



Impact of Role-Play Technique on Students' Academic Performance in Spoken English in Public Junior Secondary Schools in Toro LGA, Bauchi State

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how the role-play technique influences students' spoken English performance in public junior secondary schools in Toro Local Government Area of Bauchi State. The purpose was to determine whether role-play could improve students' fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and overall communicative ability. A quasi-experimental design was used, involving 322 students selected through multi-stage sampling from five public junior secondary schools. The participants were separated into an experimental group, which received instruction through role-play, and a control group taught using conventional methods. Data were gathered using a Spoken English Performance Test (SEPT) and an observation checklist to measure oral proficiency and classroom engagement. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential tools such as independent and paired samples t-tests at a 0.05 significance level. The results showed that the experimental group performed significantly better in the post-test than the control group and also recorded notable improvement from pre-test to post-test. Classroom observations further revealed strong participation, increased confidence, and effective language use among students involved in role-play tasks. The study concluded that role-play is a valuable instructional strategy for enhancing spoken English, encouraging active learning, and building communicative competence. It recommended the integration of role-play in English lessons, inclusion of structured activities in the curriculum, and teacher training on interactive, learner-centered approaches. The study offers empirical support for communicative and activity-based methods in improving oral English skills in junior secondary schools.

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INTRODUCTION

English language proficiency, particularly spoken English, is a critical skill for academic success and effective communication in the 21st century. In Nigeria, English serves as the official medium of instruction in schools, yet many students struggle with oral communication, including fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary (Abdullahi & Bala, 2022). Studies have shown that traditional teacher-centered methods, such as lecture and repetition, often fail to adequately

engage students or provide sufficient opportunities for active language practice (Okechukwu, 2023; Musa, 2021).

The role-play technique is an instructional strategy that encourages students to act out real-life scenarios, dialogues, and situations in a controlled classroom environment, promoting meaningful communication and interactive learning (Septiawan, 2025). This technique aligns with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles, which emphasize

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authentic language use, interaction, and learner-centered approaches (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Fiani & Nahak, 2024). Research indicates that role-play can improve fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, and overall confidence in speaking (Yasmin, Qahar & Afzal, 2022; Harmer, 2015).

In the context of public junior secondary schools in Toro Local Government Area, Bauchi State, many students face challenges such as large class sizes, inadequate teaching materials, and limited exposure to interactive learning techniques, which negatively affect their spoken English performance (Abdullahi & Bala, 2022; Musa, 2021). Consequently, there is a need for innovative, student-centered instructional strategies that can enhance engagement, participation, and communicative competence in spoken English. By implementing role-play, teachers can provide learners with authentic opportunities to practice English in meaningful contexts, thereby bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical communication skills. The introduction of this study, therefore, underscores the importance of exploring the effectiveness of the role-play technique in improving students' spoken English performance in public junior secondary schools, particularly in regions such as Toro LGA, where traditional methods may be insufficient for developing oral language proficiency.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Concept of Role-Play Technique

The role-play technique is an interactive teaching method that engages learners in simulated real-life situations, allowing them to act out roles, practice dialogues, and use the target language in meaningful contexts. In language learning, role-play encourages students to communicate actively, experiment with language forms, and develop both fluency and confidence in spoken English. It is grounded in the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes learner-centered approaches and practical use of language over rote memorization (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Role-play activities

typically involve students taking on specific roles, such as a customer and a shopkeeper, a doctor and a patient, or a teacher and a student. Through these interactions, learners are exposed to authentic language use, contextual vocabulary, and sentence structures, which facilitate better retention and application of language skills (Putri & Zaki, 2024).

Unlike traditional lecture-based methods, role-play promotes active participation, peer interaction, and collaborative learning, which have been shown to improve students' oral competence. Several researchers have highlighted the benefits of role-play in language learning. For instance, Septiawan (2025) found that students who participated in structured role-play activities demonstrated significant improvement in fluency, pronunciation, and overall communicative competence compared to peers taught through conventional methods. Similarly, Fiani and Nahak (2024) reported that role-play fosters learners' confidence, motivation, and willingness to speak, which are critical factors in enhancing spoken English performance.

Furthermore, role-play is flexible and adaptable, allowing teachers to design scenarios that suit the students' proficiency levels, interests, and real-life experiences. By simulating real-life situations, learners not only practice language structures but also develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and social interaction skills (Oktaviani et al., 2025). In summary, the role-play technique provides a practical, engaging, and effective approach for teaching spoken English, particularly in contexts where students have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Its implementation in junior secondary schools can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical language use, ultimately improving students' oral communication skills.

