

Research Article

Exploring the fluency and comprehensibility of a role-play-based speaking in a tourism area university

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doi: [10.33750/ijhi.v6i2.180](https://doi.org/10.33750/ijhi.v6i2.180)**Abstract**

This research aims to measure the performance of role-play-based speaking in a tourism area university. This research is projected to determine the student's fluency and comprehension level on role-play-based speaking in a tourism area university. This research also explores the implementation of role-play-based speaking in a tourism area university. The researchers employed exploratory research of the small sample size; twenty-nine students were selected purposively to participate in this study voluntarily. In this research, the instruments that researchers used were speaking tests and an interview guide. The speaking test is designed to measure English speaking proficiency. The speaking test focuses on students' fluency and comprehensibility levels through role-play-based speaking. The researchers used dialogue to measure the student's views on implementing role-play-based speaking; this data was obtained from the interview. The interview results were analyzed in three steps: data condensation, data display, drawing and verifying conclusion. This research demonstrates the students' level of role-play-based speaking. The result showed that role play can improve students speaking performance in fluency and comprehensibility. This research highlights the positive impact of role-play-based speaking activities in an English Tourism class. The findings suggest that students engaging in role-play exercises demonstrate good fluency and comprehensibility in spoken English. Moreover, lecturers and students benefit from this approach by gaining confidence and enjoyment in speaking. Through this exploratory research, researchers generated preliminary hypotheses, which can be further tested using other research designs like descriptive or experimental research.

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**1. Introduction**

It is undeniable that being able to communicate in English is a priceless asset in the competitive globalization era. Since English is becoming a more meaningful and widely used language for communication, its difficulty might indicate degrading behavior, which leads to isolation from the global community. The capacity to converse in English expands

people's mental horizons and can also be used to resolve international ties between countries. English in Indonesia is a prominent international and foreign language (Kirkpatrick & Liddicoat, 2017). As the international language, English by spoken for international purposes, such as communicating internationally, allowing speakers with the first different languages to understand one another both orally and written.

English is an international language used globally for international communication between countries and local

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importance as a language of wider communication within multilingual societies (Clyne & Sharifian, 2008). That means that English has also become the most widely spoken language. In Indonesia, English is one of the lessons that students must learn; it is a compulsory subject in Junior High Schools and Senior High Schools (Nurweni & Read, 1999). To have good English, students have to master the four basic language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

As the primary communication tool, speaking becomes a vital component to be mastered by the students. Students in education are required to be able to talk well. The students must be able to capture the knowledge during the learning process to link knowledge production and practice (Bullough et al., 2013). They need to understand information. English as a foreign language is the language one uses to communicate, especially with those from another country. Suggests that English is not the mother tongue in the country where it is studied and has no internal function.

English is a means to build global communication (Canagarajah, 2007). If English is appropriate, it will foster good communication. However, when used sparingly, it can cause a wrong response. Therefore, persons in the tourism industry, especially in front-line positions, should continue to have English proficiency, enabling them to use English effectively. In tourism, tourist activity requires English usage; therefore, English mastery is necessary.

In the field of the tourism industry, Indonesia has great potential and diverse tourism activities. It has many tourist destinations with various traditions and cultural festivals. Indonesia wishes for vast territory, which makes this country rich with its natural potential. Tourist destinations range from beaches, lakes, traditional ceremonies of the people, culinary delights, and so on, making it a favorite place for foreign and local tourists. Somebody can sustainably develop natural resources for the tourism industry's growth (Widiastuti et al., 2021).

The presence of foreign tourists in Tana Toraja, Indonesia, positively impacts the community, especially those who live in tourist areas. Get additional income from selling handicrafts (necklaces, bracelets, rings weaving, and carving). The district also gets other positive impacts, namely knowing and understanding English. People in tourist areas can know and understand English when they hear tourists communicating.

