

## **Enhancing Speaking Proficiency of Vernacular Higher Secondary Students through Role-Playing Activities**

**Mousumi Das Pattanaik**

**PhD Scholar(English),**

**Faculty of Arts, Communication and Indic Studies,**

**SRI SRI University,**

**Cuttack**

**Odisha.**

**Dr. Rakesh Tripathi**

**Associate Professor(English)**

**Faculty of Arts, Communication, and Indic Studies**

**SRI SRI University**

**Cuttack**

**Odisha.**

### **Abstract**

Enhancing speaking skills in vernacular higher secondary students remains a significant challenge in second-language acquisition. This study explores the impact of role-playing activities in developing the speaking proficiency of higher secondary students from vernacular backgrounds. The study was conducted with 100 students across five higher secondary colleges in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, by using an empirical research design. The findings emphasize that role-playing activities significantly improve students' fluency, confidence, and vocabulary, promoting communicative competence. The study highlights the importance of incorporating interactive teaching methods in English language classes to develop the speaking skills of students effectively.

**Keywords:** Speaking skills, Role-playing, Vernacular students, Communicative approach, Second-language acquisition

## **1.Introduction**

Improving speaking skills among higher secondary students from vernacular backgrounds presents a significant challenge in second-language acquisition. This study investigates the effect of role-playing activities on enhancing the speaking proficiency of these students. This research was conducted with a hundred students from five higher secondary colleges in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, The research employed an empirical design. The findings indicate that role-playing activities significantly enhance students' fluency, confidence, and vocabulary, promoting their communicative competence. The study highlights the importance of incorporating interactive teaching methods in English language classes to effectively develop students' speaking skills.

## **2. Literature Review:**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The development of speaking skills among vernacular students is a matter of concern in language learning research. Several studies emphasize Role-play activities as a communicative approach, which have gained prominence as an effective method to enhance students' oral proficiency. This literature review examines the empirical studies and pedagogical implications of using role-play to improve the speaking abilities of vernacular students.

### **2.2. Theoretical Framework**

Role-play is rooted in communicative language teaching (CLT), which emphasizes interaction as a fundamental aspect of language acquisition (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory supports role-play, highlighting that learning occurs through social interaction and framework. Through role-play, students can engage in meaningful conversations, improving fluency, pronunciation, and confidence in speaking English.

### **2.3.Role-Play in Language Learning**

Several researchers have emphasized the importance of role-play in developing speaking skills in English. According to Larousse (1987), role-play provides a comfortable and enjoyable environment where learners can practice real-life communication scenarios without being afraid of making mistakes. Similarly, Harmer (2007) argues that role-play activities

foster spontaneity and accuracy in speaking. These activities help students practice grammatical structures and vocabulary properly.

#### **2.4. Impact on Vernacular Students**

The challenges faced by vernacular students in speaking English are because of limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and apprehension about making errors (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Role-play serves as a strategy to root out these obstacles by engaging learners in structured yet flexible conversational experiences. Studies by Rao (2019) and Sharma (2021) indicate that role-play activities significantly enhance speaking fluency, pronunciation, and interactive skills among vernacular students.

#### **2.5. Empirical Studies**

Research has consistently considered role-play as a beneficial tool for improving speaking skills. A study by Gupta (2018) on Indian vernacular students revealed that incorporating role-play in English language classes can engage students, reduce speaking anxiety, and improve pronunciation. Another study by Choudhury (2020) demonstrated that role-play helped students develop better discourse competence, enabling them to communicate effectively in diverse social contexts.

#### **2.6. Pedagogical Consequences**

Implementing role-play in English language class requires systematic planning and execution. Teachers must design scenarios that match students' real-life experiences. These activities must create motivation among students to speak in English. Moreover, providing structured feedback and incorporating peer feedback can enhance the effectiveness of role-play activities (Brown, 2007).

Role-play activities are powerful communicative tools for improving vernacular students' speaking skills. Role-play activities significantly enhance students' speaking skills in English by developing interactive learning, reducing speaking anxiety, and encouraging real-life language use, role-play activities significantly enhance students' speaking skills in English. Future research must explore digital adaptations and role-play's long-term impacts on vernacular learners' speaking skills.

### **3.Methodology**

#### **3.1.Research Design**

This study employs a quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test design to examine the effectiveness of role-play activities in enhancing the speaking skills of vernacular students. The intervention includes structured role-play sessions conducted over a specified period, with performance assessed before and after the intervention.

