

The Role of Play Dramain Improving Students' Comprehension of Reported Speech.

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ARTICLEINFO

Keywords:

*[Drama; Role Play;
Reported Speech]*

ArticleHistory:

Received: 11-06-2026

Revised : 08-08-2026

Accepted: 10-08-2026

Published: 20-08-2026

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the role of drama scripts implemented through role-play activities in improving students' comprehension of reported speech at SMK Negeri 2 Langsa. The study employed a quantitative approach using a one-group pre-test and post-test quasi-experimental design. The population consisted of all eleventh-grade students at SMK Negeri 2 Langsa, while the sample comprised 25 students from class XI RPL selected through purposive sampling. The instrument used to collect the data was a grammar test consisting of 25 multiple-choice questions focusing on reported speech. The research procedure included administering a pre-test to measure students' initial comprehension, implementing drama scripts through role-play activities as the treatment, and administering a post-test to measure students' comprehension after the treatment. The results revealed a significant improvement in students' comprehension of reported speech. The mean score increased from 37.52 in the pre-test to 82.24 in the post-test. Furthermore, the paired sample *t*-test showed that the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) was 0.000, which was lower than 0.05. These findings indicated that the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. Therefore, it was concluded that the implementation of drama scripts through role-play activities improved students' comprehension of reported speech. The findings suggested that drama-based learning activities could serve as an engaging and effective strategy for teaching grammar in EFL classrooms.

1. Introduction

Grammar is crucial for learning English, as it establishes the basis for creating clear and precise communication. By utilizing grammatical knowledge, learners can arrange ideas, convey relationships, and communicate efficiently in both verbal and written formats. Within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, mastering grammar is viewed as equally essential as communicative competence since it allows learners to generate language that is grammatically correct and suitable for the context. Nevertheless, grammar teaching in numerous classrooms remains largely influenced by conventional methods, including rote learning, repetitive tasks, and teacher-focused instruction. These methods frequently offer few chances for students to utilize grammatical knowledge in significant communication. Consequently, numerous students can articulate grammatical rules yet struggle to apply them correctly in actual communication contexts (Normawati & Nugrahaeni, 2024).

One grammatical structure that remains challenging for many EFL learners is reported speech. Reported speech is used to convey what someone has said without quoting the speaker's exact words. This grammatical structure is widely used in spoken and written communication, particularly in academic and professional contexts where information is often summarized or paraphrased (Nst et al., 2025). However, transforming direct speech into reported speech requires several grammatical adjustments, including changes in tense, pronouns, reporting verbs, and expressions of time and place. These structural changes make reported speech one of the grammar topics that students frequently find difficult to understand and apply correctly.

Previous studies have consistently shown that students experience various difficulties in learning reported speech. (Miranti, 2020) found that university students frequently made errors when transforming direct speech into reported speech, particularly in verb tense changes, with many of the errors influenced by intralingual interference. (Wahyudi, 2021) also reported that high school students often encountered problems in changing tenses when converting direct speech into indirect speech, indicating that tense transformation remains one of the most challenging aspects of reported speech. In addition, (Rizki, 2019) found that limited grammatical awareness and insufficient contextual practice contributed to students' difficulties in transforming interrogative sentences into reported speech. These findings indicate that many students still rely heavily on memorizing grammatical rules without fully understanding how those rules function in authentic communication. Consequently, students may understand the concept of reported speech theoretically but continue to experience difficulties when applying it accurately in actual language use. This condition suggests that conventional grammar instruction does not always provide sufficient opportunities for students to practice grammar meaningfully in communicative contexts. As a result, grammar learning often becomes abstract, reducing students' motivation and active participation in the learning process (Altun, 2019).