Speaking English in the tourist attraction area is very important. Being skilled in speaking English makes selling handicrafts easier (De Azeredo Grunewald, 2002). Children in Tana Toraja, especially those in tourist areas, are skilled at speaking English because they often hear parents and tourists when making buying and selling transactions. Therefore, tourism activities require the use of English. People in tourist areas must be skilled in speaking English to make it easier to communicate with tourists. Therefore, this research aims to measure the performance of role-play-based speaking in a tourism area university. Based on the objectives, the researchers propose research questions as follows:

- What is the student's fluency and comprehensibility level on role-play-based speaking in a tourism area university?
- How is the implementation of role-play-based speaking in a tourism area university?

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

Exploratory research is conducted to investigate a problem that is not clearly defined, has been under-investigated, or is otherwise poorly understood. Exploratory research is a type of research design that aims to explore and gain a deeper understanding of a particular topic, phenomenon, or problem (Stebbins, 2001; Swedberg, 2020). The primary purpose of exploratory research is not to provide conclusive answers or test hypotheses but to generate insights, ideas, and hypotheses for further investigation. Overall, exploratory research is an important initial step in the research process, helping researchers better understand the subject and refine their research questions before conducting more structured and hypothesis-driven studies.

2.2 Participants

Twenty-nine students were selected purposively. Exploratory studies often use smaller sample sizes (Daniel, 2012). The participants belong to the English for Tourism class. The researchers administered this study to the Institutional Review Board of Universitas Kristen Indonesia Toraja in November 2022. Purposive sampling, or judgmental or selective sampling, is a non-probability sampling technique used in research to intentionally select a specific group of individuals or elements from a larger population. Purposive sampling relies on the researcher's judgment or expertise to handpick participants with certain characteristics or qualities relevant to the research objectives (Fain, 2013). The selected participant in this study is representative of the specific traits or characteristics the researchers are interested in studying.

2.3. The Instrument of the Research

In this research, the instruments used are a speaking test and an interview guide. The speaking test measures English proficiency in everyday and workplace contexts (Schmidgall & Powers, 2021). The researchers used dialogue to measure the student's speaking performance with role-play activity. Dialogue that a researcher uses to get information from a person is called an interview. The power of an interview lies in the skill of an interviewer in doing the job. The interviewer must create a peaceful, comfortable, and friendly atmosphere for a data source to provide truthful information. The interviewer has to be artificial to release accurate information without feeling compelled. Interviews were conducted precisely by the researchers who wanted up-to-date on events.

2.4. Procedure of Collecting Data

This exploratory research occurred in naturalistic settings, where researchers interacted with participants in their real-life environment. This allows for a more authentic understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Researchers gathered information in this study by conducting speaking

tests and interviews. These techniques were chosen to elicit rich and detailed responses from participants.

2.5. The Technique of Data Analysis

2.5.1. Descriptive analysis

The speaking test results are analyzed based on criteria that refer to Brown and Abeywickrama (2010). This research focuses on two aspects only, namely fluency and comprehensibility. According to Thomson (2015), fluency is most related to comprehensibility. Grades are assigned in real-time and based on rubrics to avoid bias.

2.5.2. Interview results analysis

According to Miles et al. (2014), the steps to analyze the data are as follows:

2.5.2.1. Data condensation

The researchers focused on converting the streamlined raw data into transcriptions. It aims to find out the findings that guide this research. Then, the data was collected using interviewing and documentation techniques. Classifying the data and noting the important things related to the case discussed in this research because there were unimportant data from the interview stage and data condensation assisted the researchers in centralizing their critical thinking in reducing the data.

2.5.2.2. Data display

This stage would be done after data condensation; hence, it showed clear data in several categories. Thus, data display is called a stage, which provides qualitative data in a short explanation, summary, chart, flowchart, etc. It is easy to understand and continue to the next stage by displaying the data after data condensation.

