

UNCOVERING THE CHALLENGES FACED BY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN SPEAKING ACTIVITIES THROUGH LEGEND STORY ROLEPLAY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the challenges faced by 10th-grade high school students in English speaking activities through legend story-based roleplay. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach involving 10th-grade students who have participated in legend story roleplay activities. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using the interactive analysis model of Miles (2014), which includes data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusions. The results show that students face several main challenges, such as limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, speaking anxiety, difficulties in acting out characters, and obstacles in group cooperation. Limited vocabulary and pronunciation are the main challenges because they affect students' ability to deliver dialogues smoothly and confidently. Despite this, students respond positively to using legend-based roleplay because it is considered interesting, fun, and helps them practice speaking in a more meaningful context. Besides improving speaking skills, this activity also introduces local cultural values through legend stories. The findings of this study suggest that legend-based roleplay has potential as an effective learning strategy, provided that teachers give enough support to help students overcome the various challenges they face.

Keywords: roleplay, speaking skill, challenge

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi tantangan yang dihadapi oleh siswa kelas 10 SMA dalam kegiatan berbicara bahasa Inggris melalui roleplay berbasis cerita legenda. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif yang melibatkan siswa kelas 10 yang telah mengikuti kegiatan roleplay cerita legenda. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan model analisis interaktif dari Miles (2014), yang meliputi kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa menghadapi beberapa tantangan utama, yaitu keterbatasan kosakata, kesulitan pengucapan, kecemasan saat berbicara, kesulitan dalam memerankan karakter, dan hambatan dalam kerja sama kelompok. Kosakata dan pengucapan yang terbatas adalah tantangan utama karena memengaruhi kemampuan siswa untuk menyampaikan dialog dengan lancar dan percaya diri. Meski begitu, siswa merespons secara positif penggunaan roleplay berbasis legenda karena dianggap menarik, menyenangkan, dan membantu mereka berlatih berbicara dalam konteks yang lebih bermakna. Selain meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara, kegiatan ini juga mengenalkan nilai-nilai budaya lokal melalui cerita legenda. Temuan dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa roleplay berbasis legenda berpotensi sebagai

strategi belajar yang efektif, asalkan guru memberikan dukungan yang cukup untuk membantu siswa mengatasi berbagai tantangan yang mereka hadapi.

Kata Kunci: bermain peran, kemampuan berbicara, tantangan

A. Background of the Research

Speaking skills are one of the important language abilities in learning English because they allow students to express ideas, opinions, and feelings effectively. However, speaking is often considered the most difficult skill for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students to master. In the speaking process, students are not only required to master vocabulary and grammar, but they also need to be able to use correct pronunciation, speak fluently, and have the confidence to communicate in front of others. As a result, many students struggle to express ideas orally, feel nervous when speaking, and are less active in speaking activities in class.

To tackle this issue, teachers have tried various interactive learning methods, one of which is role-play. Role-play gives students the chance to use English in more authentic and meaningful situations, which can boost their participation in the learning process. Some studies show that role-play is effective in improving students'

speaking skills (Arifin, 2021; Janah et al., 2023; Al-Azhari et al., 2024; Kholili et al., 2024). Besides that, role-play can also increase students' confidence in speaking (Angelica & Wulandari, 2025), strengthen self-efficacy (Fauziah et al., 2020), and help reduce anxiety when speaking in English (Al-Zurfi et al., 2025). These findings suggest that role-play is a promising learning strategy for supporting the development of students' speaking skills.

In English learning, role-play can be combined with various types of texts, one of which is legendary stories. Legendary stories are part of folk tales that contain cultural, moral, and social values passed down from generation to generation. Using legendary stories in learning not only provides an interesting context for students to practice speaking, but also helps introduce and preserve local culture (Purwanto, 2010; Luftiansa, 2018). Through role-play activities based on legendary stories, students are required to understand the storyline, interpret characters,

memorize dialogues, and perform their roles using English. These activities give students the chance to develop their speaking skills while also enhancing their understanding of local culture.

Even though various studies have shown the benefits of role-play in learning speaking, its implementation doesn't always go smoothly. During role-play, students can face several challenges, such as limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, lack of fluency, nervousness when performing in front of the class, difficulty understanding the character they are playing, and issues working with group members. These challenges can affect students' performance during role-play activities and the overall success of learning speaking. That's why it's important to understand students' experiences more deeply so teachers can provide support and learning strategies that suit their needs.

