Journal of English Language and Education
ISSN 2597- 6850 (Online), 2502-4132 (Print)
Journal Homepage: https://jele.or.id/index.php/jele/index

OPEN ACCESS Article

The Effect of Cartoon Character Role Play for Students' Speaking Fluency and Confidence

https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v11i4.2644

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A B S T R A C T

Speaking is a fundamental component of English language learning that enables students to communicate ideas effectively in academic and social contexts. Among the key aspects of speaking, fluency facilitates smooth and coherent communication, while confidence supports students in expressing their ideas without excessive hesitation or anxiety. However, many lower secondary school students continue to experience difficulties in these areas. This study aimed to examine the effect of Cartoon Character Role Play on students' speaking fluency and confidence. A quantitative approach employing a pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design was used. The participants were 25 ninth-grade students of MTs Alkhairaat Mamboro. Data were collected through speaking performance tests and analyzed using SPSS. The findings revealed that the mean score increased from 44.5 in the pre-test to 56 in the post-test. Furthermore, the paired sample t-test yielded a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that Cartoon Character Role Play significantly improved students' speaking fluency and confidence.

Keywords: *Cartoon Character, Role Play, Speaking Fluency, Speaking Confidence*

Article History:
Received 25th May 2026
Accepted 09th June 2026
Published 02nd July 2026

INTRODUCTION

English has become a global language that plays an important role in education, professional settings, and intercultural communication. Among the four language skills, speaking is considered the most essential because it enables learners to express ideas verbally in real interactions. According to (Ridayani & Purwanto, 2024), speaking requires not only vocabulary and grammar mastery, but also the ability to think quickly and respond spontaneously. Likewise (Daulay et al., 2023) stated that speaking is an important skill that helps learners communicate their thoughts, feelings, and ideas effectively. Therefore, improving students' speaking ability is important to help them become confident English users in real-life situations.

Speaking enables students to participate actively in presentations, discussions, and intercultural interactions, making it an important indicator of language ability. This skill requires Engaging and interactive learning experiences rather than simple memorization. One effective method is the use of cartoons, which can create an enjoyable learning environment through interesting characters and stories. This idea is supported by (Ridayani & Purwanto, 2024), who found that innovative techniques such as role-playing and multimedia can improve students' speaking abilities effectively.

Students frequently feel nervous to talk in English in many secondary schools, particularly in EFL situations like Indonesia. According to (Ridayani & Purwanto, 2024), difficulties in speaking are generally caused by students' fear of trying and making mistakes, which causes them to remain silent during class discussions. These findings suggest that students' low speaking ability is caused by a combination of psychological barriers and teaching strategies that are inadequate to address students' Difficulties.

Cartoon character role play is beneficial for developing students' speaking fluency and confidence, as it combines imaginative interaction with meaningful language practice. When students take on the roles of cartoon characters, they are already familiar with, they tend to feel afraid of making mistakes, as the focus shifts from themselves to the characters they are portraying. This reduced anxiety encourages students to speak more freely and participate actively in classroom interactions. Furthermore, role-playing requires learners to respond spontaneously, maintain conversations, and express ideas continuously, which are essential elements of speaking fluency. Through repeated oral practice in enjoyable and contextual situations, students gradually become more comfortable using English and develop greater confidence. According to (Alvarez, 2024), playing activities significantly improved learners' fluency, speech clarity, and confidence, with the participants reporting the progress. This method is the effective strategy for speaking fluency and confidence in EFL classrooms.

Considering these benefits, role play can be an innovative approach to overcome students' speaking difficulties in EFL contexts such as MTs Al-Khairaat Mamboro. Preliminary observations showed that ninth-grade students still struggled to speak English fluently and confidently due to limited vocabulary and fear of making mistakes. In addition, teaching practices mainly focused on grammar and reading comprehension, providing limited opportunities for oral interaction. Therefore, cartoon character role play offers a promising alternative because it combines enjoyable role play activities with familiar animated characters to create a supportive environment for improving speaking ability.