2.5.2.3. Drawing and verifying the conclusion

After the data display, the last stage in analyzing data is concluding and verifying the results. The collected data is categorized, found to have a pattern, and finally concluded by the researchers. Some specific conclusions are drawn from each participant's answer in the interview. It supported the basic conclusion of this research.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Fluency and Comprehensibility

The first question in this study is, "What is the student's fluency and comprehensibility level on role-play-based speaking in a tourism area university?." In this part, the research demonstrates the students' level of role-play-based speaking. The data were obtained through the speaking test, especially in fluency and comprehensibility, and the results are illustrated below:

Table 1. Result of the Speaking test

No	Name	Fluency		Comprehensibility	
		Score	Criteria	Score	Criteria
1	Student 1	3	Good	3	Good
2	Student 2	3	Good	3	Good
3	Student 3	3	Good	3	Good

4	Student 4	4	Very Good	2	Poor
5	Student 5	4	Very Good	3	Good
6	Student 6	4	Very Good	2	Poor
7	Student 7	5	Excellent	4	Very Good
8	Student 8	4	Very Good	4	Very Good
9	Student 9	5	Excellent	4	Very Good
10	Student 10	4	Good	3	Good
11	Student 11	4	Very Good	3	Good
12	Student 12	3	Good	3	Good
13	Student 13	5	Excellent	3	Good
14	Student 14	2	Poor	2	Poor
15	Student 15	2	Poor	2	Poor
16	Student 16	2	Poor	2	Poor
17	Student 17	5	Excellent	5	Excellent
18	Student 18	4	Good	3	Good
19	Student 19	4	Good	3	Good
20	Student 20	4	Good	3	Good
21	Student 21	5	Excellent	5	Excellent
22	Student 22	5	Excellent	3	Good
23	Student 23	4	Good	3	Good
24	Student 24	5	Excellent	3	Good
25	Student 25	5	Excellent	3	Good
26	Student 26	5	Excellent	3	Good
27	Student 27	5	Excellent	5	Excellent
28	Student 28	4	Good	3	Good
29	Student 29	4	Good	3	Good

In analyzing the speaking test, and after receiving the results, the researchers classified the criteria based on the range of assessment. The level of students' ability in speaking based on role-play-based speaking activity is excellent, very good, good, poor, and very poor.

3.1.1. Fluency

After analyzing the speaking test, especially fluency, the researchers categorized levels based on range. In Table 1, the researchers found that ten students tended to reach an excellent level, meaning they have completed fluency in the language such that their speaking ability is fully expected by educated native speakers. Twelve students are at a good level, meaning they can discuss their interests of competence with reasonable ease. Five students are at a very good level, meaning they can use the language fluently on all levels normally pertinent to professional needs and can participate in any conversation within the range of this experience with a degree of fluency. Three students at poor level mean that students can handle with confidence but not with facility most social situations, including introductions and conversation about current events, as well as work, family, and autobiographical information. Role-play improves oral fluency (Miles et al., 2014).

3.1.2. Comprehensibility

After analyzing the speaking test, especially comprehensibility, the researchers categorized levels based on range. Table 1 shows that eighteen students tended to fall into the good level, meaning that students' comprehension is quite complete at a normal speech rate. Five students tended

to fall into a poor level, meaning they could get the gist of most conversations on non-technical subjects (i.e., topics requiring no specialized knowledge). Three very good-level students can understand any conversation within the range of their experience. Moreover, three students have an excellent level, which means the student can be equivalent to an educated native speaker. Role-play can help students improve comprehensibility (Razali & Ismail, 2017).

3.2. The Implementation of a Role-play-based Speaking

After conducting the speaking test, the next step was interviewing to obtain the information from role-play-based speaking. The second research question of this research is, "How is the implementation of role-play-based speaking in a tourism area university?." The result showed that role play can improve students speaking performance in fluency and comprehensibility. Role-play is an effective technique to animate the teaching and learning atmosphere, arouse learners' interests, and make language acquisition impressive (Liu & Ding, 2009). In the interview, the student stated they became more interested in studying role play because using role play class can be a fun atmosphere class. A role-play technique not only makes the students fluent in speaking but also makes them creative and confident (Neupane, 2019). According to Adib et al. (2018), simulation and role play can motivate students to speak. From the findings, role play can improve the student's speaking performance at Universitas Kristen Indonesia Toraja. Using role play can make students confident in their roles because they explore their character. The activities based on the observation checklist about role play are:

3.2.1. Asking the previous material is meaningful with animated flashcards

Students expressed four statements about lecturers reviewing previous material in the classroom setting. They highlight the positive impact of such a practice on students' learning and retention due to using animated flashcards. Let us break down each statement and explain their implications:

"When lecturers ask the previous material using animation, it makes me remember what I learned in the last meeting" (Interview with Student 5).