Concept of Spoken English

Spoken English refers to the oral use of the English language for communication. It encompasses not only the ability to pronounce words correctly but also to construct grammatically accurate sentences, use appropriate vocabulary, maintain fluency, and



convey meaning effectively in various social and academic contexts (Harmer, 2015). Spoken English is a core component of communicative competence, enabling learners to interact meaningfully, express ideas clearly, and respond appropriately in conversations. In the Nigerian educational context, English serves as the official language and medium of instruction in schools, making proficiency in spoken English critical for students' academic success.

However, research indicates that many students in public secondary schools struggle with oral English due to limited exposure, traditional teacher-centered methods, and insufficient practice opportunities (Akinboye & Adebayo, 2022). Such deficiencies manifest as weak pronunciation, limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, lack of fluency, and low confidence when speaking English. Effective spoken English requires mastery of several interrelated components:

1. **Fluency:** The ability to speak smoothly without excessive hesitation or self-correction.
2. **Pronunciation:** Correct articulation of English sounds, stress patterns, and intonation.
3. **Vocabulary:** Appropriate use of words to convey meaning clearly.
4. **Grammar:** Correct sentence structures and use of tenses.
5. **Communicative Competence:** The capacity to convey messages appropriately according to context, audience, and purpose.

The teaching of spoken English in schools has often been limited to reading aloud or rote memorization, which fails to provide authentic opportunities for communication. This gap underscores the need for interactive methods, such as the role-play technique, that allow students to practice English in realistic and meaningful contexts (Putri & Zaki, 2024; Fiani & Nahak, 2024). Role-play enables learners to apply theoretical knowledge of English into practice, enhancing fluency, pronunciation, and confidence in oral communication. In summary, spoken

English is a vital skill that forms the foundation for academic success and social communication. Addressing the challenges in students' oral proficiency through innovative teaching strategies like role-play can improve their performance and overall communicative competence in English. Importance of Spoken English in Junior Secondary Schools

Spoken English is a critical skill for students in junior secondary schools, as it influences academic success, social interaction, and future career opportunities. Its importance can be highlighted in several key areas:

1. **Academic Achievement:** Proficiency in spoken English enables students to actively participate in classroom discussions, express ideas clearly, and comprehend instructions in various subjects. Since English is the medium of instruction in Nigerian schools, students' oral competence directly affects their understanding and performance across the curriculum (Akinboye & Adebayo, 2022).
2. **Communication Skills:** Spoken English allows students to communicate effectively with teachers, peers, and the wider community, facilitating collaboration, group work, and problem-solving. The ability to articulate thoughts clearly promotes self-confidence and leadership skills (Harmer, 2015).
3. **Social and Cultural Interaction:** Competence in spoken English enables students to interact beyond their immediate environment, engage in cultural exchanges, and understand diverse perspectives. This is especially important in multilingual settings like Nigeria, where English serves as a unifying language (Olaoye & Ogunleye, 2021).
4. **Career and Lifelong Learning:** Early mastery of spoken English provides a foundation for future educational and career opportunities, particularly in fields that require effective communication skills, such as teaching,

law, journalism, and international relations. Proficiency also facilitates access to global knowledge and resources, supporting lifelong learning (Umar & Bello, 2023).

5. **Confidence and Motivation:** Students who can communicate effectively in spoken English develop confidence, motivation, and a positive attitude toward learning, which enhances their overall academic engagement. Role-play and other interactive methods are particularly effective in boosting confidence and encouraging participation (Putri & Zaki, 2024).

In essence, the importance of spoken English in junior secondary schools extends beyond language learning to academic, social, and personal development. Therefore, strategies that enhance oral proficiency, such as the role-play technique, are crucial for improving students' performance and equipping them with essential life skills.

Role-Play Technique and Students' Performance in Spoken English

The role-play technique has been widely recognized as an effective learner-centered strategy for improving students' spoken English performance. By involving students in simulated real-life scenarios, role-play provides opportunities for active participation, contextualized practice, and immediate feedback, all of which enhance fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and communicative competence (Putri & Zaki, 2024).

Role-Play and Fluency

Fluency refers to the ability to speak smoothly and coherently without undue pauses or hesitation. Role-play encourages **spontaneous speech**, as students respond to prompts and interact with peers in dynamic scenarios. Studies have shown that students exposed to role-play activities exhibit a significant increase in fluency compared to those taught using traditional lecture methods (Septiawan, 2025).

Role-Play and Pronunciation

Pronunciation, including correct articulation, stress, and intonation, is crucial for intelligible communication. During role-play exercises, students imitate native-like pronunciation patterns and receive corrective feedback from teachers and peers. This repetitive practice in context has been shown to improve pronunciation accuracy and overall oral clarity (Fiani & Nahak, 2024).

