



Exploring Collaborative Role-Playing as a Pedagogical Strategy for Developing Young Learners' Communication Skills: A Case Study at PAUD PKK Plosorejo Gampengrejo Kediri

Edi Titik Kusnawawati¹, Siti Lebar², Samsiah³

^{1,2,3}FKIP PG PAUD Department, Universitas Wahidiyah, Kediri, Indonesia
bundamami50@gmail.com, sitilebar37@gmail.com, busamsiah1980@gmail.com

Corresponding author's e-mail: bundamami50@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Early childhood education requires engaging and developmentally appropriate pedagogical strategies to support children's communication development. Collaborative role-playing has been widely recognized as a child-centered approach that encourages interaction, language use, and social participation. This study explores the use of collaborative role-playing as a pedagogical strategy for developing young learners' communication skills at PAUD PKK Plosorejo Gampengrejo Kediri, Indonesia. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through classroom observations, teacher interviews, field notes, and documentation of learning activities. The findings reveal that collaborative role-playing provided meaningful opportunities for children to communicate with peers, express ideas, respond to others, and participate actively in classroom interactions. The strategy also enhanced children's speaking confidence, vocabulary use, and willingness to engage in collaborative communication during learning activities. In addition, role-playing created authentic and contextualized learning experiences that supported children's social interaction and language development. Nevertheless, several challenges were identified, including differences in children's confidence levels, varying communication abilities, and the need for continuous teacher facilitation. The study concludes that collaborative role-playing is a valuable pedagogical strategy for fostering young learners' communication skills through interactive and cooperative learning experiences. The findings offer practical insights for early childhood

educators seeking to promote meaningful communication and active participation in classroom settings.

Keywords : collaborative role-playing, communication skills, young learners, early childhood education, case study.

INTRODUCTION

Communication skills are widely recognized as a fundamental component of early childhood development. During the early years, children learn to express ideas, share experiences, respond to others, and participate in social interactions that support their cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional growth (Saxena et al., 2022). The development of communication skills at an early age is particularly important because it forms the foundation for later academic achievement, social competence, and lifelong learning. Therefore, early childhood education institutions are expected to provide meaningful learning experiences that encourage children to communicate actively and confidently (Wiwit, 2024). Research has consistently highlighted that communication development in young children is closely associated with opportunities for interaction, participation, and engagement in authentic social contexts.

Despite the acknowledged importance of communication skills, fostering meaningful communication among young learners remains a challenge in many early childhood classrooms (Rathod, 2022). Learning activities are often dominated by teacher explanations and instructional routines that limit children's opportunities to initiate conversations, express opinions, negotiate meanings, and interact with peers. As a result, children may become passive participants rather than active communicators during classroom learning. This condition suggests the need for pedagogical approaches that provide greater opportunities for children to engage in meaningful interactions and collaborative communication (Cao & Yu, 2023).

In response to these challenges, collaborative learning has gained increasing attention in early childhood education (Schneider, 2026). Collaborative activities enable children to share ideas, negotiate roles, solve problems together, and communicate with peers while participating in learning tasks. Through collaborative interactions, children not only learn academic content but also develop essential communication competencies, including listening, speaking, responding, and turn-taking skills (Harianto et al., 2020; Mugabekazi et al., 2025). Previous studies have emphasized that cooperative and collaborative play can significantly support communication development, interpersonal interaction, and social competence among young children.

Among various collaborative learning approaches, role-playing has emerged as a promising pedagogical strategy in early childhood education. Hafidhoh et al. (2025) Role-playing allows children to engage in imaginative and contextualized situations by assuming different social roles and interacting with others in meaningful ways. Through these activities, children can practice verbal expression, develop confidence in speaking, and learn how communication functions in real-life social situations. Previous research has demonstrated that role-playing contributes positively to children's communication development, language use, creativity, and social participation (Zhiyenbayeva et al.,

3rd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Organised by the English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,
Universitas Islam Kadiri ©2026

2026). Furthermore, role-playing creates a safe and enjoyable environment in which children can experiment with language and social interaction without fear of making mistakes (Yuliawati et al., 2024).