The usage of animated media and cartoon characters is one of the best ways to support role play. Cartoons offer comedy, visual appeal, and well-known characters that make language practice less daunting and more pleasurable. Students not only learn linguistic structures but also develop an emotional bond with the characters they play when they role-play cartoon characters. Empirical studies have demonstrated the beneficial effects of English cartoons on oral communication and vocabulary development by (Saiddina & Darma, 2024). Additionally, speaking fluency is strengthened with frequent and genuine cartoon exposure by (Elfeitouri, 2025). As a result, the combination of role-playing and cartoon media makes the setting more engaging and stimulating for the development of speaking skills.

Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that cartoons have a psychological as well as linguistic impact on students. Cartoon characters have a beneficial and detrimental influence on children's cognitive and emotional development in the digital era, according to (Prithviraj et al., 2024). Structured usage in educational settings offers significant motivating advantages and language help, even if excessive exposure may lead to reliance. Thus, cartoon-based learning can strike a balance between amusement and intentional communication practice when paired with role-playing.

Therefore, this study wants to look into how role play to be cartoon characters affects the way ninth-graders at MTs Al-Khairaat Mamboro speak English. By doing fun role-playing activities with characters they know, students should feel surer of themselves, excited, and better at using English. This method of instruction not only assesses how effectively incorporating enjoyment and creativity aids in language acquisition, but it also demonstrates a novel approach for English teachers to use in comparable circumstances. This study aims to make learning more enjoyable and significant by fusing the entertainment value of cartoons with the active elements of role play, such as cooperating, envisioning, and boosting self-esteem. The study's findings are therefore anticipated to be beneficial in theory as well as in practice by developing fresh approaches to enhance English instruction, particularly with regard to improving students' speaking abilities.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental One Group Pre-Test and Post-Test Design to carefully assess the direct effect of the educational program on one group of participants. The selection of this research design was based on the characteristics of the study population, as there was only one ninth-grade class available at

MTs Alkhairaat Mamboro during the 2025/2026 academic year. Consequently, it was not feasible to establish a separate control group. Therefore, all students in the class were selected as the research participants and received the same instructional treatment. The effectiveness of the intervention was determined by comparing students' speaking performance before and after the implementation of Cartoon Character Role Play through pre-test and post-test assessments.

Table 1. Data of Population

NO	CLASS	NUMBER OF STUDENT
1	IX	25
Total		25

Respondents

The population of this study consisted of students in grade IX MTS Alkhairaat Mamboro, which is located in Mamboro, North of Palu. Using total sampling, the researcher selected one class as the experimental group to meet the pre-experimental design requirements, ensure the feasibility of the treatment implementation, and strengthen the validity of the findings. The experimental group received treatment through Cartoon Character Role Play as a learning medium. Data was collected through pre-test and post-test oral assessments.

Treatment Procedure

The treatment was conducted in six sessions over three weeks. Each session concentrated on a particular speaking skill and included activities involving role play with cartoon characters. The design of the intervention design followed the strategies outlined by (Safaah & Airlanda, 2025), who illustrated that the combination of role play and multimedia enhances student engagement.

Table 2. Table 2

Meeting	Topic	Teacher Activities	Student Activities
1st	Introduction to Role Play and Characters	Explains the learning objectives, introduces cartoon characters (e.g., Doraemon, Naruto,upin ipin,spongebob), and plays sample video scenes.	Observes video, discusses characters, and imitates short dialogues.
2nd	Expressions of Agreement and Disagreement (Introduction)	Presents expressions such as *"I agree with you," "I don't think so," "That's true,"* etc. Gives examples from short cartoon dialogues. Guides pronunciation and meaning.	Practice repeating and using the expressions in short dialogues with correct pronunciation and intonation.
3rd	Pair Dialogue Practice through Cartoon Characters	Demonstrates how to use agreement/disagreement expressions in conversations. Models a dialogue between two cartoon characters (e.g., SpongeBob and Patrick).	Work in pairs to perform dialogues expressing agreement or disagreement. Focus on fluency and confidence while acting in character.
4th	Group Role Play Performance	Divides class into groups and gives each group a scenario based on cartoon themes (e.g., classroom, friendship, teamwork). Encourages teamwork and creativity.	Prepare and perform group role plays using the target expressions naturally in context.
5th	Improvisation and Creativity	Encourages students to create their own short scenes without scripts. Guides them to use expressions naturally and confidently.	Perform short improvised scenes, using cartoon voices and expressions creatively. Focus on natural delivery and confidence.