Role-Play and Vocabulary

Role-play exposes students to contextualized vocabulary, enabling them to learn words and expressions relevant to specific situations, such as shopping, traveling, or formal interactions. This method allows students to internalize vocabulary through use rather than memorization, leading to improved retention and active application in spoken English (Oktaviani et al., 2025).

Role-Play and Grammar

Role-play provides students with opportunities to construct grammatically correct sentences within meaningful dialogues. By practicing language structures in context, students learn to apply grammatical rules in communication, reinforcing both accuracy and appropriateness (Putri & Zaki, 2024).

Role-Play and Communicative Competence

Communicative competence refers to the ability to use language effectively in real-life situations. Role-play requires students to interpret, respond, negotiate meaning, and adapt language according to context, audience, and purpose. Research indicates that learners engaged in role-play develop stronger communicative skills, including listening, speaking, and interactional strategies, compared to those taught through traditional methods (Yasmin, Qahar & Afzal, 2022).

Challenges of Using Role-Play in Teaching Spoken English

Although the role-play technique is widely recognized for improving students' spoken



English performance, several practical and contextual challenges may affect its successful implementation in junior secondary schools, particularly in public schools in Toro LGA. These challenges include:

Limited Classroom Resources

Many public schools lack adequate teaching aids such as audio-visual equipment, props, or materials necessary for creating realistic role-play scenarios. The absence of such resources can hinder students' engagement and reduce the effectiveness of the technique (Akinboye & Adebayo, 2022).

Large Class Sizes

Overcrowded classrooms make it difficult for teachers to **manage group activities** effectively. In large classes, some students may be less involved, while others dominate the role-play exercises, limiting equitable participation and learning opportunities (Harmer, 2015).

Teacher Preparedness and Skills

Not all teachers are adequately trained in learner-centered methods or the facilitation of role-play activities. Inexperience or lack of confidence in managing interactive lessons can reduce the effectiveness of role-play and may discourage students from participating actively (Fiani & Nahak, 2024).

Student Reluctance and Shyness

Some students may feel embarrassed, anxious, or self-conscious when performing in front of peers. This reluctance can limit oral participation and hinder the improvement of spoken English skills. Overcoming such barriers requires consistent encouragement and a supportive classroom environment (Yasmin, Qahar & Afzal, 2022).

Time Constraints

Role-play activities require sufficient class time for preparation, practice, and performance. In schools with a tight curriculum schedule, allocating time for interactive activities

may be challenging, leading teachers to prioritize traditional lecture methods over role-play.

Language Proficiency Limitations

Students with low baseline proficiency in English may struggle to engage in role-play effectively. Limited vocabulary, poor grammar, and low confidence can impede participation, making it necessary for teachers to scaffold activities and provide guidance (Septiawan, 2025).

Cultural and Contextual Barriers

In some cases, role-play scenarios may conflict with students' cultural norms or experiences, making it difficult for them to fully immerse themselves in the activity. Designing culturally appropriate scenarios is therefore essential to maximize learning outcomes (Oktaviani et al., 2025).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the importance of spoken English as a core component of communication and academic success in Nigerian secondary schools, many students in public junior secondary schools in Toro Local Government Area continue to perform poorly in oral English. Classroom observations and examination reports indicate persistent challenges such as weak pronunciation, limited vocabulary, lack of fluency, and low confidence when speaking English. These weaknesses are often linked to the dominance of traditional teaching methods, including lecture and rote repetition, which provide few opportunities for students to actively practice spoken English in meaningful contexts.

Furthermore, large class sizes, inadequate instructional materials, and limited teacher exposure to interactive teaching strategies contribute to poor learner engagement in oral English activities. As a result, students rarely participate in communicative tasks and lack the confidence required to express themselves effectively in English. While the role-play technique is widely recognized as an effective method for promoting communicative competence and learner interaction, its use in public junior

secondary schools in Toro LGA appears limited or inconsistent. There is therefore a need to empirically investigate whether the role-play technique can significantly improve students' spoken English performance in this context. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the extent to which role-play enhances students' fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary development, and overall communicative competence in public junior secondary schools in Toro LGA, Bauchi State.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective of this study is to assess the impact of the role play teaching technique on students' performance in spoken English in public junior secondary schools in Toro LGA, Bauchi State. Specifically, the study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To determine the level of students' spoken English performance (in fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and communicative competence) before implementing the role play technique.
2. To implement the role play teaching technique in selected public junior secondary school classes in Toro LGA.
3. To measure the change in students' spoken English performance (fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, communicative competence) after using the role play technique.
4. To compare the pre-intervention and post-intervention performance scores to evaluate the effectiveness of the role-play technique.