One instructional approach that has gained increasing attention in English language teaching is drama-based learning. Drama encourages students to learn through active participation, collaboration, and meaningful interaction rather than through

memorization alone. Through activities such as dialogues, role-play, and drama scripts, students are provided with opportunities to use language in situations that resemble real communication. (Anderson & Dunn, 2013) explain that drama supports language learning by engaging students in narrative experiences and collaborative activities that strengthen both language comprehension and retention. Likewise, (Davies, 1990) emphasizes that drama creates a supportive classroom environment in which learners can experiment with the target language without fear of making mistakes. Role-play also enables students to express ideas, negotiate meaning, and practice language structures in authentic communicative situations (Ladousse, 1987). Similarly, (Livingstone, 1983) argues that role-play allows learners to practice grammatical structures in meaningful contexts rather than through isolated drills. Collectively, these studies suggest that drama-based learning can create an interactive learning environment that encourages students to use language meaningfully while developing both their grammatical understanding and communicative competence.

Although the educational benefits of drama have been widely discussed, previous studies have primarily examined its contribution to improving speaking skills, learner motivation, and communicative competence. Comparatively, fewer studies have investigated the use of drama as an instructional strategy for teaching specific grammatical structures. Likewise, previous studies on reported speech have mainly focused on identifying students' grammatical difficulties rather than exploring instructional approaches designed to address those difficulties through interactive learning (Kolar & Sándorová, 2025). Consequently, there is still limited evidence regarding how drama scripts implemented through role-play activities can support students' comprehension of reported speech in EFL classrooms. This gap indicates the need for further investigation into the use of drama-based learning as a contextual approach to grammar instruction. Based on this gap, the present study examines the role of drama scripts implemented through role-play activities in improving students' comprehension of reported speech among eleventh-grade students at SMK Negeri 2 Langsa. Unlike previous studies that mainly investigated drama as a means of improving speaking ability, learner motivation, or general communicative competence, this study focuses specifically on its application in grammar instruction. The novelty of this study lies in integrating structured drama scripts with role-play activities to facilitate students' understanding of reported speech through contextualized language practice. By providing empirical evidence on the role of drama-based learning in teaching a specific grammatical structure, this study contributes to the development of more interactive and meaningful approaches to grammar instruction in EFL classrooms and offers practical insights for English teachers seeking alternative strategies for teaching reported speech.

2. Method

This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design with a one-group pre-test and post-test design. The design was selected to examine students' comprehension of reported speech before and after the implementation of drama scripts through role-play activities. In this design, students completed a pre-test before receiving

the treatment and a post-test after the treatment. The research design can be illustrated as $O_1 - X - O_2$, where O_1 represents the pre-test, X represents the treatment, and O_2 represents the post-test (Creswell, 2017). The study was conducted at SMK Negeri 2 Langsa during the 2025/2026 academic year. The population consisted of all eleventh-grade students, while the sample comprised 25 students from class XI RPL selected through purposive sampling. This class was chosen because the students had previously studied reported speech but still experienced difficulties in understanding and applying the grammatical structure correctly. Therefore, the class was considered appropriate for examining the implementation of drama scripts through role-play activities.

The research instrument was a grammar test consisting of 25 multiple-choice questions designed to measure students' comprehension of reported speech. The test covered essential aspects of reported speech, including tense changes, pronoun changes, adverbial changes of time and place, and the transformation of statements, questions, and commands. The instrument was adopted from a previously validated study on students' mastery of reported speech conducted by Rahayu (2012). The instrument had fulfilled content validity in the original study and was used without modification in the present research. Therefore, additional statistical item validation was not conducted. Likewise, no additional expert judgment, pilot testing, or reliability analysis, such as Cronbach's Alpha, was performed because the instrument had already been adopted in its original validated form. Each correct answer received one point, while incorrect answers received zero points. The same test was administered as both the pre-test and the post-test to ensure consistency in measuring students' comprehension before and after the treatment.

