistently indicate that the pupils' self-confidence remained a significant challenge throughout the role-play activities. Although the pupils generally participated with great enthusiasm in group discussions and preparatory activities, some appeared hesitant when asked to present in front of the class. This challenge was also evident during the evaluation session, where some pupils appeared shy and were sometimes reluctant when asked to perform again.

The narrative notes from the third observation session recorded:

"Students asked to perform again appeared shy and lacked confidence, but the teacher continued to motivate them and emphasized that their first attempt was worthy of appreciation." (NN-3)

To address these challenges, teachers provide encouragement, recognition and ongoing constructive feedback throughout the process. These observations suggest that pupils' self-confidence is not merely a characteristic of the learners, but an important pedagogical consideration that influences teachers' teaching decisions.

"I had never taught role-play at all. At first, I wasn't sure if I could deliver this material effectively." (T)

These considerations were addressed through independent preparation and ongoing reflection throughout the three sessions. Teachers independently prepared teaching materials, designed supporting resources, and continuously evaluated the effectiveness of each lesson. The reflection carried out after the sessions also demonstrated the teachers' efforts to improve role-play activities in

the future, even though their previous experience in implementing such strategies was still limited.

Curriculum Alignment and Institutional Factors

"This method aligns perfectly with the current curriculum; its approach to students is entirely student-centered." (T)

Furthermore, the teacher was aware that the speaking examination at the school would include role-play activities, as had already been implemented by other teachers in Year 9. This institutional context reinforced the teacher's commitment to implementing role-play and strengthened their view that this strategy was appropriate for achieving the curriculum objectives and preparing pupils to meet the assessment requirements.

Table 1. Summary of Findings

Theme	Evidence Sources	Key Findings
Flexible, Student-Centered Planning	Observation, Interview	The teacher provided a communicative framework rather than pre-written scripts, allowing students to create their own dialogues.
Interactive Instruction and Active Scaffolding	Observation, Interview	The teacher facilitated learning through questioning, demonstrations, vocabulary support, monitoring, and motivation.
Student Autonomy in Role Assignment	Observation, Interview	Students were given responsibility for selecting roles based on their perceived abilities and group agreements.
Corrective Feedback and Reflection	Observation, Narrative Notes, Interview	Feedback and reflection were used to support students' improvement and guide future instructional adjustments.
Pedagogical Considerations	Observation, Narrative Notes, Interview	Implementation decisions were influenced by pronunciation development, student confidence, teacher readiness, and curriculum alignment.

4. Discussion

This Implementation of Role-Play in Speaking Instruction

The findings of this study on the implementation of role-playing which took place through five phases: scenario planning, instruction, role assignment, interaction facilitation, and feedback expand upon and deepen what has been documented in previous studies on speaking teaching strategies at the junior high school level. Previous studies, such as those by Octavia et al. (2023) and Sari and

Zuhriyyah (2023), have successfully identified various speaking teaching strategies used by EFL teachers in junior high schools; however, both acknowledge that their research has not comprehensively examined how these strategies can be systematically applied within a coherent sequence of learning. This study directly addresses this gap by documenting these five phases sequentially and contextually, revealing that implementation is not a linear process but rather a dynamic sequence in which each phase is adapted to the needs of the students and the classroom situation.

Furthermore, Fauziah et al. (2025) found that role-playing activities in a junior high school setting are effective, particularly in building students' confidence in speaking, especially when teachers provide structured steps and supportive feedback while maintaining flexibility in implementation. This is fully consistent with the findings of this study, in which teachers consciously adapted each phase of the role-playing activities to students' individual abilities and affective needs, confirming that a structured yet responsive approach is the key to the success of role-playing in teaching English as a foreign language.

Pedagogical Considerations Influencing Implementation

The four pedagogical considerations identified in this study pronunciation, student confidence, teacher readiness, and curriculum alignment indicate that the teaching decisions made by teachers are not isolated phenomena but are indeed influenced by a combination of individual, affective, and institutional factors. These considerations reveal that the quality of implementation depends on various levels of decision-making, ranging from student needs at the classroom level to institutional policy requirements a dimension that has not been sufficiently explored in previous studies.

Pronunciation as a Linguistic Consideration

In the studies reviewed including Octavia et al. (2023), Sari and Zuhriyah (2023), Tamala et al. (2025), and Muzahira and Zuhriyah (2024) has not yet explicitly emerged as a pedagogical consideration that drives the selection and implementation of speaking instruction strategies. This study has revealed a previously under-explored dimension: teachers may consciously choose role-playing not only as a means of communication practice but also to observe and address pronunciation patterns within the context of natural discourse. These findings suggest that future professional development programs should help teachers recognize and capitalize on how role-playing provides authentic opportunities for targeted pronunciation feedback a linguistic benefit that goes beyond general fluency development.