Research Questions

1. What is the current level of students' spoken English performance (fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and communicative competence) in public junior secondary schools in Toro LGA?
2. How does the use of the role-play technique affect students' spoken English performance in terms of fluency,

pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and communicative competence?

3. What differences, if any, exist between students' spoken English performance before and after the implementation of the role-play technique?

Research Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant difference in students' overall spoken English performance before and after exposure to the role-play teaching technique in public junior secondary schools in Toro LGA.

Ho2: There is no significant improvement in students' fluency in spoken English after the use of the role-play technique.

Ho3: There is no significant improvement in students' pronunciation in spoken English after the use of the role-play technique.

Ho4: There is no significant improvement in students' vocabulary and grammar in spoken English after exposure to the role-play technique.

METHODOLOGY

The research design outlines the overall plan and strategy that will guide the study in achieving its objectives. For this study, a quasi-experimental research design was adopted, specifically the pre-test and post-test non-equivalent control group design. The quasi-experimental design is suitable because it allows the researcher to measure the effect of the role-play technique on students' spoken English performance while controlling for extraneous variables as much as possible in a natural classroom setting.

The population of this study involves all students in JSS in Toro Local Government Area which is 1657 based on recent enrollment data from Toro LGA public junior secondary schools. This figure includes students across JSS1, JSS2, and JSS3 classes in all public junior secondary schools within the LGA. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select 322 participants using Yamane's (1967) formula. An instrument titled "Spoken English Performance Test" (SEPT) developed by the researcher was used for data



collection. It was designed to measure the oral English proficiency of students in terms of fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension.

To ensure its validity, the instrument was presented to three experts in English language education and assessment to check for relevance, clarity, and appropriateness. It was then subjected to pilot testing on 30 students outside the research area after which a reliability test using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was employed where a reliability index of 0.77 was obtained. The method of data collection used in this study was a combination of pre-test, intervention, post-test, and classroom observation. Both descriptive and inferential

statistical techniques were employed to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. Before embarking on the data collection, permission was sought from the authorities concerned, participation was made voluntary and the confidentiality of all responses was assured.

RESULTS

Research Questions One:

What is the current level of students' spoken English performance (fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and communicative competence) in public junior secondary schools in Toro LGA.?

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Spoken English Performance (Pre-Test)

Component	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Fluency	32.14	6.45	Moderate
Pronunciation	30.77	6.11	Moderate
Vocabulary	28.40	5.83	Low moderate
Grammar	27.92	5.60	Low moderate
Communicative Competence	31.55	6.02	Moderate
Overall Performance	30.55	5.94	Moderate

Analysis in the table 1 above indicated that Students' spoken English performance before treatment is generally **moderate**, indicating room for improvement across all components.

Research Questions Two:

How does the use of the role-play technique affect students' spoken English performance?

Table 2. Comparison of Experimental and Control Group Post-Test Scores

Component	Experimental Group Mean	Control Group Mean	Mean Diff	Interpretation
Fluency	55.82	44.31	11.51	Improved
Pronunciation	55.66	42.77	10.89	Significant improvement
Vocabulary	51.22	40.88	10.34	Significant improvement
Grammar	50.76	39.41	11.35	Strong improvement
Communicative Competence	54.18	40.52	10.66	High improvement
Overall Performance	53.53	42.98	10.55	Effectively enhanced

The result of analysis in the table 2 above revealed that Students taught using role-play outperformed those taught through traditional methods across all components. This suggests that the role-play technique positively influenced students' performance.

Research Questions Three:

What differences exist between students' spoken English performance before and after the implementation of the role-play technique?

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Table 3. Paired Samples (Pre-Test vs Post-Test) for Experimental Group

Component	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Mean Gain	Interpretation
Fluency	32.14	55.82	23.68	Significant improvement
Pronunciation	30.77	53.66	22.89	Significant improvement
Vocabulary	28.40	51.22	22.82	Significant gain
Grammar	27.92	50.76	22.84	Significant gain
Communicative Competence	31.55	54.18	22.63	Strong improvement
Overall Performance	30.55	53.53	22.98	High improvement

The result of the analysis in table 3 above indicated that there is clear evidence of substantial improvement in the performance of the students after the role-play intervention.

Hypothesis One:

There is no significant difference in students' overall spoken English performance before and after exposure to the role-play technique in public junior secondary schools in Toro LGA.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 4. Paired Sample t-Test on Overall Performance

Variable	Mean Dif.	t-Value	p-Value	Decision
Pre-test vs Post-test	22.98	18.77	0.000	Rejected

The result in the table 4 above revealed that role-play significantly improved students' overall spoken English performance hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis Two:

There is no significant improvement in students' fluency in spoken English after the use of the role-play technique.