Data collection was carried out in three stages. The first stage was administering the pre-test to identify students' initial comprehension of reported speech. The second stage involved implementing the treatment using drama scripts through role-play activities, there are four meetings. During the treatment, students worked collaboratively in groups using drama scripts containing dialogues that required them to identify and practice reported speech in meaningful communicative contexts. Students first read and discussed the scripts, identified the reported speech expressions, practiced transforming direct speech into reported speech, rehearsed the dialogues with their group members, and finally performed the drama in front of the class. Throughout these activities, the teacher guided students in recognizing grammatical features such as tense shifts, pronoun changes, and adverbial changes while providing feedback on the accuracy of their language use. The final stage was administering the post-test using the same instrument to measure students' comprehension after completing the treatment. The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25. Descriptive statistics were first used to summarize students' performance by presenting the minimum score, maximum score, mean, and standard deviation of both the pre-test and post-test. Before testing the hypothesis, a Shapiro-Wilk normality test was conducted because the sample consisted of fewer than 50 participants. A significance value greater than 0.05 indicated that the data were normally distributed. Since the data met the assumption of normality, a paired sample *t*-test was employed to compare students' pre-test and post-test scores.

The null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted if the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) was less than 0.05.

3. Result

The following table shows the frequency distribution of students' pre-test and post-test scores before and after using drama scripts in role-play activities.

Table 1. Distribution Frequency of Students' Pre-Test Score

Class Interval	Category	Frequency	Percent
86 - 100	Very Good	0	0%
70 - 85	Good	0	0%
56 - 69	Fair	4	16%
36 - 55	Poor	10	40%
0 - 35	Very Poor	11	44%
Σ		25	100%

Table 2. Distribution Frequency of Students' Post-Test Score

Class Interval	Category	Frequency	Percent
86 - 100	Very Good	9	36%
70 - 85	Good	14	56%
56 - 69	Fair	2	8%
36 - 55	Poor	0	0%
0 - 35	Very Poor	0	0%
Σ		25	100%

After the students' pre-test and post-test scores were collected, the scores/data were analyzed using IBM SPSS 25. The following are the steps of the analysis:

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize students' performance before and after the treatment. The analysis includes the number of participants, minimum score, maximum score, mean score, and standard deviation.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-Test	25	8	56	938	37.52	13.800
Post-Test	25	68	100	2056	82.24	8.570
Valid N (listwise)	25					

The pre-test results indicate that students' initial comprehension of reported speech was relatively low, with a mean score of 37.52. After the implementation of drama scripts through role-play activities, the mean score increased to 82.24. The decrease in standard deviation from 13.800 to 8.570 also indicates that students' scores became more consistent after the treatment. These results suggest that students demonstrated a significant improvement in understanding reported speech after participating in the drama-based learning activities.

3.2 Normality Test

Before conducting hypothesis testing, a normality test was performed to determine whether the pre-test and post-test data were normally distributed. Since the number of participants was fewer than 50, the Shapiro–Wilk test was used.

Table3. Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-Test	.136	25	.200*	.948	25	.227
Post-Test	.127	25	.200*	.967	25	.565

The results show that the significance value for the pre-test is 0.227 and for the post-test is 0.565, both of which are greater than 0.05. This indicates that the data are normally distributed. Therefore, the assumption for parametric statistical analysis was met, allowing further analysis using a paired sample t-test.

3.3 Paired Sample T-test

A paired sample t-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between students' pre-test and post-test scores.

Table.4 Paired Test

		Paired Differences							
				Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Pre-Test - Post-Test	-44.720	13.303	2.661	-50.211	-39.229	-16.809	24	.000

The results show that the mean difference between the pre-test and post-test scores is -44.720, indicating that the post-test scores were significantly higher than the pre-test scores. The significance value (0.000) is lower than the significance level of 0.05, which means that the difference between the two scores is statistically significant. These findings indicate that the implementation of drama scripts through role-play activities significantly improved students' comprehension of reported speech.

3.4 Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis testing was conducted to determine whether the alternative hypothesis (H1) was accepted or rejected based on the statistical analysis. The test was carried out using the results of the paired sample t-test in SPSS version 25. The purpose of this test was to examine whether the use of drama scripts through role-play activities had a significant effect on students' comprehension of reported speech.

The hypotheses of this study are formulated as follows:

- a. H0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant effect of using drama scripts through role-play activities on students' comprehension of reported speech.
- b. H1 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant effect of using drama scripts through role-play activities on students' comprehension of reported speech.