Although the benefits of role-playing have been widely reported, existing studies have predominantly focused on communication outcomes, language development, or general classroom engagement (Yuliawati et al., 2024). Comparatively less attention has been devoted to understanding how collaborative role-playing functions as a pedagogical strategy that fosters communication skills through children's interactions during learning activities. Moreover, limited research has explored this issue within the context of early childhood institutions characterized by a strong language-learning environment, such as those located in PKK Plosorejo Gampengrejo Kediri. Existing literature also tends to emphasize whether communication skills improve, rather than examining how communication opportunities emerge and are negotiated through collaborative role-playing experiences.

The present study addresses these gaps by examining collaborative role-playing as a pedagogical strategy for fostering young learners' communication skills in an early childhood education setting. The study offers a distinctive contribution by exploring communication development as a social and interactive process that occurs through children's collaborative participation in role-playing activities. In addition, the research provides empirical insights from PAUD PKK Plosorejo Gampengrejo Kediri, a unique educational environment where children are exposed to rich communicative and language-learning experiences. By focusing on the implementation of collaborative role-playing and the communication practices that emerge during learning activities, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on child-centered pedagogy and communication development in early childhood education.

Therefore, this study aims to explore how collaborative role-playing is implemented as a pedagogical strategy for fostering young learners' communication skills and to examine the communication experiences that emerge during role-playing activities at PAUD PKK Plosorejo Gampengrejo Kediri.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the implementation of collaborative role-playing as a pedagogical strategy for fostering young learners' communication skills in an early childhood education setting. A case study approach was considered appropriate because it enables an in-depth understanding of a contemporary educational phenomenon within its real-life context and allows researchers to examine participants' experiences, interactions, and learning practices comprehensively (Widhagdhha & Ediyono, 2022).

The study was conducted at PAUD PKK Plosorejo Gampengrejo Kediri, Kediri, East Java, Indonesia. The participants consisted of one classroom teacher and fifteen children aged 5–6 years who regularly participated in collaborative role-playing activities during classroom learning. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement in role-playing sessions and their relevance to the objectives of the study.

Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, field notes, and documentation. Classroom observations were conducted during several role-playing sessions to examine children's communication behaviors, interactions, and participation in collaborative activities. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the classroom teacher to obtain insights into the planning, implementation, and perceived benefits of collaborative role-playing. Field notes were used to record contextual information and noteworthy events during the learning process, while documentation such as photographs, lesson plans, and learning materials served as supplementary data sources.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures proposed by (Braun & Clarke, 2023). The analysis involved data familiarization, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, theme definition, and report writing. Through this process, recurring patterns related to communication skills, collaborative interactions, and pedagogical practices were identified and interpreted.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, data triangulation was employed by comparing information obtained from observations, interviews, field notes, and documentation. Member checking was also conducted with the classroom teacher to verify the accuracy of the interpretations. Furthermore, detailed descriptions of the research context and participants were provided to enhance the credibility and transferability of the findings.

Ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining permission from the school administration and informed consent from the children's parents or guardians. Participants' identities were kept confidential, and all data were used solely for research purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Collaborative Role-Playing Activities

The findings revealed that collaborative role-playing was implemented as a regular classroom activity designed to encourage children's participation and interaction (Divanji et al., 2024). The teacher organized children into small groups and introduced role-playing themes closely related to their daily experiences, such as shopping at a market, visiting a doctor, family activities, and classroom situations. Dorożyński & Dorożyńska (2022) Prior to the role-playing sessions, children were encouraged to discuss the storyline, select roles, and determine how the scenario would be enacted. This preparatory stage created opportunities for children to communicate, negotiate, and collaborate with their peers before the actual role-playing began.

