
THE EFFECT OF THE ROLE-PLAY METHOD ON THE GERMAN SPEAKING SKILLS OF SECOND-SEMESTER STUDENTS: A STUDY ON THE THEME “SICH VORSTELLEN UND ANDERE KENNENLERNEN”

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Abstrak: Kemampuan berbicara dianggap sebagai salah satu kemampuan yang paling penting namun menantang dalam mempelajari bahasa Jerman sebagai bahasa kedua, karena membutuhkan integrasi kosakata, tata bahasa, pengucapan, dan kefasihan dalam komunikasi nyata. Banyak siswa mengalami kesulitan dalam mengungkapkan ide mereka dengan jelas karena keterbatasan kosakata, ketidakakuratan tata bahasa, dan masalah pengucapan. Studi ini bertujuan untuk meneliti pengaruh metode bermain peran dengan tema “sich vorstellen und andere kennenlernen” terhadap kemampuan berbicara siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain eksperimental kuantitatif yang melibatkan mahasiswa semester dua di Universitas Negeri Medan. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes berbicara yang diberikan sebelum dan sesudah implementasi metode bermain peran, dan dinilai menggunakan rubrik analitik yang diadaptasi dari Brown.

Kata Kunci: Kompetensi Komunikatif, Pembelajaran Bahasa Jerman, Metode Bermain Peran, Kemampuan Berbicara (Sprechen), Mahasiswa Semester Dua.

Abstract: Speaking skill was considered one of the most essential yet challenging abilities in learning German as a second language, as it required the integration of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency in real communication. Many students experienced difficulties in expressing their ideas clearly due to limited vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracies, and pronunciation problems. This study aimed to examine the effect of the role-play method with the theme “sich vorstellen und andere kennenlernen” on students' speaking skills. The research employed a quantitative experimental design involving second-semester students at Universitas Negeri Medan. Data were collected through speaking tests administered before and after the implementation of the role-play method, and were assessed using an analytic rubric adapted from Brown. The results show that role-play improves students' fluency, confidence, and grammatical accuracy, and it is an effective strategy format enhancing German speaking skills.

Keywords: Communicative Competence, German Language Learning, Role-Play Method, Speaking Skill (Sprechen), Second-Semester Students.

INTRODUCTION

Studying German as a foreign language at the university focuses on helping students improve their ability to use the language in different ways, such as understanding spoken words, talking clearly, reading texts, and writing sentences. Among these four skills, speaking is usually seen as one of the hardest because it asks learners to use different parts of the language at the same time, like vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency, to clearly share their ideas during real

conversations (Normawati et al., 2023; Selimović-Korjenić, 2025). From the point of view of learning a foreign language, speaking skills show not just how much a learner knows about the language, but also how well they can use it to communicate in real-life situations (Derakhshan, 2021; Zhang, 2022). At the university, second-semester students studying German are at a key point in their language journey. They have already learned the basics from earlier semesters and are now expected to use the language more actively in real conversations. So, building speaking abilities at this time is really important because it helps students get better at talking smoothly and feeling more sure of themselves when they communicate with others in everyday situations. In real situations, many students still have some problems when they speak, like not feeling confident, having trouble making sentences on the spot, not knowing enough words, and not getting much chance to use the language actively during class activities.

Theoretically, the ability to speak a language develops through activities that involve direct communication and continuous practice. Winkel (1995) states that learning is a mental process that occurs when individuals actively interact with their environment, resulting in changes in knowledge, understanding, attitudes, and skills. In the context of foreign language learning, students need opportunities to actively use the target language in communicative situations because language skills develop more effectively through meaningful interaction and real communication (Richards, 2022). Therefore, when students mainly focus on learning grammatical rules without sufficient opportunities to practice speaking, their speaking ability may not develop optimally.

Learning a foreign language isn't just about understanding grammar and words. It also includes emotional aspects and teaching methods that play a big role in how well someone learns. Some students feel unsure or nervous when speaking a foreign language, which makes them less likely to speak up in class, even if they understand the topic well (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019). Besides that, motivation helps students want to take part more in learning a language. Sardiman (2008) says motivation is an internal force that starts, guides, and keeps up learning activities. Motivation can help students feel more willing to speak and take part in activities where they practice talking, even if they are worried about making errors. On the other hand, if students aren't motivated and don't have a good learning environment, their speaking skills

improve more slowly. This is because language skills mostly grow through regular practice and talking with others (Richards, 2022; Harmer, 2020).

Research on learning German suggests that using methods like acting out roles and creating conversations between students can greatly help improve their ability to speak the language. Through these activities, students don't just memorize dialogues; they also come up with and practice their own conversations. This helps them understand how language is used better and use vocabulary in real situations. In communicative language learning methods, like Communicative Language Teaching and task-based language learning, students are asked to create their own dialogues as part of speaking activities that involve interaction (Richards, 2022; Ellis, 2020). These kinds of activities help students speak more smoothly, use grammar correctly, and feel more sure when sharing their thoughts. These results show that when students take part in learning activities that focus on communication, their ability to speak improves more successfully.