This statement indicates that when lecturers revisit and ask questions about previously covered material using animated flashcards, it triggers the student's memory and helps them recall the concepts and information from the last class (Licorish et al., 2018). Regularly reviewing previous topics reinforces the learning and reinforces important points, preventing them from fading away from memory. This review process is beneficial as it ensures that students stay connected to the ongoing learning process and helps them build a solid foundation for future topics.

"If the lecturer asks me for the most recent materials, I can remember them using flashcards." (Interview with Student 1).

The above statement implies that students retain information better when they actively participate in self-evaluation and recall exercises utilizing animated flashcards, such as by asking themselves questions about the subject

covered in the previous class. By asking themselves questions, students mentally retrieve the pertinent information, enhancing memory and long-term retention. Self-testing is a useful study method to foster students' development as self-directed learners.

"Lecturers tested our memory of the previous lesson using the previous materials and animated flashcards." (Interview with Student 3).

This sentence emphasizes that one of the lecturer's goals in going over earlier content is to gauge how well the students remember and comprehend the preceding lesson. The lecturer can determine the degree of comprehension and spot any areas that might benefit from additional reinforcement by having students take animated flashcard tests on previously covered material. Recall testing also motivates students to concentrate more intently on the subject covered in class because they anticipate being tested on it later. This strategy encourages students to remain engaged and effectively retain knowledge in an active learning environment.

"I can connect the previously mentioned resources to the present ones." (Interview with Student 1).

The experience by Student 1 above shows how using animated flashcards to review past content aids students in making connections between what they have learned and the current topics being studied. Making these connections is crucial for building a coherent understanding of a subject. When students see how new material builds upon or relates to what they already know, it creates a more meaningful and integrated learning experience. Understanding these links improves comprehension and makes applying information to new situations easier.

The above statements underline the value of revisiting prior knowledge in learning. Regularly going over earlier material aids in memory consolidation, promotes active participation and self-evaluation, offers a chance for assessment, and aids students in making connections between distinct ideas. These procedures help students have more fruitful and worthwhile learning experiences.

3.2.2. Showing the virtual reality video about role-play make students enthusiastic

Participants made two statements that are linked to this theme. Both arguments emphasize the benefits of employing virtual reality movies as a teaching tool, particularly when used in the context of role-playing exercises. To comprehend the advantages of using movies in the learning process, let us explore each of the following statements:

"I do not find watching virtual reality videos during class to be boring" (Interview with Student 5)

This report shows that employing virtual reality films in the classroom has successfully maintained the student's interest in and engagement with learning. When the subject matter is dense or tedious, traditional teaching approaches like lectures or reading from textbooks can occasionally cause boredom or disengagement. However, movies can enhance the learning process with a visual and aural component, making it more dynamic and compelling.

Virtual reality content can feature a variety of components, including animations, in-person demos, interviews, and online multimedia presentations (Araiza-Alba et al., 2021). With the use of multimedia, teachers can better engage students' learning styles and aid in their understanding of difficult ideas. Students are more likely to stay focused, remember information better, and actively participate in conversations and activities connected to the video material when they find learning engaging and pleasurable.

*"I gain a better grasp of role-playing after watching the video."
(Interview with Student 3)*

This claim emphasizes how useful videos are for enhancing learning, especially when used in the context of role-playing exercises. Students role-play by employing particular personas or roles to mimic real-life situations or circumstances. Videos can show viewers how players interact, behave, and act in various scenarios during role-plays.