Based on previous research studies, most research focuses on the effectiveness of role-play in improving students' speaking skills, confidence, self-efficacy, and students' perceptions of speaking learning (Fauziah et al., 2020; Indriani et al.,

2023; Al-Azhari et al., 2024; Angelica & Wulandari, 2025). Some studies have also explored students' experiences in using role-play in English learning (Pradhana et al., 2021; Salsabila & Megawati, 2025). However, research specifically examining the challenges faced by high school students in speaking activities through story-based role-play is still limited. Moreover, the integration of legends as role-play media in speaking learning has not been widely explored, especially from the perspective of students' experiences and difficulties during the learning process.

The limitations of this study point to a research gap that needs further exploration. Understanding the challenges students face during legend-based roleplay activities is important to help teachers identify factors that hinder the development of students' speaking skills. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a basis for designing more effective, engaging, and student-centered speaking learning strategies. In addition, this study also contributes to the development of English learning that integrates local culture as a meaningful learning resource.

Based on the explanation above, this study aims to explore the challenges that high school students face in English speaking activities through legend-based roleplay. Using a descriptive qualitative approach and interviews as data collection instruments, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of students' experiences during the activity. The research question in this study is: "What challenges do tenth grade high school students face when participating in English speaking activities through legend-based roleplay?"

B. Methodology

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the challenges faced by 10th-grade high school students in English speaking activities through legend story-based roleplay. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the students' experiences and difficulties in a particular learning context (Creswell, 2012). The research participants were selected using purposive sampling, specifically students who had participated in legend story roleplay activities. Data

were collected through semi-structured interviews focusing on the students' experiences during the activity.

The data collected was analyzed using the interactive analysis model by Miles (2014), which includes data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. During the analysis stage, the data was categorized based on emerging themes related to students' challenges in speaking activities through legend story roleplays. To ensure the credibility of the findings, the researcher double-checked the interview results and data interpretations so that the research outcomes could accurately reflect the phenomenon being studied.

C. Findings and Discussion

Based on interviews with ten 10th-grade high school students who participated in the legend story roleplay activity, four main challenges were found that students faced: vocabulary challenges, pronunciation challenges, speaking anxiety, and challenges in performing their characters. In addition, some students also experienced difficulties in group collaboration during the process of

creating dialogues and practicing the roleplay. Despite this, all participants showed a positive perception of using legend stories as a medium for learning speaking because they found it interesting, familiar, and helpful in understanding the story flow more easily. These findings show that legend-based roleplay can create an enjoyable learning experience while also presenting various challenges that students need to overcome.

1. Vocabulary

Research findings show that the most common challenge is vocabulary limitations. Most students admit they struggle to choose vocabulary that fits the context of the story, put together dialogues in English, and find expressions that match the characters they play. Some students also have trouble using vocabulary related to romance, advice, and terms found in legend stories. In addition, some students have difficulty changing sentences into the past tense when writing dialogues.

This finding aligns with Brown's (2004) view that vocabulary mastery is one of the important components of speaking ability. Limited vocabulary can hinder students' ability to express ideas verbally. This study also

supports the research by Al-Azhari et al. (2024), Janah et al. (2023), and Kholili et al. (2024), who found that students often face difficulties in constructing sentences and developing dialogues during roleplay activities. In the context of this study, vocabulary challenges become more complex because students not only have to speak in English but also have to adjust their word choices to fit the character and storyline of the legend being played.

2. Pronunciation Challenges

The next challenge is pronunciation. Some students admitted having trouble saying certain words or phrases, like throw, unfaithful, while you were, and to deep regret. This difficulty comes from the differences between how words are written and how they're pronounced in English. On the other hand, some students said they didn't have any trouble with pronunciation because they had practiced beforehand.

This finding supports Brown's (2004) theory, which explains that pronunciation is an important aspect of speaking skills because it affects the clarity of the message being delivered. The results of this study also align with research by Fitriani and

Susiati (2025), which shows that although roleplay can improve students' speaking abilities, pronunciation remains one of the main challenges faced by learners. Interestingly, most students use Google Translate and repeated practice as strategies to overcome these difficulties. This shows that technology can function as a supportive tool in learning speaking.

