

EFFECTIVENESS OF ROLE PLAY IN IMPROVING COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Darsan

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to comprehensively analyse and measure the effectiveness of the role-play method in improving preschool children's communication competence. in the development of social and academic skills, communicating effectively is not just about conveying wishes, but also forms the foundation of complex social interactions helping preschool children to build positive relationships with peers, teachers, and the surrounding environment, Role play is a highly effective method of improving preschool children's communication competence. By integrating this approach into the educational curriculum, educators can provide rich and immersive learning experiences that support children's social, emotional and cognitive development. The research methodology used a quasi-experimental approach with a non-equivalent control group design. The research subjects were 25 preschool children who were selected by purposive sampling. The research instruments used included communication competence observation sheets, interview guidelines, and documentation that had been validated by early childhood education experts. Data analysis used paired sample t-test and independent sample t-test statistical tests with a significance level of 5%,. Role play is a highly effective method of improving preschool children's communication competence. By integrating this approach into the educational curriculum, educators can provide rich and immersive learning experiences that support children's social, emotional and cognitive development

Keywords: Role Play, Communication Competence, Preschool Children



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INTRODUCTION

Communication competence in preschoolers is a critical foundation in the development of their social and academic skills. (Tsatzali & Beazidou, 2023). During this period, the ability to communicate effectively is not just about conveying wishes, but also forms the basis of complex social interactions. (Ramsook et al., 2019) Children with good communication competence are able to express their thoughts, feelings and needs clearly, which in turn helps them build positive relationships with their peers, teachers and neighbours. (Simacek et al., 2021)

The importance of communication competence is evident from its role in children's cognitive and emotional development. Through communication, children learn to understand others' perspectives, develop empathy and build complex social skills. The ability to listen, speak and interact effectively enables them to resolve conflicts, negotiate and co-operate in a variety of social context.(Mcwayne & Sanders,

2019). Furthermore, good communication competence contributes significantly to future academic success, karena mendukung kemampuan belajar, memahami instruksi, dan berpartisipasi aktif dalam proses pendidikan. (Jannah, 2016)

Communication competence is a critical foundation for children's social, emotional and academic development. According to (Smeekens et al., 2022), Effective communication skills in the preschool years not only influence social interactions, but are also a predictor of future educational success. Disruptions or delays in communication competence can have a long-term impact on children's psychosocial development. (Safitri & Endang, 2018)

Recent research has revealed that innovative learning methods such as role play have significant potential in developing children's communication skills.(Qobilovna, 2023) emphasises that early intervention through engaging and participatory methods can substantially improve children's ability to express themselves, understand others' perspectives, and build positive social relationships. (Mcwayne & Sanders, 2019) in his study showed that children who received communication stimulus through interactive methods showed more optimal cognitive and social development compared to those who only received conventional methods.(Manoi et al., 2022)

Currently, the early childhood education system still faces significant challenges in developing communication skills through innovative and engaging learning methods. The conventional methods that are still dominant tend to be teacher-centred, where children receive more information passively compared to active opportunities to express themselves.(Sultan et al., 2022) This traditional approach limits the space for children to develop communication skills holistically, from both verbal and non-verbal aspects. As a result, many preschoolers experience difficulties in developing complex communication skills, such as the ability to negotiate, express feelings, and interact socially effectively..(Georgeson et al., 2014) This methodological problem is exacerbated by educators' lack of understanding of the importance of meaningful and enjoyable learning methods for early childhood. Most educational institutions still use monotonous conventional approaches, such as lectures, simple assignments, and drill methods that do not accommodate children's communication development needs (Aydin & Studies, 2021). The lack of a variety of creative learning methods such as role-playing, simulation, and other interactive methods causes children to lose the opportunity to explore their communication skills optimally. (Greenwood et al., 2019) This has the potential to hinder children's social-emotional and academic development, and limit their potential to develop complex and adaptive communication skills. (Rahiem, 2021).

The purpose of this study is to comprehensively analyse and measure the effectiveness of the role play method in improving preschool children's communication competence. Specifically, the study aims to: (1) Identify the effect of role-playing on children's verbal ability, including speech clarity, sentence structure, and fluency; (2) evaluate the impact of the method on social interaction skills, such as the ability to negotiate, empathise and understand others' perspectives; (3) measure changes in children's non-verbal expressions and emotional communication during the role play proces; (4) comparing the development of communication between the group that received the role-playing intervention and the control group that used conventional methods; and (5) generate practical recommendations for educators and parents in implementing role-playing strategies as an effective method for developing early childhood communication competence. Through a quasi-experimental approach with a pretest-posttest design, this study aims to provide empirical evidence on the potential of role-playing as an innovative intervention in supporting holistic communication development in preschool children.

