MIKAILALSYS
Journal of Multidisciplinary Sciences

e-ISSN : 2987-2286
p-ISSN : 2987-3924
Index: Harvard, Boston, Sydney, Copernicus, Sinta 4, Scilit, Semantic, Google, etc

https://doi.org/10.58578/mikailalsys.v4i3.12182

The Implementation of the Role-Play Technique and Teacher's Challenges in Teaching English

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Submitted:	Revised:	Accepted:	Published:
Aug 15, 2026	Sep 12, 2026	Sep 24, 2026	Sep 29, 2026

Abstract

Role play can support English language teaching, but its implementation may present challenges for teachers. This study examines how an English teacher at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Islamiyah Batahan Silaping applied role play and addressed difficulties during lessons. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the study drew on a semi-structured interview with one experienced teacher. The data were analyzed through reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. The teacher reported preparing materials and dialogues, organizing students into groups, guiding and monitoring activities, and providing assessment and feedback. Reported challenges included limited student vocabulary, differences in English proficiency, low self-confidence, uneven participation, classroom management difficulties, time constraints, and difficulties providing feedback. The teacher responded by simplifying materials, providing vocabulary support, using smaller groups, allowing more practice time, and encouraging less active students to participate. These findings identify preparation, teacher guidance, classroom management, and practice time as practical considerations for implementing role play in this setting.

Keywords: Role-Play Technique; English Language Teaching; Teacher Challenges; Classroom Participation; Qualitative Research

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INTRODUCTION

English is considered one of the most important languages, frequently used in various spheres of life such as communication, education, science, technology, and business. It is widely recognized as a global language (Arunarsirakul, 2018). In many countries, including Indonesia, English is taught as a mandatory second language within the secondary school curriculum (Wibowo et al., 2020).

In Indonesia, teaching English as a foreign language requires educators to employ methods that are appropriate and aligned with educational goals. Teaching English as a foreign language differs from teaching other subjects, as it demands strategies or techniques capable of enhancing students' English language proficiency (Cyntia et al., 2019; Laksmi et al., 2025).

Effective teaching strategies can create engaging learning experiences and enhance students' understanding of the subject matter. Instead of merely teaching grammar rules, teachers can employ interactive language teaching methods that emphasize meaningful engagement, where students actively use English to communicate. Consequently, English teachers should utilize strategies that provide students with opportunities to communicate, collaborate, and practice the language within real-world contexts (Wiyana et al., 2022; Suryaningpram et al., 2019).

One communicative technique frequently used in English language instruction is role-playing. Role-play is one of the technique in communicative language teaching. Role-playing is a classroom simulation activity in which students take on various roles in real-life situations. This activity can encourage students to communicate, collaborate with their classmates, and use English meaningfully in accordance with the given situation. The use of role-playing can also promote student-centered learning because students are actively involved in the learning process, rather than simply listening to the teacher's explanations (Suciati, 2021).

Several previous studies have shown that the use of role-playing techniques in English language instruction has benefits. Dwiyanti & Lolita (2023) found that role-playing creates a more interactive classroom atmosphere and increases student participation during English lessons. Similarly, (Fiani & Nahak, 2025) found that role-playing enhances students self confidence, motivation, and engagement in the classroom because students are directly

involved in communicative activities. These findings indicate that role-playing is an effective teaching technique for promoting active and meaningful English language learning.

The implementation of the role-play technique in English language teaching involves several stages that should be carried out systematically. Based on the findings of (Dwiyanti & Lolita, 2023), the teacher begins by introducing the topic and assigning roles to students, followed by guiding them in practicing and performing the role-play. At the end of the activity, the teacher provides feedback and evaluates student performance. These stages help create an interactive learning environment where students can practice English in meaningful communication situations.

Although role-playing has many advantages, implementing this technique is not always easy. Teacher often face various challenges before, during, and after conducting role-playing activities. These challenges include designing appropriate learning scenarios, managing classroom interactions, encouraging passive students to participate, accommodating students with varying levels of English proficiency, managing class time effectively, and assessing student performance objectively. These conditions require teachers to possess not only pedagogical competence but also effective classroom management skills to ensure that learning objectives are successfully achieved.