3. Speaking Anxiety During Roleplay

The research results also showed that some students experience speaking anxiety when performing in front of the class. The types of anxiety that appear include feeling nervous, afraid of making mistakes, forgetting lines, and feeling awkward when acting out certain scenes, especially the romantic scenes between the characters Sri Tanjung and Sidopekso. However, some students actually feel more comfortable and confident because they can really get into the character they are playing.

These findings support the research results of Al-Zurfi et al. (2025), who found that speaking anxiety still remains a common challenge in roleplay activities. According to Brown (2004), affective

factors such as fear and lack of confidence can affect students' speaking performance. Although some students experience anxiety, the majority of participants stated that roleplay is more enjoyable compared to regular presentations. These results also reinforce the findings of Angelica and Wulandari (2025) and Fauziah et al. (2020), which show that roleplay can boost students' confidence and self-efficacy in speaking English.

4. Character Performance Challenge

Besides the language aspect, students also face challenges in portraying characters from legend stories. The most common difficulties are expressing the character's emotions, figuring out the right movements and gestures, adjusting intonation, and embodying the character while still remembering the lines they have to say. Some students admit they struggle with certain characters because they don't yet understand how that character is supposed to act or react in the story.

These findings show that roleplay doesn't just demand language skills, but also performative abilities. According to Anderson and Anderson (1997), narrative texts contain

elements like characters, conflict, and plot that students need to understand in order to accurately represent them. In this study, students were asked to transform a legendary story into an oral performance, so they had to understand the characters and at the same time show appropriate expressions. The results of this study also align with Pratiwi (2026), who emphasized that a drama-based approach in learning English requires both linguistic and performative skills simultaneously.

5. Collaboration Challenge

Although it's not a major challenge, some students reported having difficulties with group work. These difficulties include differences of opinion when creating dialogues, taking turns speaking, deciding on the content of the conversation, and some group members not taking practice seriously. However, most groups were able to resolve these issues through discussion and negotiation.

These findings support the research by Indriani et al. (2023), which showed that roleplay encourages interaction and collaboration among students. In this study, collaborative challenges actually became part of the learning

process because students learned to adjust ideas, support their peers, and solve problems together. So, roleplay not only improves speaking skills but also students' social skills.

Overall, the research results show that legend-based roleplay provides a positive learning experience for students, but it also presents various challenges related to linguistic, psychological, and performance aspects. Linguistic challenges are seen in vocabulary and pronunciation difficulties, while psychological challenges appear in the form of speaking anxiety. In addition, students also face performance challenges in expressing characters and embodying roles in the legend stories.

Nevertheless, using legendary stories as a roleplay medium has been shown to provide context that is familiar to students' experiences. Many students said that they already knew the stories beforehand, making it easier to understand the plot and characters. This finding supports Bascom's (1954) view that folklore and legends have an educational function because they contain cultural values that can be passed down to younger generations. Therefore,

legend-based roleplay not only contributes to developing English speaking skills but also helps students understand and appreciate local cultural heritage.

Thus, this study reveals that the success of roleplay in speaking learning doesn't just depend on the speaking activity itself, but also on students' ability to handle limited vocabulary, pronunciation, speaking anxiety, and the challenge of convincingly playing a character. These findings expand on previous research that usually focused on the effectiveness of roleplay, by providing a deeper understanding of the challenges students face during the learning process.

D. Conclusion

This study aims to explore the challenges faced by 10th-grade high school students in English speaking activities through legend-based roleplay. The results show that students face various challenges during the activities, including limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, speaking anxiety, difficulty acting out characters, and problems with group collaboration. Among these challenges, limited vocabulary and

pronunciation are the most dominant obstacles because they affect students' ability to deliver dialogues smoothly and confidently. In addition, some students also experience nervousness, fear of making mistakes, and difficulty expressing the characters' emotions when performing in front of the class.

Despite facing various challenges, students showed a positive response to the implementation of legend-based story roleplays. They found the activity interesting, fun, and helpful in increasing their opportunities to practice speaking in English. Using legend stories also provided a familiar context for the students, making it easier for them to understand the plot, characters, and the messages contained within. These findings suggest that legend-based story roleplays not only support the development of speaking skills but also play a role in introducing and preserving local cultural values.

Despite facing various challenges, the students responded positively to doing legend-based story roleplays. They found the activity fun, interesting, and helpful for giving them more chances to practice speaking

English. Using legend stories also gave them a familiar context, making it easier to understand the storylines, characters, and messages. These results suggest that legend-based story roleplays not only help improve speaking skills but also help introduce and keep local cultural values alive.

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