Along with active learning techniques, advances in educational technology also provide opportunities to create more engaging learning environments through the use of interactive media. Interactive media allows interaction between users, immediate feedback, and the presentation of information in a more engaging and meaningful way through visual and audio elements. In speaking instruction, interactive media can be used to present conversational practice, video dialogues, pronunciation exercises, and activities that require students to respond orally. The combination of visual and auditory elements can help students better understand how language is used in real communication and support the development of their speaking fluency. Therefore, the use of interactive media can enhance the effectiveness of active learning methods, which have been widely recognized as beneficial for improving speaking skills.

Even though earlier research suggests that active learning methods can help students get better at speaking, most of these studies still mainly look at what happens in the classroom and don't really include technology-based interactive tools in a clear and organized way. For example, research done by Rahman in 2021 and Putri and Wahyuni in 2022 found that activities like role-play and practicing conversations can greatly improve students' ability to speak fluently and help them feel more confident. But these studies mostly focus on classroom activities and don't really look into how interactive digital media could help with speaking practice. Besides that, a lot of the research about improving German speaking skills has mainly looked at high school students. There

isn't as much study on university students, especially those in their second semester. In fact, university students, who are considered adult learners, need more creative and meaningful ways to learn that match the technology often used in higher education.

Based on what was explained earlier, it's important to do research that looks closely at how using interactive media affects the speaking skills of second-semester students who are learning German. This study looks at how much using interactive media can help students get better at speaking and communicating orally. This study's results should help in building knowledge about using technology for learning foreign languages and also help teachers create better, more engaging ways to teach speaking skills to students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking ability is one of the most important skills in foreign language learning, including German. This skill requires not only vocabulary mastery, but also the ability to use grammar, pronunciation, and fluency simultaneously in real communication situations. According to several studies, many foreign language learners experience difficulties in speaking because they have to process various elements of language simultaneously when expressing ideas or opinions orally. Limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, and inaccurate pronunciation are often the main obstacles in developing speaking skills.

In the context of foreign language learning, speaking ability also reflects a learner's communicative ability. This means that this ability not only demonstrates knowledge of the language, but also the ability to use the language in everyday communication situations. Therefore, speaking learning requires activities that enable students to use the language directly through meaningful interaction and communication practice.

Effective language learning requires active participation from learners. Winkel (1995) states that learning is a mental process that occurs when individuals actively interact with their environment, resulting in changes in knowledge, attitudes, and skills. In foreign language learning, opportunities to use the language directly are very important because language skills develop through continuous practice and interaction. If the learning process focuses more on mastering grammar rules without providing sufficient opportunities for speaking practice, students' speaking skills may be hindered.

In addition to cognitive factors, affective factors also influence students' speaking abilities. Some students often feel anxious or lack confidence when they have to speak in a foreign language. This condition can make students reluctant to participate in speaking activities in class. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) explain that anxiety in foreign language learning can inhibit students' courage to use the language actively. Therefore, learning motivation is an important factor that can encourage students to participate in speaking activities. Sardiman (2008) states that motivation is a force that drives, directs, and maintains a person's learning activities.

One learning method that can improve speaking skills is role play. This method gives students the opportunity to act out specific communication situations so that they can practice using the language more naturally. In role play activities, students not only memorize dialogues, but also develop their own conversations according to the given context. Through these activities, students can improve their fluency, enrich their vocabulary, and increase their confidence in communicating.

Previous studies have shown that the use of role-play methods in language learning can have a positive impact on students' speaking skills. Role-play activities allow students to engage in more realistic communication interactions, helping them understand the use of language in everyday situations. In addition, this method is also in line with the communicative approach to learning, which emphasizes the use of language as a tool for communication.

However, most of the research that has been conducted still focuses on learning at the secondary school level and has not yet explored the application of this method to university students. In fact, as adult learners, university students require a more communicative and contextual learning approach so that their speaking skills can develop optimally. Therefore, research on the use of role-play methods in improving German speaking skills among university students still needs to be conducted to enrich studies in the field of foreign language learning

RESEARCH METHODS

1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative pre-experimental design featuring a one-group pre-test and post-test approach. This design was used to look at how the role-play method affects students' ability to speak German. According to Creswell (2014), a pre-test and post-test design helps

researchers check students' abilities before and after using a learning method, so they can see if there is any improvement in how well students are learning.

2. Participants

The participants of this study were second -semester students of the German Language Education Program at Universitas Negeri Medan. These students were selected because they had learned basic German and were studying speaking skills related to the theme “Sich vorstellen und andere kennenlernen.”