Table 5. Paired Sample t-Test on Fluency

Variable	Mean Dif.	t-Value	p-Value	Decision
Fluency (Pre vs Post)	23.68	17.11	0.000	Rejected

The result of the analysis in the table 5 above shows that role-play significantly improved fluency. Therefore, the null hypothesis is here by rejected.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant improvement in students' pronunciation in spoken English after the use of the role-play technique.

Table 6. Paired Sample t-Test on Pronunciation

Variable	Mean Dif.	t-Value	p-Value	Decision
Pronunciation (Pre vs Post)	22.89	16.56	0.000	Rejected

Result in the table 6 above revealed that pronunciation of students is significantly enhanced after they were exposed to role-play. Hence, the hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis Four:

There is no significant improvement in students' vocabulary and grammar in spoken English after exposure to the role-play technique.

Table 7. Paired Sample t-Test on Vocabulary and Grammar

Variable	Mean Dif.	t-Value	p-Value	Decision
Vocabulary	22.82	15.93	0.000	Rejected
Grammar	22.84	15.87	0.000	Rejected

In the table 7 above analysis indicated that vocabulary and grammar improved significantly after the role-play intervention. Hence, the hypothesis is rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study revealed that the use of the role-play technique had a significant and positive impact on students' performance in spoken English in public junior secondary schools in Toro LGA, Bauchi State. Analysis of post-test scores indicated that the experimental group, which engaged in structured role-play activities, achieved a total mean score of 53.53, considerably higher than the control group's 42.98, demonstrating that students exposed to interactive and context-based learning performed better than those taught through traditional lecture-based methods.

Furthermore, the paired sample t-test revealed a significant improvement within the experimental group from pre-test (30.55) to post-test (53.53), indicating that the role-play intervention substantially enhanced students' fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and overall oral communicative competence. These outcomes are consistent with the findings of Septiawan (2025), who reported that role-play improves speaking confidence and fluency among secondary school students, as well as Fiani and Nahak (2024), who emphasized its effectiveness in enhancing vocabulary, grammar accuracy, and overall communicative skills.

Similarly, Yasmin, Qahar, and Afzal (2022) highlighted that interactive and student-centered strategies such as role-play increase motivation and reduce anxiety, thereby promoting better language acquisition. The theoretical underpinnings of the study, particularly Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Theory and Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory (1978), provide a strong explanation for these

results: CLT emphasizes the importance of meaningful, contextualized interaction in language learning, while Vygotsky underscores the role of social interaction and scaffolding in cognitive and linguistic development. The positive impact of role-play observed in this study implies that students learn more effectively when they are actively involved, collaborating with peers, and using language in realistic, communicative contexts, rather than passively receiving information.

These findings have significant pedagogical implications, suggesting that English language teachers should incorporate role-play exercises into lesson plans, curriculum designers should include structured role-play activities in textbooks, and professional development programs should train teachers in implementing interactive, student-centered strategies. Overall, the study provides compelling evidence that the role-play technique is an effective instructional strategy for enhancing spoken English performance, fostering active participation, boosting learners' confidence, and improving communication skills among junior secondary school students in public schools within Toro LGA, Bauchi State.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the role-play technique is an effective instructional strategy for improving students' spoken English performance in public junior secondary schools in Toro LGA, Bauchi State. The technique not only enhances fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary but also boosts students' confidence, motivation, and active participation in the learning process. The results suggest that traditional teacher-centered methods alone may not be sufficient for developing oral communicative competence, whereas interactive methods like role-play provide meaningful practice



in realistic contexts, facilitating better learning outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. English Language Teachers should integrate role-play activities into daily lesson plans to enhance students' oral proficiency.
2. English Teacher should encourage students to participate actively, provide constructive feedback, use varied scenarios and dialogues relevant to students' real-life experiences to promote meaningful communication and create a supportive classroom environment for practicing spoken English.
3. School Administrators and Curriculum Planners should include structured role-play exercises in English language curricula and textbooks for junior secondary schools and provide resources, materials, and training to enable teachers to effectively implement interactive teaching methods.
4. Workshops and training sessions on innovative teaching strategies, such as role-play, simulation, and task-based learning service and in-service teacher training programs should be offered to teachers
5. Similar studies should be conducted in other subject areas or school levels to explore the broader applicability of role-play, investigate the long-term effects of role-play on language retention, academic performance, and learner confidence and explore the integration of digital or online role-play platforms to enhance English language learning in resource-limited settings.

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