Classroom observations indicated that children actively participated in assigning roles and discussing the sequence of activities within their groups. During this process, children exchanged ideas, expressed preferences, and negotiated responsibilities. These interactions demonstrated that communication occurred not only during the role-playing performance but also throughout the planning stage. The collaborative nature of the activity required children to engage in continuous interaction with their peers, thereby creating a communicative learning environment.

These findings support the social constructivist perspective, which emphasizes that learning occurs through social interaction and collaborative engagement. Through collaborative role-playing, children were provided with authentic opportunities to construct knowledge and develop communication skills while interacting with others. The activity also reflected child-centered learning principles, where children actively participated in creating and directing their own learning experiences rather than merely receiving information from the teacher.

Communication Skills Emerging Through Collaborative Role-Playing

Axrorova (2024) One of the most significant findings of this study was the emergence of various forms of communication during collaborative role-playing activities. Observations revealed that children frequently expressed ideas, responded to peers, initiated conversations, asked questions, and participated in turn-taking interactions. This communication behaviors emerged naturally as children attempted to perform their assigned roles and maintain the continuity of the role-playing scenarios.

Children often demonstrated their ability to express opinions and preferences while negotiating roles within their groups. Statements such as “I want to be the doctor” or “You can be the customer” reflected their willingness to communicate ideas and participate in collaborative decision-making. Furthermore, children actively responded to suggestions from their peers and modified their actions based on group agreements. Such interactions indicated that communication was functioning as a collaborative process rather than an individual activity.

The findings also showed that children practiced turn-taking communication during conversations. They listened to their peers, waited for opportunities to speak, and responded appropriately to ongoing interactions. These behaviors are important indicators of emerging communication competence in early childhood. Through repeated engagement in role-playing situations, children learned to communicate within social contexts that required reciprocal interaction and cooperation.

The results align with previous studies suggesting that role-playing promotes meaningful language use and social interaction among young learners. Unlike structured teacher-led questioning, collaborative role-playing provides authentic communicative situations where children use language for genuine social purposes. Consequently, communication skills develop naturally through participation, interaction, and collaborative meaning-making.

Development of Speaking Confidence and Participation

Another important finding concerned children's increasing confidence in verbal communication (Eliyanti & Bahiroh, 2025). Observational data indicated that some children initially displayed hesitation when speaking in front of peers or participating in group discussions. However, as role-playing activities became more familiar, these children gradually demonstrated greater willingness to communicate and participate actively in classroom interactions.

Several children who were initially passive began initiating conversations and responding more confidently during role-playing sessions. They appeared more comfortable expressing ideas and interacting with classmates when communication occurred within imaginative and enjoyable scenarios. The role-playing environment reduced anxiety and allowed children to experiment with language in a supportive social setting.

This finding suggests that collaborative role-playing may contribute to the development of communication confidence among young learners. Confidence plays a crucial role in children's willingness to engage in social interaction and verbal communication. The findings support experiential learning theories, which argue that active participation in meaningful experiences enhances learning outcomes and personal development. By engaging directly in communicative situations, children gain opportunities to practice and strengthen their communication abilities in a natural and enjoyable manner.

The Role of Teacher Facilitation in Supporting Communication

The study also found that teacher facilitation played a crucial role in the success of collaborative role-playing activities. Throughout the learning process, the teacher provided guidance, modeled appropriate communication behaviors, encouraged participation, and assisted children when difficulties arose. Teacher support was particularly important during the initial stages of role-playing, when some children were uncertain about their roles or reluctant to communicate with peers.

Observations showed that the teacher frequently used prompts and questions to encourage children to express ideas and maintain conversations. In situations where communication became limited, the teacher provided scaffolding by suggesting possible responses or helping children develop the storyline. This support enabled children to remain engaged and continue participating in collaborative interactions.

The findings highlight the importance of scaffolding in early childhood learning. Consistent with sociocultural theory, teacher guidance helps children perform tasks that may be difficult to accomplish independently. Through strategic facilitation, the teacher created a supportive environment that enabled children to engage more effectively in communication and collaborative learning activities.