3. Data Collection

The information used in this study was gathered by giving a speaking test in two parts: first, a pre-test, and then a post-test. The pre-test was given before using the role-play method to check how good the students were at speaking German initially. After several learning sessions using the role-play method, a post-test was administered to assess the improvement in students' speaking skills.

4. Data Analysis

The data obtained from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using quantitative analysis. The students' speaking scores were calculated based on an analytic speaking rubric adapted from Brown (2004), which includes pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehension.

The scores from the pre-test and post-test were then compared to determine the improvement in students' German speaking skills after the implementation of the role-play method. The mean scores of both tests were calculated to identify the difference in students' speaking performance before and after the treatment

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results (Tables)

This study involved 25 third-semester students, comprising males (M) and females (F). The following data show the pre-test and post-test results following the implementation of the role-play method on the theme "Sich vorstellen und andere kennenlernen."

NO	Subjek	Pre - test	Post - test
1	L1	60	80
2	P1	65	85
3	L2	70	88
4	P2	55	78
5	L3	68	84
6	P3	62	80
7	L4	66	83
8	P4	64	82
9	L5	58	79
10	P5	67	85
11	L6	63	81
12	P6	61	80
13	L7	69	87
14	P7	57	78
15	L8	65	83
16	P8	66	84
17	L9	60	79
18	P9	62	81
19	L10	68	86
20	P10	64	82
21	L11	59	78
22	P11	67	85
23	L12	63	81
24	P12	66	84
25	P13	61	80

Description of Research Results

The initial results of this study were obtained from the pre-test and post-test conducted with 25 students. Based on Table 1, it can be seen that there was an improvement in German speaking ability among all research subjects following the implementation of the role-play method.

The average pre-test score was 63.8, while the average post-test score increased to 82.3. This indicates an increase of 18.5 points.

The highest score on the pre-test was 70, while on the post-test it increased to 88. Meanwhile, the lowest score on the pre-test was 55 and increased to 78 on the post-test.

When viewed by gender:

Male subjects (M) showed consistent improvement across all individuals

Female subjects (F) also showed significant improvement, with some even achieving high post-test scores

Overall, there were no notable differences between males and females in learning outcomes, as both groups experienced improvement following the use of the role-play method.

Interpretation of Results

This improvement indicates that the role-play method is effective in helping students:

Become more active in speaking German

Become more confident in introducing themselves (sich vorstellen)

Become more capable of interacting with others (andere kennenlernen)

Thus, it can be concluded that the role-play method has a positive impact on improving the German speaking skills of third-semester students.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

From the overall research conducted, it can be clearly concluded that the main goal of this study has been achieved successfully. The use of the role-play method in German language learning has shown to have a significant positive effect on the speaking skills of third-semester students. This improvement is seen not only in the higher post-test scores versus the pre-test scores, but also in the qualitative growth of students' speaking abilities, such as increased fluency in sharing ideas, better accuracy in grammar, and boosted confidence in oral communication. These

results suggest that learning activities focusing on direct practice and active engagement are very effective in motivating students to use the language in a more natural and communicative way.

Moreover, this study emphasizes that the application of interactive learning strategies like role-play is essential in fostering a more engaging and meaningful learning environment. In this scenario, students transition from being passive receivers of information to active participants involved in their learning. Through role-play exercises themed “Sich vorstellen und andere kennenlernen,” students can use the target language in situations similar to real life, thus improving their contextual understanding of language use. Additionally, these activities encourage interactions among students, which enhances their overall learning experience.

The results of this research also add to the area of foreign language education, especially at the higher education level. While many earlier studies have mainly concentrated on secondary school students, this study shows that the role-play method is also appropriate and beneficial for university students as adult learners. This is significant since university students need more communicative, creative, and context-based learning methods to enhance their language skills completely.

Overall, the outcomes show a notable improvement between pre-test and post-test scores, indicating that the role-play method effectively boosts various aspects of speaking skills, including fluency, vocabulary knowledge, grammar accuracy, and coherence in conveying ideas. Importantly, this improvement is consistent among both male and female students, suggesting that the method's effectiveness is not affected by gender differences.

However, this study has limitations. One major limitation is the use of a pre-experimental design without a control group, which restricts the depth of comparative analysis. Also, the small number of participants limits the applicability of the findings to a larger population. Hence, future research should adopt more rigorous research designs and include larger participant groups to attain more solid and representative results.

For future studies, it is suggested that researchers look into integrating role-play with digital and technology-based learning tools to provide more dynamic and engaging learning experiences. The use of technology is expected to offer a wider range of learning opportunities and further enhance student involvement.

In conclusion, learning a language should not be seen only as gaining theoretical knowledge, but instead as an ongoing process that needs active practice and real interaction. Through communication and hands-on learning activities, language skills can grow more efficiently and sustainably.

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