Students can observe the subtleties of the characters' behavior, emotions, and communication styles as they watch role-playing scenarios in videos. Acknowledgments to this insight, they can better comprehend their expected responsibilities and the circumstances in which those roles are applied. Videos' visual signals, facial expressions, and body language can provide important details about how characters interact with one another and their surroundings, adding authenticity and potency to the role-playing performances of the students. Students can evaluate and analyze the role-play scenarios at their own pace because recordings can be rewound or rewatched. This adaptability can aid pupils in internalizing the subject matter and improving their role-playing abilities.

In conclusion, these claims highlight the benefits of employing virtual reality movies in the classroom, particularly regarding role-playing exercises. Virtual reality movies can effectively engage students, make learning more entertaining and offer insightful visual examples that improve comprehension and role-playing performance. When used carefully, virtual reality movies can be a potent tool to help students' learning and skill development.

3.2.3. Students enjoy learning to play a certain character

These three claims illustrate the advantages of allowing students to choose their own characters for learning activities and how this improves their engagement and comprehension. To further comprehend the consequences of each statement, let's examine them individually:

*"I adore practicing playing specific characters thanks to my lecturers."
(Interview with Student 5)*

This claim implies that the lecturer includes exercises in which students play out particular personas or roles as a component of their education. The instructor creates an engaging and immersive learning environment in this way. The learning process is made more enjoyable and creative when pupils are allowed to "play" a role. This strategy is frequently applied in drama-based or role-playing exercises to promote active learning and deepen subject understanding.

Participating in and enjoying such pursuits can also help students retain more information.

*"I get to choose a real character, which helps me understand the role I am performing better."
(Interview with Student 4)*

The statement above highlights the importance of letting students choose the characters or roles they want to play in instructional events. When they may select a character that speaks to them or piques their interest, students are more engaged in the learning process. This emotional connection might lead to a deeper understanding of the chosen character's role and the information surrounding it. Because of this, students might be motivated to learn more about the character's traits and background, which could increase their understanding and level of engagement.

*"When I am not limited to playing a particular type of character, I can give my best performance in my role."
(Interview with Student 2)*

This claim implies that students feel more empowered to perform at their best when they are not constrained to particular characters or roles. Students can play to their talents and interests while choosing their characters, which results in more genuine and enthusiastic performances. The learning outcomes will likely be better if students have a sense of ownership over their position and put more effort into understanding and enacting it.

In conclusion, these assertions highlight the importance of including role-playing exercises and letting students pick characters during the learning process. These methods encourage interest, enjoyment, and a greater comprehension of the subject. Allowing students to explore different roles and express themselves in a learning context can lead to a more enriching and effective educational experience. This approach supports self-determined learning (Aguayo et al., 2020).

3.2.4. Lecturers explain the material as practical as possible

These three statements reflect the positive impact of practical and clear explanations by lecturers on students' learning experiences. Let us analyze each statement to understand the key points:

*"Lecturers explain the materials as if the real-life activity, so I can play the role naturally."
(Interview with Student 1)*

This statement by student 1 indicates that the lecturer presents the course material in a way that simulates real-life situations or scenarios. By doing so, the lecturer helps the student to relate to the content more easily, as if they were actively engaged in a real-life activity. When learning is framed in practical and relatable contexts, it can enhance the student's understanding and ability to apply the knowledge in practical situations. This approach is often called "experiential learning," where students learn by doing and connecting theory to real-world applications.

*"It easy for me to understand the material to play due to as if I the role is real."
(Interview with Student 2)*

Similar to the first statement, student 2 also appreciates using real-life scenarios or role-playing in the learning

process. By immersing themselves in the role as if it were a real experience, the student finds it easier to grasp and internalize the material. This approach can make learning more engaging and enjoyable, as it taps into the student's imagination and allows them to apply the concepts in a practical context.

"The materials explained are practical because the guideline is clear." (Interview with Student 3)

Student 3 emphasizes the importance of clear, well-structured guidelines in the learning materials. When the lecturer provides a coherent and easily understandable framework for the subject matter, it enhances the practicality of the content. Students can follow the guidelines more effectively and see how the information relates to their learning objectives or real-world applications. The clarity in explanations helps students avoid confusion and ensures they stay on track with their learning.