Challenges Encountered During Implementation

Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges were identified during the implementation of collaborative role-playing activities (Clarín & Baluyos, 2022). One of the primary challenges was the variation in children's confidence levels. While some children actively participated and communicated throughout the activities, others demonstrated reluctance to speak or engage with peers. These differences occasionally affected the balance of participation within groups.

Another challenge involved variations in communication abilities and vocabulary use among children (Agayon et al., 2022). Some participants were able to communicate ideas fluently, whereas others required additional support and encouragement from the

teacher. Furthermore, certain children occasionally dominated group discussions, limiting opportunities for less confident peers to contribute.

These challenges indicate that collaborative role-playing should not be viewed as a self-sustaining activity that automatically promotes communication development. Instead, effective implementation requires careful teacher facilitation, continuous encouragement, and the creation of inclusive learning environments that support participation from all children. Addressing these challenges is essential to maximize the communicative benefits of collaborative role-playing in early childhood education.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that collaborative role-playing functions as a valuable pedagogical strategy for fostering young learners' communication skills. Through collaborative interaction, imaginative participation, and teacher-supported learning experiences, children were provided with meaningful opportunities to express ideas, respond to others, engage in conversations, and develop confidence in communication. These findings reinforce the importance of child-centered and interaction-based pedagogical approaches in promoting communication development during early childhood.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the implementation of collaborative role-playing as a pedagogical strategy for fostering young learners' communication skills at PAUD PKK Plosorejo Gampengrejo Kediri. The findings revealed that collaborative role-playing created meaningful opportunities for children to engage in communication through expressing ideas, responding to peers, participating in turn-taking interactions, and collaborating within shared learning scenarios. The strategy encouraged active participation and supported the development of communication confidence by providing authentic and enjoyable contexts for social interaction.

The study also demonstrated that communication skills emerged not only during the enactment of role-playing activities but also throughout the processes of negotiating roles, planning scenarios, and interacting with peers. These findings highlight the importance of collaborative learning experiences in creating communicative environments where children can practice language and social interaction in meaningful ways. Furthermore, teacher facilitation was found to play a crucial role in sustaining children's participation and supporting communication during role-playing activities.

Despite several challenges, including variations in children's confidence levels and communication abilities, collaborative role-playing proved to be a valuable child-centered pedagogical strategy that supports communication development in early childhood education. The study contributes to the existing literature by providing insights into how communication skills are fostered through collaborative interaction rather than focusing solely on communication outcomes. Additionally, the findings offer empirical evidence from the unique educational context of PAUD PKK Plosorejo Gampengrejo Kediri, where communicative learning experiences are strongly emphasized.

The study suggests that early childhood educators should consider integrating collaborative role-playing into classroom practices to promote meaningful communication, active participation, and social interaction among young learners. Future

research may further investigate collaborative role-playing across different early childhood settings and explore its potential contribution to other aspects of children's development, including language proficiency, creativity, and social-emotional learning.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Edi Titik Kusnawawati is a lecturer in the Early Childhood Education Teacher Education (PG-PAUD) Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Wahidiyah, Kediri, Indonesia. Her academic interests include early childhood education, child-centered learning, play-based pedagogy, and communication development in young learners.

Siti Lebar is a lecturer in the Early Childhood Education Teacher Education (PG-PAUD) Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Wahidiyah, Kediri, Indonesia. Her research focuses on early childhood learning strategies, classroom interaction, educational innovation, and children's social development.

Samsiah is a lecturer in the Early Childhood Education Teacher Education (PG-PAUD) Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Wahidiyah, Kediri, Indonesia. Her scholarly interests include early childhood curriculum, language development, educational psychology, and creative learning environments for young children.