6th	Final Performance and Post-Test	Conducts the final post-test. Asks students to perform one short dialogue as their chosen cartoon character. Provides feedback and reflection on progress.	Perform final role play individually or in pairs. Reflect on improvement in fluency and confidence.

Instruments

The research instrument used in this study is a speaking performance rubric that evaluates two main aspects: fluency and confidence. Both rubrics used in the pre- test and post-test to measure students' improvement after the implementation of cartoon character role play.

Fluency Rubric

The fluency rubric used to assess the smoothness of students' spoken production, including their ability to speak continuously, with minimal pauses or hesitation. This rubric was modified based on the works of (Brown, 2004) and (Hughes, 2003), emphasizing fluency and confidence as key indicators of speaking proficiency.

Table 3. Research Instruments Fluency

Aspect	1 (Poor)	2 (Fair)	3 (Good)	4 (Exelent)
Fluency	Speech is slow and often halting; speech is very halting, with frequent long pauses, and communication often comes to a complete standstill.	Speech is slow and often halting due to language limitations. Listeners must concentrate fully.	Speaks fluently, though there are a few pauses or repetitions. Nevertheless, the meaning is conveyed clearly.	Speaks very fluently.Hesitation is very rare and does not disrupt the flow of communication.

Confidence Rubric

The confidence component in this study used a performance-based rubric originally developed by (Al-Roud, 2016) to assess visible indicators of students' confidence during activities. The rubric consists of four score levels and includes observable behaviors such as eye contact, vocal clarity, and body language. The scoring descriptions adapted are as follow:

Table 4. Research Instruments Confidence

Aspect	1 (Poor)	2 (Fair)	3 (Good)	4 (Exelent)
confidence	Avoid eye contact,voice barely audible refuses to speak body language very tense.	Limited eye contact,voice quiet or unstable,waits to be promted,body language tense.	Occassional eye contact,voice generally clear responds when asked body language mostly relaxed	Maintain eye contact,speaks clearly,shows initiative,body language relaxed

Classification of Score

The table shows the classification of students' oral exam marks based on their performance in terms of fluency and confidence. The marks obtained from the oral exam were converted to a scale of 0–100, and then categorised into four assessment levels: Exelent, Good, Fair, and Poor. The table is as follows:

Table 5. Classification Score

No	Rating	Score	Level	Qualivication
1.	4	90-100	Exelent	Successful
2.	3	70-89	Good	Successful
3.	2	40-69	Fair	Failed
4.	1	0-39	Poor	Failed

Procedures

This intervention was conducted over four weeks and consisted of eight sessions, with two sessions held each week. Each session lasted 60 minutes and took place face-to-face in the classroom. The research procedure was carried out through several stages. The first stage was administering a pre-test to assess students' initial speaking ability before the treatment. In this stage, students completed an oral test by answering several questions using words, phrases, and short sentences related to themselves. After the pre-test, the researcher gave the treatment through cartoon character role-play as a learning medium. During the learning activities, students practised speaking English by watching cartoons and then performing directly as one of the characters. The treatment was conducted across several sessions to give students enough opportunities to practise speaking and participate actively in role-play. After the treatment was completed, a post-test was administered using questions related to the students' interests. The results from both tests were then collected and analyzed for further discussion.