The level of novelty in this study lies in the comprehensive and innovative approach in exploring the role play method as a strategic intervention to develop preschoolers' communication competence. Compared to previous studies that tend to focus on a single aspect of communication, this study offers a multidimensional analysis that includes verbal, non-verbal, and socio-emotional dimensions. The

uniqueness of the study is also reflected in the methodological design that integrates quantitative and qualitative assessments, using comprehensive and contextualised measurement instruments

. In addition, this study does not merely test the effectiveness of the method, but also aims to produce a role-playing intervention model that can be practically applied in various early childhood education settings. Another transformative aspect is the focus on developing an adaptive intervention framework, taking into account the diversity of children's social and cultural backgrounds, thus providing significant theoretical and practical contributions to the field of early childhood education and communication development.

Fremwork

Role Play Learning Method

Role playing is a learning method or interactive approach that involves individuals in imitating or acting out certain characters, situations, or behaviors in a simulated context. Role playing has multidimensional goals, namely developing empathy skills, improving communication skills, building a deep understanding of different perspectives, and encouraging active learning through direct experience. (Veryawan & Jellysha, 2020) Types of role play include: (1) social role play, which focuses on human interaction; (2) professional role play, which simulates a particular work or professional situation; (3) educational role play, which is used as a learning strategy in areas such as education, psychology, and training; and (4) therapeutic role play, which is utilized in counseling and personal skills development (Ulah et al., 2020). This method has proven effective in providing meaningful learning experiences, encouraging active participation, and facilitating complex understanding through direct involvement of participants in various simulated scenarios..

Communication competence of preschool children.

Communication competence of preschool children is a fundamental ability that covers various important aspects in social interaction and language development. According to recent research **from**(Marwah, 2022), kompetensi komunikasi pada usia prasekolah meliputi beberapa dimensi utama yang saling terkait. Aspek verbal mencakup kemampuan berbicara yang mencakup artikulasi kata, pembentukan kalimat sederhana, penguasaan kosakata yang berkembang, dan kemampuan menyampaikan pikiran serta perasaan secara jelas(Magdalena et al., 2021; Sakti & Farhan, 2020).

Nonverbal aspects of preschoolers' communication competence are equally important, which include facial expressions, eye contact, gestures and body language that support communication. Active listening skills are a critical component that enables children to understand information, follow instructions and respond appropriately in social interactions. Research(Johnson et al., 2020) emphasises that effective listening skills contribute significantly to preschoolers' social-emotional and cognitive development (Hasanah et al., 2022; Hasni, 2019).

Social interaction is an integrative aspect of communication competence, where children begin to develop the ability to negotiate, share, empathise and build relationships with peers and adults. Study(Azwi et al., 2022) revealed that communication competence in preschoolers goes beyond technical language skills to include complex social skills, including understanding the context of conversations, adjusting communication styles, and demonstrating social sensitivity in various interaction situations.(Qobilovna, 2023)

The Relationship Between Role Play and Language Development

Role play is an important activity that significantly contributes to early childhood language development. According to Vygotsky's still-relevant research, role play creates a zone of proximal development where

children can explore their language abilities through dynamic social interactions. Recent studies by (G. & Bote, 2021) shows that through role play, children develop complex communicative skills, including the ability to use language contextually, understand conversational structures, and develop a richer vocabulary. Role play has a close relationship with early childhood language development as it involves intensive verbal communication and social interaction. In role-playing, children mimic, create dialogue, and conform to the characters being played, which helps them expand their vocabulary, improve pronunciation, and understand language structure.. Research shows that role-playing can improve children's expressive skills because it involves an interactive process that nurtures natural speaking and listening skills (Rambe et al., 2021) noted that storytelling and storytelling methods on children's speaking ability can be seen based on increasing mastery of the number of vocabulary, stimulating children's imagination and creativity, training language learning skills and verbal expression, improving oral communication, encouraging children to be more expressive, improving children's communication, imagination, and collaboration(Safitri & Endang, 2018).

The effectiveness of role-playing in language development is also supported by various studies which found that this activity enriches children's vocabulary through interaction with peers. In addition, role play provides a supportive environment for children to learn language contextually, such as in the pronunciation of new words or phrases during the game.(Jayanthi & Pratiwi, 2021) Children who engage in role play show improved sentence construction skills and express ideas more clearly (Qobilovna, 2023; Yanti et al., 2022). Empirical research over the past five years provides strong evidence of the effectiveness of role-playing in improving language skills. A longitudinal study conducted by (Sunardi, 2011) demonstrated that children who regularly engaged in role-playing activities showed significant improvements in language pragmatics, narrative ability, and communication flexibility..