#### **3.2.Participants**

The study includes a hundred students from five higher secondary vernacular colleges in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Each college contributes twenty students, selected through purposive sampling to ensure representation across diverse linguistic backgrounds and proficiency levels. The participants are from the eleventh and twelfth classes, aged between sixteen and eighteen.

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### **4. Data Collection Procedure**

#### **Pre-Test**

Before starting the role-play activities, a speaking skills assessment for the participants is conducted to evaluate the students' proficiency. The pre-test comprises:

- **Pronunciation Task:** Reading a short passage aloud.
- **Fluency and Coherence Task:** A two-minute extempore speech on a given topic.
- **Communicative task:** A role-play scenario where students can engage in a planned dialogue.
- **Assessment Criteria:** The pre-test is evaluated using a rubric measuring pronunciation, fluency, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary skills, and communicative ability.

### **Intervention: Role-Play Activities**

The role-play intervention spans six weeks, with two sessions per week. The sessions involve:

1. **Situational Role-Plays:** Simulating real-life scenarios (e.g., job interviews, ordering at a restaurant, doctor-patient conversations).
2. **Scripted and Unscripted Activities:** Balancing guided practice with spontaneous interactions to develop confidence.
3. **Peer Feedback and Teacher Guidance:** Providing constructive feedback for improvement.

### **Post-Test**

After the intervention, students undergo the same speaking skills assessment as the pre-test. The post-test results are compared with pre-test scores to measure improvement.

## **5.Data Analysis**

- 5.1. **Qualitative Analysis:** English teachers' observations and feedback on students will be documented to understand their experiences with role-play activities.

## **6.Ethical Considerations**

- 6.1. **Confidentiality:** The identities of the students and institutions remain anonymous in all reports and publications.

**6.2. Voluntary Participation:** Students participate willingly, with the option to withdraw at any stage without academic consequences.

**6.3. Fair Assessment:** The pre-test and post-test evaluations are conducted impartially, ensuring a supportive and non-judgmental learning environment.

**6.4.Data Protection:** All collected data is securely stored and used exclusively for research purposes.

This methodology systematically evaluates the impact of role-play activities on the speaking skills of vernacular students, providing empirical insights into their effectiveness.

**7.Results and Discussion:** The pre-test observations indicated that all participants had similar proficiency levels before the intervention. However, post-test results revealed a marked improvement in the experimental group's fluency, pronunciation accuracy, and vocabulary skills. Observational analysis highlighted an enhancement in students' confidence and willingness to communicate in English.

**7.1. Improvement in Fluency and Confidence:** The role-playing activities enabled students to engage in realistic conversations without fear of making mistakes. In the post-test, the students exhibited spontaneity in speech, command of vocabulary skills, improvement in speaking, and a reduction in hesitancy. Public speaking anxiety decreased significantly as students grew accustomed to interactive learning settings.

**7.2. Vocabulary Expansion and Contextual Learning:** Students learned practical vocabulary relevant to real-life situations. Through role-playing activities, they learned new words and how to use them appropriately in different contexts. This role-playing aspect contributed to better retention and vocabulary application in subsequent conversations.

**7.3. Pronunciation and Intonation Accuracy:** Observations revealed that students developed received pronunciation patterns and improved their intonation. Role-playing

activities encouraged them to improve stress and rhythm, making their speech more clear and expressive.

**7.4. Student Perception:** Student feedback revealed that almost all participants found role-playing activities enjoyable and motivating. They thought these activities reduced anxiety while speaking in English and increased their ability to frame constructive dialogues spontaneously. Many students also highlighted that these activities helped them communicate properly, which was often ignored in traditional learning methods.

**7.5. Comparison with Conventional Lecture-Based Methods:** The present study highlighted that while the conventional way of teaching English primarily relied on textbook-based exercises and teacher-led discussions, the communicative approach, such as role-playing activities, enhanced the communication skills of the students. The traditional approach of learning English often resulted in passive learning, whereas role-playing actively engaged students in meaningful interaction.

**8. Conclusion and Suggestions:** The present study proves that role-playing activities are an effective pedagogical tool for enhancing the speaking skills of vernacular medium students. It creates an engaging learning environment, promotes communicative competence, and reduces the linguistic fear of the learners. Future research can investigate the prolonged impact of role-playing activities on students' academic performance and employability skills.

**8.1 Implications for Language Teaching:** Language teachers should incorporate structured role-playing activities in the English language class to enhance students' English speaking skills in a meaningful and enjoyable way.

**8.2 Future Research Directions:** Further studies could investigate the effectiveness of role-playing in different linguistic settings and its impact on writing and listening skills. Additionally, integrating digital simulations and AI-based conversational tools in role-playing exercises could offer innovative solutions for language learning.

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