Data Analysis

The data from the pre-test and post-test will be examined utilizing both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics comprising the calculation of the mean, median, standard deviation, and frequency, will provide a summary of the scores that highlight overall trends and patterns in performance (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Subsequently, these results will be represented in the form of tables and graphs to illustrate the improvements observed after treatment. To check the treatment's statistical significance, inferential statistics will be used, specifically the Paired Sample t-Test via SPSS 25. This test will compare the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test from the same group to see if a significant difference existed post-treatment. Essential prerequisite analyses, including normality and homogeneity tests, will be performed first to ensure the data met the assumptions for parametric testing, ensuring accurate and reliable t-test results (Ghozali, 2021). The final inferential outcome will determine if the Cartoon Character Role Play technique significantly improves students' speaking fluency and confidence.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Result of Pre-Test

Before implementing the intervention, the researcher administered a pre-test to the students to assess their basic understanding of the skills. The researcher used Excel and SPSS version 25 to calculate descriptive statistics, including the mean, minimum, maximum, and standard deviation. The complete results of this analysis are presented in the following table.

Table 6. The Result of Pre-Test

NO	Initial	Kind of Test		Score			
		Speaking Performance		Obtained (1-8)	Final (1-100)	Level	Qualification
		Fluency (1-4)	Confident (1-4)				
1	ANW	3	3	6	75	Good	Success
1	ADC	2	2	3	50	Fair	Failed
1	AN	1	2	3	37,5	Poor	Failed
4	DN	2	2	4	50	Fair	Failed
5	HNA	2	2	2	50	Fair	Failed
6	IRA	2	2	3	50	Fair	Failed
7	KA	1	2	3	37,5	Poor	Failed
8	LT	1	2	3	37,5	Poor	Failed
9	MAS	1	2	3	37,5	Poor	Failed

10	MF	2	1	3	37,5	Poor	Failed
11	MFA	1	1	2	25	Poor	Failed
12	MAS	1	2	3	37,5	Poor	Failed
13	MMI	2	1	3	37,5	Poor	Failed
14	KU	2	2	4	50	Fair	Failed
15	MN	2	1	3	37,5	Poor	Failed
16	MPA	1	1	2	25	Poor	Failed
17	MR	1	2	3	37,5	Poor	Failed
18	NF	2	2	4	50	Fair	Failed
19	QM	3	3	6	75	Good	Failed
20	SK	2	1	3	37,5	Poor	Failed
21	SF	1	2	3	37,5	Poor	Failed
22	TR	2	2	4	50	Fair	Failed
23	WS	1	2	3	37,5	Poor	Failed
24	QAY	3	2	5	62,5	Fair	Failed
25	MA	2	2	3	50	Fair	Failed
			TOTAL SCORE	= 1112,5			
			MEAN SCORE	= 44,5			

According to the above table, the mean pre-test score was 44.5, with the greatest score being 65 and the lowest being 25. This outcome demonstrates that the pupils' initial speaking proficiency remained in the fair range. The majority of pupils continued to struggle with speaking English fluently, as seen by their pauses, hesitations, and repetitions. Additionally, a few of students showed signs of insecurity during their performance, such as poor voice projection and little eye contact. The Cartoon Character Role Play approach was used as a treatment since the pre-test results showed that students' speaking abilities, particularly in fluency and confidence, still needed to be improved.

The Result of Post-Test

After applying the treatment, the researcher conducted a final test and presented the data using Excel and SPSS version 25 to calculate the descriptive statistics, which are presented as follows:

Table 7. The Result of Post-Test

NO	Initial	Kind of Test Speaking Performance		Score			
		Fluency (1-4)	Confident (1-4)	Obtained (1-8)	Final (1-100)	Level	Qualification
1	ANW	3	4	7	87,5	Good	Successful
2	ADC	2	2	4	50	Fair	Failed
3	AN	2	2	4	50	Fair	Failed
4	DN	3	3	6	75	Good	Successful
5	HNA	2	3	5	62,5	Fair	Failed
6	IRA	2	2	4	50	Fair	Failed
7	KA	2	2	4	50	Fair	Failed
8	LT	2	2	4	50	Fair	Failed
9	MAS	2	2	4	50	Fair	Failed
10	MF	2	2	4	50	Fair	Failed
11	MFA	1	2	3	37,5	Poor	Failed
12	MAS	1	2	3	37,5	Poor	Failed
13	MMI	2	2	4	50	Fair	Failed
14	KU	2	3	5	62,5	Fair	Failed
15	MN	2	1	3	37,5	Poor	Failed
16	MPA	1	2	3	37,5	Poor	Failed
17	MR	2	2	4	50	Fair	Failed
18	NF	3	3	6	75	Good	Successful
19	QM	3	4	7	87,5	Good	Successful

20	SK	2	2	4	50	Fair	Failed
21	SF	2	2	4	50	Fair	Failed
22	TR	3	3	6	75	Good	Successful
23	WS	1	2	3	37,5	Poor	Failed
24	QAY	3	3	6	75	Good	Successful
25	MA	2	3	5	62,5	Fair	Failed
			TOTAL SCORE	= 1400			
			MEAN SCORE	= 56			

Based on the table above, the mean post-test score was 56, with the greatest score being 87.5 and the lowest being 37.5. This outcome showed an improvement in students' speaking skills following the intervention, since it was greater than the pre-test mean score of 44.5. The improvement in the average score indicates that the experimental group benefited from the Cartoon Character Role Play approach. The post-test results were then compared to the control group in order to see how the two groups differed.

Deviation and Square Deviation

In this study, to determine the extent of the increase in learning outcomes, calculations were made of the deviation (Y) and the square deviation (Y^2) for further statistical analysis, particularly in calculating the variance and testing hypotheses. The results of the deviation and square deviation calculations for all respondents are presented in the following table:

Table 8. The Result of Defiation and Square Deviation

NO	Initial	Test Score		Deviation	Scuare Deviation
		Pre	Post	Y	y2
1	ANW	75	87,5	12,5	156,25
2	ADC	50	50	0	0
3	AN	37,5	50	12,5	156,25
4	DN	50	75	25	625
5	HNA	50	62,5	12,5	156,25
6	IRA	50	50	0	0
7	KA	37,5	50	12,5	156,25
8	LT	37,5	50	12,5	156,25
9	MAS	37,5	50	12,5	156,25
10	MF	37,5	50	12,5	156,25
11	MFA	25	37,5	12,5	156,25
12	MAS	37,5	37,5	0	0
13	MMI	37,5	50	12,5	156,25
14	KU	50	62,5	12,5	156,25
15	MN	37,5	37,5	0	0
16	MPA	25	37,5	12,5	156,25
17	MR	37,5	50	12,5	156,25
18	NF	50	75	25	625
19	QM	75	87,5	12,5	156,25
20	SK	37,5	50	12,5	156,25
21	SF	37,5	50	12,5	156,25
22	TR	50	75	25	625
23	WS	37,5	37,5	0	0
24	QAY	62,5	75	12,5	156,25
25	MA	50	62,5	12,5	156,25
Total		1112,5	1400	287,5	4.531,25

By analysing the results of the previous data calculations, the researcher found that the calculated t-value of 8,0483234407 was higher than the table t-value of 1.711, using a significance level of 0.05 and a degree of freedom (df) of 24 (N-1=25-1=24). Consequently, the results indicate that the treatment is effective.

Classification and Frequency of Pre-Test Post-Test

To classify the data from the student pre-test and post-test, the researcher classified the number of students who achieve the Exelent score to poor score as can be seen in Table as follows:

Table 9. Classification and Frequency of Pre-Test and Post-Test

NO	Categories	Pre Test		Post Test	
		Freq	%	Freq	%
1	Exelent	0	0%	0	0%
2	Good	2	8%	6	24%
3	Fair	9	36%	14	56%
4	Poor	14	56%	5	20%
Total		25	100%	25	100%

The table presents the frequency and percentage of students' speaking test scores, showing a difference between the pre-test and post-test results. In the pre-test, 14 students were classified in the Poor category and 9 students were in the Fair category, while only a small number of students reached the good category before the intervention. After the treatment, the post-test results showed an improvement in students' scores. A total of 6 students achieved the good category, 14 students were in the Fair category, and 5 students remained in the Poor category. In summary, the results indicate that students' speaking ability improved after the intervention, although the increase was not statistically significant. The comparison of students' scores in both tests can be seen more clearly in the graph below.