REFERENCES

- Agayon, A. J. D., Agayon, A. K. R., & Pentang, J. (2022). *Teachers in the new normal: Challenges and coping mechanisms in secondary schools*.
<https://philarchive.org/rec/AGATIT-3>
- Axrorova, M. (2024). USING ROLE-PLAYING TO ENHANCE COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING. *Academic Research in Educational Sciences*, 5(11), 74–82. Communication Skills Emerging Through Collaborative Role-Playing
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2023). Toward good practice in thematic analysis: Avoiding common problems and becoming a knowing researcher. *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 24(1), 1–6.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2022.2129597>
- Cao, W., & Yu, Z. (2023). Exploring learning outcomes, communication, anxiety, and motivation in learning communities: a systematic review. *Humanities and Social*

Sciences Communications, 10(1), 1–13. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-023-02325-2>

- Clarín, A. S., & Baluyos, E. L. (2022). Challenges encountered in the implementation of online distance learning. *EduLine: Journal of Education and Learning Innovation*, 2(1), 33–46. <https://doi.org/10.35877/454RI.eduline591>
- Divanji, R., Dangol, A., Lombard, E. J., Chen, K., & Rubin, J. D. (2024). Togethertales RPG: Prosocial skill development through digitally mediated collaborative role-playing. *Proceedings of the 23rd Annual ACM Interaction Design and Children Conference*, 1012–1015. <https://dl.acm.org/doi/abs/10.1145/3628516.3662048>
- Dorożyński, P., & Dorożyńska, K. (2022). The role-playing game to increase students' activity and engagement in the teaching process—A pilot study of research & development campaign. *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, 14(8), 1046–1052. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3582437.3587180>
- Eliyanti, R., & Bahiroh, S. (2025). Public Speaking Training Strategies for Enhancing the Self-Confidence of Young Children. *Kiddo: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini*, 6(2), 466–476. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.19105/kiddo.v6i2.21062>
- Hafidhoh, H., Fatahillah, M., & El Habib, N. (2025). Enhancing Early Childhood Development Aged 4-6 Years Through Role-Playing Method. *JOYCED: Journal of Early Childhood Education*, 5(2), 247–259. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14421/joyced.2025.52-07>
- Hariato, G. P., Rusijono, R., Masitoh, S., & Setyawan, W. H. (2020). Collaborative-Cooperative Learning Model to Improve Theology Students' characters: Is it Effective? *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendidikan*, 39(2). <https://doi.org/10.21831/cp.v39i2.31272>
- Mugabekazi, J. C., Mukanziza, J., Nizeyimana, P., & Manirahari, P. (2025). Integrating collaborative learning strategies in the curriculum: enhancing critical thinking and communication skills in primary education. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 12(3).
- Rathod, S. S. (2022). Fostering Communication Skills Among Teams in Organizations. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills*, 16(3).

- Saxena, S., Rastogi, P., Gupta, S. S., & Nesamony, S. R. (2022). Role of Communication Skills: A Review. *World Journal of English Language*, 12(3), 18.
- Schneider, B. (2026). Observing joint visual attention with sensors: A review of research and recommendations for studying and supporting collaborative learning. *Review of Educational Research*, 96(3), 942–984.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543251327172>
- Widhagdha, M. F., & Ediyono, S. (2022). Case Study Approach in Community Empowerment Research in Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Social Responsibility Review (IJSRR)*, 1(1), 71–76. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.55381/ijssr.v1i1.19>
- Wiwit, S. P. H. S. (2024). Application of active learning methods in developing early children's confidence capabilities. *Early Childhood Education & Parenting*, 1(2), 67–72. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.17509/ecepa.v1i2.74713>
- Yuliawati, L., Wardhani, P. A. P., & Ng, J. H. (2024). A scoping review of tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG) as psychological intervention: potential benefits and future directions. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 2885–2903.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S466664>
- Zhiyenbayeva, S., Zhumabekova, F., Stybayeva, A., Adamova, M., Onlanbekkyzy, G., & Izmagambetova, R. (2026). Vocabulary development in preschool children through role-playing games. *International Journal of Instruction*, 19(1), 87–104.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2026.1915a>