The decision criteria are:

- a. If the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), then H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted.
- b. If the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) is greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$), then H0 is accepted and H1 is rejected.

Based on the paired sample t-test results, the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) is 0.000, which is lower than the significance level of 0.05 ($0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted. This result indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between students' pre-test and post-test scores. In other words, the implementation of drama scripts through role-play activities significantly improves students' comprehension of reported speech in class XI RPL at SMK Negeri 2 Langsa.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of drama scripts through role-play activities improved students' comprehension of reported speech. The increase in students' post-test scores indicates that learning grammar through contextualized and interactive activities enabled students to understand and apply the rules of reported speech more effectively than before the treatment. Rather than memorizing grammatical rules in isolation, students actively practiced transforming direct speech into reported speech while participating in meaningful communication.

This learning experience allowed them to connect grammatical knowledge with authentic language use, making reported speech easier to understand and apply in classroom situations. One possible explanation for these findings is that drama-based learning provides students with repeated opportunities to use grammatical structures in meaningful contexts. Throughout the learning process, students worked collaboratively to read drama scripts, identify reported speech expressions, transform direct speech into reported speech, rehearse dialogues, and perform role-play activities. These activities encouraged students to practice grammatical structures repeatedly while communicating with their peers instead of completing isolated grammar exercises. As explained by (Davies, 1990), drama creates a supportive learning environment in which learners can experiment with language without fear of making mistakes. This learning atmosphere encourages active participation, increases learners' confidence, and helps students develop a deeper understanding of grammar through authentic communication.

The findings are consistent with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that knowledge is actively constructed through experience. According to (Piaget, 1970), learners develop understanding by integrating new knowledge with their existing cognitive structures. In the present study, students were not limited to memorizing the rules of reported speech. Instead, they actively constructed their understanding by applying grammatical rules while interacting with drama scripts and participating in role-play activities. As a result, students developed a more meaningful understanding of reported speech because grammar learning was closely connected to communicative situations rather than presented as isolated rules. The present findings can also be explained through Vygotsky's Social Constructivism, which emphasizes that learning occurs through social interaction and collaboration. During group discussions, rehearsals, and classroom performances, students exchanged ideas, solved grammatical problems together, and received guidance from both their peers and the teacher. These collaborative activities created opportunities for students to strengthen their understanding through interaction before applying the target grammatical structure independently (Santhi & Selvam, n.d.). In addition, Long's Interaction Hypothesis suggests that language acquisition develops through meaningful interaction and negotiation of meaning. Throughout the role-play activities, students continuously interpreted dialogues, discussed language forms, and practiced transforming direct speech into reported speech while communicating with others (Zulianingrum, 2025). This interaction enabled students to notice grammatical forms within meaningful communication, supporting both grammatical development and language use simultaneously.

The findings of this study are generally consistent with previous studies on drama-based language learning. (Anderson & Dunn, 2013) argue that drama promotes language development by engaging learners in collaborative experiences that strengthen language comprehension and retention. Similarly, the improvement observed in this study suggests that collaborative drama activities helped students develop a better understanding of reported speech. Likewise, (Ladousse, 1987) explains that role-play encourages learners to express ideas naturally while practicing language structures in communicative situations. Moreover (Livingstone, 1983) also emphasizes that role-play

enables learners to practice grammar in meaningful contexts instead of relying solely on mechanical drills. These similarities indicate that drama-based learning provides opportunities for students to use language meaningfully while reinforcing grammatical knowledge through authentic interaction. However, the present study also extends previous research in several important ways. Earlier studies have predominantly investigated the contribution of drama to improving speaking ability, learner motivation, and communicative competence. In contrast, this study specifically examined the role of drama scripts in supporting students' comprehension of reported speech as a particular grammatical structure. Rather than focusing on oral fluency, the learning activities were designed to help students recognize, transform, and apply reported speech accurately during classroom interaction. This difference may explain why students demonstrated considerable improvement in grammatical comprehension after participating in the role-play activities. The findings therefore suggest that drama-based learning can contribute not only to communicative competence but also to grammar instruction when learning activities are carefully designed to provide contextualized grammatical practice.