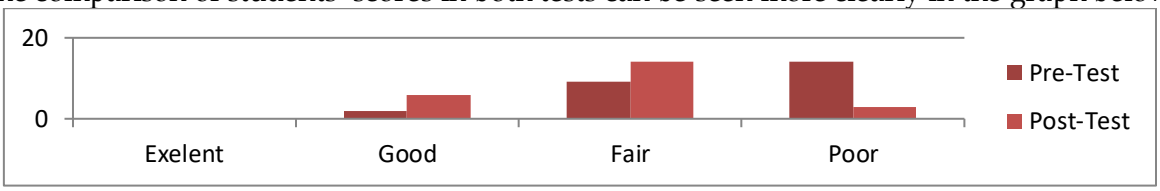

Figure 1. Chart of Pre-Test and Post-Test

Based on the previous graph, it can be seen that there is a significant difference in the number of students who improved their scores between the pre-test and post-test. In the pre-test, the majority of students achieved the lowest grade of 'Poor', 9 students achieved a 'Fair' grade, and 2 students achieved a 'Good' grade. In the post-test, the majority of students who had previously achieved a 'Poor' score showed a slight improvement by achieving a 'Fair' score, which is one level higher than in the pre-test. In addition, 6 students managed to achieve a 'Good' score, which means that these students' speaking skills are now considered successful.

Standard Deviation score Speaking Test Using SPSS

After classifying the students' pre-test and post-test scores, the researcher calculated the standard deviation score of the students' speaking test using SPSS 25, "employing the Paired Sample T-Test"method (Phakiti, 2014), as follows:

Table 10. Deviation score Using SPSS

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
PRE-TEST	44.500	25	12.5416	2.5083
POST-TEST	56.000	25	15.3603	3.0721

Effect Size Analysis

To determine the magnitude of the treatment effect, Cohen's d was calculated using the mean scores and pooled standard deviation of the pre-test and post-test results.

Table 11. Effect Size Score

Variable	Mean Difference	Cohen's d	Interpretation
Speaking Fluency & Confidence	11.50	0,82	Large Effect

The calculation yielded a Cohen's d value of 0.82. According to (Cohen, 1988), an effect size above 0.80 is categorized as a large effect. This result indicates that Cartoon Character Role Play not only produced statistically significant improvement but also generated a substantial practical impact on students' speaking fluency and confidence.

CONCLUSIONS

This study found that the implementation of Cartoon Character Role Play positively improved the speaking fluency and confidence of ninth-grade students at MTs Al-Khairaat Mamboro. The findings showed that the mean speaking score increased from 44.5 in the pre-test to 56.0 in the post-test, while the paired-sample *t*-test yielded a significance value of 0.000, confirming that the improvement was statistically significant. These results indicate that Cartoon Character Role Play is an effective strategy for enhancing students' speaking ability. By engaging with familiar cartoon characters in interactive role-play activities, students became more confident, participated more actively, and communicated more fluently in English. This study also addresses a gap in previous research, which generally examined role play and cartoon media separately or focused on younger learners. The integration of both approaches in a junior secondary EFL classroom created a supportive and engaging environment that encouraged meaningful communication. These findings suggest that English teachers should incorporate creative, student-centered, and low-anxiety activities to promote speaking fluency, confidence, and authentic language use.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the principal, teachers, and ninth-grade students of MTs Al-Khairaat Mamboro for their cooperation and enthusiastic participation throughout the data collection process.

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