Further research emphasizes that role-playing not only helps children in linguistic aspects but also improves their social and emotional skills. By understanding the roles of others, children learn to speak from different perspectives, which in turn hones their language skills. This activity provides a fun and effective learning approach to early childhood education, helping them develop better communication skills while playing.(Bakri & Nasucha, 2021; Irkinovich, 2022).

The psychological mechanisms behind the positive impact of role play on language development involve complex cognitive and social processes.(Balter & Tamis-LeMonda, 2006) in their study in Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood explains that when children engage in role play, they not only develop communication skills, but also build a deep social understanding. They learn to adapt language to the role, understand the perspectives of others, and use more sophisticated communication strategies..(Irkinovich, 2022) also asserts that role play provides a safe space for children to experiment with language, reduces communication anxiety, and encourages freer and more creative self-expression..

Methodology

The methodology of this study used a quasi-experimental approach with a non-equivalent control group design. The subjects of the study were 25 preschool children selected by purposive sampling from an early childhood education institution, with 13 children in the experimental group and 12 children in the control group. The sampling technique took into account the characteristics of age 4-5 years, relatively homogeneous levels of communication development, and permission from parents. The research instruments used included communication competence observation sheets, interview guidelines, and documentation that had been validated by early childhood education experts. The independent variable in this study was the role-playing method, while the dependent variable was the communication competence of preschool children..(Sarmanu, 2017)

The research procedure was carried out through several systematic stages. The initial stage began with a pre-test to measure initial communication competency in both groups using a prepared

observation instrument. The experimental group then received role-playing intervention for 6 meetings with a duration of 30 minutes each session, while the control group continued to follow conventional learning activities. Role-playing materials were designed with scenarios that were in accordance with the stages of child development, covering daily life themes such as family, profession, and social interaction. After the intervention was given, a post-test was conducted to measure changes in communication competency. Data analysis used paired sample t-test and independent sample t-test statistical tests with a significance level of 5% to test significant differences in communication competency between the experimental and control groups before and after treatment (Budiyo, 2016).

Results and Discussion

The research was conducted at Kemala Bhayangkari Kindergarten 33 Kencong which consists of 3 classes, namely class A1, B1, and B2. The class taken in this study was only class B2 which had 20 students but there was 1 student who rarely came so that it became 19 students, then each student was given treatment by giving an initial test (pre-test) and after the treatment was given a test (post-test), the following are the results of the Descriptive Statistics of the study before the research was carried out

Table.1. Descriptive Statistics Bermain Peran

Descriptive Statistics							
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
control	19	10	20	30	24.37	2.629	6.912
eksperimen	19	6	30	36	32.84	1.463	2.140
Valid N (listwise)	19						

Based on the descriptive statistical table presented, it can be interpreted that the study on the effectiveness of role play in improving preschool children's communication competence involved two groups (control and experiment) each with 19 participants. The control group showed a range of scores from 20 to 30 with an average of 24.37 and a standard deviation of 2.629, while the experimental group had a wider range of scores from 6 to 36 with an average of 32.84 and a lower standard deviation of 1.463. The significant difference in the mean score (an increase of 8.47 points) and variance (a decrease from 6.912 to 2.140) indicated that the role play intervention had a substantial positive impact in improving preschool children's communication competence. This suggests that the role play method is effective in helping children develop communication skills, with the experimental group showing a more consistent and higher increase in communication skills compared to the control group.

Table 2. Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
pre test	.181	19	.102	.934	19	.203
post test	.227	19	.011	.916	19	.095

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Normality test using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk aims to test the distribution of research data. For the pre-test, Kolmogorov-Smirnov showed a significance of 0.102 (> 0.05) and Shapiro-Wilk 0.203 (> 0.05), indicating that the pre-test data was normally distributed. While the post-test had a different pattern, with Kolmogorov-Smirnov showing a significance of 0.011 (< 0.05) which means it was not normally

distributed, but Shapiro-Wilk still showed 0.095 (> 0.05). This difference in results indicates the complexity of data distribution and requires caution in selecting further statistical analysis methods, as well as considering the use of non-parametric tests or data transformation for further analysis

Table 3
Test of Homogeneity of Variance

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
hasil belajar	Based on Mean	4.536	1	36	.040
	Based on Median	3.268	1	36	.079
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	3.268	1	28.277	.081
	Based on trimmed mean	4.652	1	36	.038

Levene's Homogeneity of Variance Test tests whether the variances of the groups in the study are homogeneous (the same). In this result, there are four slightly different test methods, but the main focus is on the significance value. Based on the mean (4.536) and trimmed mean (4.652), the significance values are 0.040 and 0.038, both of which are < 0.05 , indicating a significant difference in variance between groups. Meanwhile, based on the median, the significance value is greater than 0.05 (0.079 and 0.081), indicating no significant difference in variance. In practice, these results indicate that researchers need to be careful in interpreting the results of further analysis and may consider non-parametric statistical tests or correction methods for variance differences.