Student Self-Confidence as an Affective Challenge

Muzahira and Zuhriyah (2024) found that innovative strategies such as Pecha Kucha can increase student activity and engagement in speaking activities, which indirectly confirms that self-confidence is a key factor in the success of speaking

instruction. This study confirms those findings while expanding our understanding: it not only identifies self-confidence as a challenge but also documents specific and concrete teacher strategies to address it including sustained encouragement, selective positive reinforcement, and deliberate decisions to avoid interrupting student performances. These findings show us that teachers' affective pedagogical responses are not secondary to the implementation of strategies but are an integral part of them, and therefore need to be explicitly incorporated into teacher education curricula.

Teachers' Initial Experiences

This dimension how novice teachers adapt to new strategies through self-directed learning and practice has not been explicitly addressed in the reviewed literature, which generally focuses on the strategies implemented and student learning outcomes without examining the teachers' learning processes. This study directly documents that a teacher implementing role-playing for the first time demonstrated a gradual increase in self-confidence and adaptive decision-making from session to session, supported by their own preparation and reflective practice. These findings indicate that teachers' professional readiness and capacity for spontaneous adaptation are variables that cannot be ignored when evaluating the quality of implementation, and suggest that teacher education programs should incorporate opportunities for guided practice with feedback rather than one-time strategy training.

Curriculum Alignment and Exam Preparation

Sari and Zuhriyyah (2023) concluded that the choice of strategies is strongly influenced by students' needs and shaped by the classroom situation. This study confirms these findings while also demonstrating that many factors influencing teachers' pedagogical decisions extend beyond the classroom to the institutional and policy levels. Teachers' awareness that role-playing would be assessed in the end-of-year oral exam, combined with the alignment of this strategy with the student-centered principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, substantially strengthened their commitment to this strategy. These findings indicate that teachers' pedagogical decisions are shaped by a variety of layered factors, ranging from students' current affective needs to curriculum policy requirements a multilevel understanding that is essential for designing contextually relevant professional development programs.

5. Conclusion

This study indeed reveals that the implementation of role-play strategies in speaking instruction by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in eighth-grade junior high school classes occurs through five sequential and interrelated phases: scenario planning; instruction and demonstration; role assignment; facilitation of interaction and scaffolding; and feedback and reflection. Its

implementation is also highly student-centered and flexible, allowing students the freedom to develop their own dialogues within a communicative framework an approach that appears particularly valuable for novice teachers adapting new strategies to their own contexts. Of the 16 indicators on the observation sheet, 13 were correctly observed, indicating a fairly successful outcome despite the teacher's lack of prior experience with this strategy.

In addition, four key pedagogical considerations were found to influence the teacher's implementation decisions: pronunciation development as the primary learning objective; student self-confidence as the greatest affective challenge; the teacher's status as a novice role-play practitioner, which was gradually overcome through self-directed preparation and adaptive teaching; and the alignment of role-play with the student-centered principles of the Merdeka Curriculum and the school's speaking exam requirements.

These findings strongly indicate that role-playing can be a relevant and applicable strategy in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction at the junior high school level, and that its success depends heavily on three interrelated factors: the teacher's pedagogical readiness and ability to make adaptive decisions, the emotionally supportive classroom environment created by the teacher, and the alignment between instructional choices and institutional priorities.

In accordance with guidelines to avoid overgeneralization, these findings are limited by the context of a single teacher and one eighth-grade class at a junior high school, three observation sessions, and a qualitative data collection instrument. Therefore, the generalizability of these findings to different school contexts, grade levels, or teachers should be approached with great caution.

Suggestions

For Teaching Practice: Teachers are strongly encouraged to integrate structured role-playing by: (1) providing an explicit speaking assessment rubric to clarify expectations and support self-evaluation; (2) designing follow-up activities that will encourage broader language production, such as contextual conversation simulations or short role-based presentations; and (3) creating numerous intentional opportunities to reflect on both linguistic performance (pronunciation, grammar) and affective experiences (self-confidence, anxiety).

For Teacher Training and Professional Development: Professional development programs must set aside dedicated time for teachers—especially novice teachers—to: (1) practice designing role-play activities and adapting them to diverse classroom contexts; (2) practice and reflect on their implementation before fully applying them in the classroom; and (3) develop strategies for managing students' affective responses and building confidence in speaking contexts.

For Future Research: It is recommended that: (1) research the long-term implementation of role-playing to assess students' speaking skill development as

well as sustained changes in teaching practices; (2) involve a large number of English teachers and classes from diverse school contexts to broaden representativeness; (3) use validated speaking assessment tools, such as analytical rubrics or proficiency-based speaking tests; and (4) conduct comparative studies that also examine how the implementation of role-playing varies based on teachers' levels of experience.

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