These statements collectively highlight the value of practical, real-life-oriented explanations and clear guidelines in the learning process. When lecturers present material in a way that students can relate to and apply to real-world scenarios, it can significantly improve comprehension, engagement, and overall learning outcomes. Practical learning experiences bridge theory and application, making the educational journey more meaningful and enjoyable for the students to develop high potential in young people (Renzulli, 2011).

3.2.5. Lecturers provide dynamic feedback to students

These two statements are related to the dynamics between students and lecturers in an educational setting. Let us break down and explain each statement:

"I ask a question to my lecturer something that I do not know about the material." (Interview with Student 1)

Statement by student 1 reflects a student's willingness to seek clarification and understanding when faced with unfamiliar concepts or material. It is common for students to encounter topics or ideas that they find challenging or unclear. By asking questions, they actively engage with the learning process and show a desire to deepen their understanding. Asking questions is an essential part of the learning experience. It helps the student who asked the question and benefited other students who may have had similar doubts but were hesitant to ask. Moreover, when a student asks a question, the lecturer can identify areas needing further explanation or clarification, improving the quality of the teaching and learning process.

"Lecturers give opportunities for students to ask a question to make students think more about the material". (Interview with Student 5)

The statement by student 5 highlights the role of the lecturer in fostering a conducive learning environment. When lecturers encourage and facilitate questions from students, it stimulates critical thinking and engagement with the material. In conclusion, both statements highlight the importance of active student participation in the learning process by asking questions. It is a collaborative effort where students seek

clarity and understanding, and lecturers support and facilitate this process to enhance learning outcomes for everyone involved. Providing feedback gives students a chance to reflect and make meaning about what has been said (Kaur & Yong Bing, 2020).

4. Conclusion

Role-play involves students taking on specific characters or roles and engaging in simulated conversations or scenarios. In the context of an English Tourism class, this could mean acting out interactions between tourists and hospitality professionals, such as hotel receptionists, tour guides, or travel agents. Students practice their speaking skills in real-life contexts by engaging in role-plays, which can benefit language learning.

The research indicates that students participating in role-play-based speaking activities demonstrate good fluency, meaning they speak relatively easily and without hesitation. Additionally, their comprehensibility is high, meaning they can convey their ideas and messages clearly and effectively. Role-playing provides a context where students can apply their language skills practically, leading to improved language fluency and communication abilities.

The research shows that lecturers and students experience increased confidence when using role-play methods to teach speaking. For students, taking on roles in a safe and supportive environment allows them to practice without fearing making mistakes or being judged. As they gain more confidence through role-playing, their overall willingness to engage in speaking activities improves.

5. The Limitation of the Research

This study demonstrates the beneficial effects of speaking exercises based on role-playing in an English tourism lesson. According to the research, students participating in role-playing activities speak English fluently and comprehensibly. Additionally, this strategy helps professors and students become more confident and love speaking.

6. Implication for Further Research

The teaching and learning process is made more engaging, dynamic, and pleasant by including speaking exercises based on role-playing. Students can take on the roles of various characters when role-playing to have meaningful conversations. This active involvement in learning fosters a deeper understanding of language usage and cultural nuances related to tourism interactions. Role-play activities mirror real-life situations students may encounter when using English in tourism. By engaging in these activities, students practice language skills directly applicable to their future careers in the tourism industry. This practical relevance increases their motivation to learn and enhances the transferability of their language skills to real-world scenarios.

The research suggests that role-play-based speaking activities in an English Tourism class offer several benefits. It enhances students' fluency and comprehensibility in spoken English, boosts their confidence to speak, and makes the learning experience enjoyable and relevant. Role-playing

provides a practical and interactive approach to language learning, allowing students to develop their communication skills in a context that mirrors real-world situations they may encounter in the tourism industry. Through this exploratory research, researchers generated preliminary hypotheses, which can then be further tested using other research designs like descriptive or experimental research.

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