Table 3.
Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	pre test - post test	-7.474	2.318	.532	-8.591	-6.356	-14.052	18	.000

Paired Samples Test analysis revealed a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores, with a mean difference of -7.474 indicating an increase in communication competence. The t-value of -14.052 with 18 degrees of freedom and a significance of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) indicated a highly significant statistical change. The 95% confidence interval with a lower limit of -8.591 and an upper limit of -6.356 strengthened the evidence of consistent improvement. The results of this test provide strong empirical evidence that role-playing intervention significantly improves preschool children's communication competence, with a substantial and statistically reliable difference in scores..

Discussion

Role playing is a pedagogical strategy that has proven to be very effective in developing preschool children's communication competencies. According to research (Bakri & Nasucha, 2021), Role play provides a safe and stimulating environment for children to explore their language skills. Through this activity, children can develop pragmatic skills, build vocabulary, and improve their ability to interact socially in a complex manner.

Through role-playing, children learn to express themselves, understand others' perspectives, and respond effectively in social situations. This is important for the development of interpersonal communication skills that support their future learning. A study also emphasized that teacher-guided play experiences can

increase children's engagement and accelerate social and emotional learning (Aeni et al., 2017; Ernawati et al., 2023).

Role-playing is not only beneficial for children, but also provides an opportunity for teachers to use a play-based approach to teaching. This approach allows for the integration of child-led and teacher-directed activities, creating a balanced and enjoyable learning environment. Research shows that well-designed interactions can strengthen social relationships between children and encourage better communication skills (Aeni et al., 2017; Aulina et al., 2014).

In addition, role-playing includes characteristics of meaningful, active, and fun learning, which are in accordance with the holistic development of children. By giving children the freedom to explore roles, they can improve their problem-solving skills, creative thinking, and public speaking skills. This process also helps them build confidence in communicating (Aisyah et al., 2024; Trisnawati et al., 2024).

Empirical studies show the significant impact of role playing on communication development. (Taslim, 2022) found a 35% increase in communication skills in children who regularly engaged in role-playing activities. The main mechanism underlying this effectiveness is the opportunity for children to practice speaking in a variety of social contexts, develop empathy, and understand others' perspectives through different role simulations. Cognitive and social aspects of role play play a key role in the development of communication competencies. (Nst et al., 2023) explains that through role-playing, children learn to adapt language to context, understand conversational rules, and develop more complex communication skills. This activity helps children overcome communication barriers, increase self-confidence, and develop effective speaking strategies. (Cendekia et al., 2021; Safitri & Endang, 2018)

The effectiveness of role play in improving preschool children's communication competence has been widely proven by recent studies. Role play allows children to participate in social scenarios that encourage verbal interaction, vocabulary development, and understanding of two-way communication. In the context of preschool education, role play activities such as daily life simulations or imaginative stories have been shown to improve communication and collaboration skills among children. (Marwah, 2022; Technology et al., 2022)

Study (Saimun, 2022) shows that role-playing has advantages over traditional teaching methods in developing communication competencies. Role-play-based interventions have been shown to be more effective in stimulating receptive and expressive language development, helping children develop narrative skills, and increasing communication flexibility.

The practical implications of these studies are significant for early childhood education. (Nurbayanni et al., 2023) confirms the importance of designing learning environments rich in role-play opportunities to optimise children's communication development. This strategy is not only effective in improving language skills, but also helps children develop social, emotional and cognitive skills that are fundamental to their development. (Doludea & Nuraeni, 2018; Nst et al., 2023)

In addition, role-playing encompasses the characteristics of meaningful, active and fun learning, which is in line with the holistic development of children. By giving children the freedom to explore roles, they can improve their problem-solving, creative thinking and public speaking skills. This process also helps them build confidence in communicating (Cendekia et al., 2021)

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Conclusions and Suggestions

In conclusion, role-playing is a highly effective method in improving preschool children's communication competence. By integrating this approach into the educational curriculum, educators can provide rich and immersive learning experiences that support children's social, emotional and cognitive development.

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