Based on these findings, this study proposes a conceptual pedagogical framework for teaching grammar through drama scripts and role-play activities. The learning process begins with contextualized practice, in which students are introduced to reported speech through drama scripts that reflect meaningful communication (Topal, 2024). It continues with collaborative interaction, where students discuss the scripts, identify grammatical forms, rehearse dialogues, and receive feedback from their peers and teacher. These activities promote learner engagement by encouraging active participation, confidence, and meaningful language use throughout the learning process. As students repeatedly apply reported speech in authentic communicative situations, they gradually develop stronger grammatical understanding, enabling them to comprehend and use reported speech more accurately. This framework explains how drama-based learning supports grammar instruction while providing practical guidance for English teachers who wish to integrate drama scripts and role-play activities into grammar lessons. Overall, the findings suggest that drama scripts implemented through role-play activities provide an alternative approach to grammar instruction by integrating grammatical knowledge with meaningful communication. Instead of viewing grammar as a collection of rules to be memorized, students learn to understand and apply grammatical structures through interaction, collaboration, and authentic language use. Therefore, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on drama-based learning by demonstrating its potential not only to support communicative competence but also to facilitate students' comprehension of specific grammatical structures, particularly reported speech.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the implementation of drama scripts through role-play activities contributed to improving students' comprehension of reported speech among eleventh-grade students at SMK Negeri 2 Langsa. The findings demonstrated a significant improvement in students' post-test scores compared with their pre-test performance, indicating that integrating grammar instruction with contextualized and interactive

learning activities enabled students to understand and apply reported speech more effectively. By engaging students in meaningful communication through drama, grammar learning became more active, collaborative, and relevant to authentic language use. These findings also contribute to English language teaching by demonstrating that drama scripts can function not only as speaking activities but also as instructional tools that support students' comprehension of grammatical structures through contextualized practice and collaborative learning. The findings offer several practical implications for English language teaching. English teachers are encouraged to integrate drama scripts into grammar instruction by selecting scripts that contain the target grammatical structure, organizing students into small groups, guiding them to identify and transform direct speech into reported speech, allowing them to rehearse and perform the dialogues through role-play activities, and providing corrective feedback after each performance. These learning activities enable students to practice grammar in meaningful communicative contexts rather than relying primarily on rule memorization and mechanical exercises. Consequently, students have greater opportunities to understand grammatical concepts while simultaneously developing their confidence and participation in classroom interaction.

The results also have implications for curriculum development and educational institutions. Curriculum designers are encouraged to incorporate drama-based learning activities into English language programs, particularly as complementary strategies for teaching grammar through meaningful communication. Drama scripts may be integrated into classroom modules, supplementary learning materials, or project-based learning activities that encourage students to apply grammatical structures in authentic situations. To support the successful implementation of this approach, schools should provide appropriate instructional resources, allocate sufficient classroom time for collaborative learning activities, and facilitate professional development programs that equip English teachers with practical strategies for integrating drama into grammar instruction. Despite these positive findings, this study has several limitations. The research employed a one-group pre-test and post-test quasi-experimental design without a control group, making it difficult to attribute the observed improvement solely to the treatment. In addition, the study involved a relatively small number of participants from a single school, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings. Future research is recommended to employ more rigorous research designs by involving larger and more diverse samples as well as comparison or control groups to strengthen the evidence regarding the implementation of drama scripts in grammar instruction. In addition, future studies are encouraged to adopt mixed-methods approaches by combining quantitative findings with qualitative data obtained through classroom observations, interviews, or students' reflective responses to gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' learning experiences. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to investigate the long-term retention of reported speech after drama-based instruction and to examine whether this approach remains effective over time. Furthermore, future research may explore the implementation of drama scripts in teaching other grammatical structures and across different educational contexts to

broaden the applicability of drama-based grammar instruction in English language learning.

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