Most previous studies have focused on assessing the effectiveness of role-playing in enhancing learning outcomes, speaking skills, or student participation in the classroom. However, few studies have examined both the implementation of role-play techniques and the challenges teachers face in applying them during English language instruction, particularly in Islamic high school settings.

Based on preliminary observations conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Islamiyah Batahan Silaping, An english teacher has been using role-playing techniques in their English lessons. However, several challenges were identified during implementation. Some students were reluctant to actively participate in role-playing activities due to a lack of self-confidence. Other students have limited vocabulary, making it difficult for them to express their ideas during the activities. In addition, teacher faced difficulties in managing classroom interactions, motivating passive students, allocating sufficient time for each group to present their work, and evaluating student performance fairly. These challenges indicate that the implementation of role-playing techniques requires careful planning, effective classroom management, and appropriate teaching strategies.

Given the importance of understanding teacher experiences in applying role-play techniques, the researcher is interested in conducting a qualitative study titled "The Implementation of the Role Play Technique and the Teachers Challenges in Teaching English". This study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by English teacher during the implementation of role-play techniques and to contribute to the improvement of English teaching practices, particularly in similar educational contexts.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive qualitative research design to describe the implementation of the role-play technique and the challenges encountered by the English teacher during the teaching and learning process. A qualitative descriptive design was selected because it enables the researcher to present participants' experiences, activities, and challenges in a straightforward and contextual manner without manipulating the research setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019; Hardani et al., 2020). The research was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Islamiyah Batahan Silaping (MAS IB Silaping), Ranah Batahan Subdistrict, West Pasaman Regency, West Sumatra. The participant was one English teacher who was selected using purposive sampling because the teacher had direct experience in implementing the role-play technique in English language teaching (Sugiyono, 2019). Students involved in the classroom activities were observed as part of the teaching and learning process, but the English teacher served as the primary participant and source of interview data. The instruments used in this study were a classroom observation instrument and a semi-structured interview guide developed by the researcher. The observation focused on the teacher's preparation, explanation of the role-play activity, student grouping, teacher facilitation, classroom monitoring, students' role-play performance, feedback, and challenges encountered during the implementation of the technique. The semi-structured interview guide was developed based on the research objectives and adapted from the indicators discussed by (Fan, 2020), particularly those concerning student-related challenges, classroom management, factors that hinder the implementation of role-play, and strategies used by teachers to overcome these challenges. Data were collected through classroom observation and a semi-structured interview. The interview was conducted with the teacher after obtaining permission, recorded for accuracy, and subsequently transcribed for analysis. The data collection was documented on Friday, August 14, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. Data were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis model

consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing (Mutiara & Surono, 2024). Data condensation involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, and organizing information obtained from the observation and interview, while data display involved presenting the relevant findings in an organized form to facilitate interpretation. The final stage involved drawing conclusions by identifying patterns and meanings related to the implementation of the role-play technique and the challenges faced by the teacher. This analytical process was also consistent with the principles of qualitative data analysis, which emphasize systematic organization, interpretation, and drawing meaning from qualitative data (Rijali, 2018). The overall research period was conducted in August 2026, while the specific duration of the research activities was not explicitly stated in the research documentation.

RESULTS

This part of the study shares the results based on information gathered from an observation and semi-structured interview with one English teacher at Madrasah Aliyah Islamiyah Batahan Silaping. The results are shown based on the two main questions the study was trying to answer.

1. The implementation of role play technique in teaching English

a. Giving Instructions

The findings show that giving instructions was an important part of the teacher's implementation of role play. The teacher used simple language, introduced vocabulary and dialogue, explained the students' roles, and repeated instructions when necessary. The teacher also provided examples of how the role play should be performed. These practices helped students understand the purpose of the activity and what was expected from them.

This finding is in line with Dwiyanti and Lolita 2023, who emphasized the importance of explaining the activity and dialogue before students begin practicing and performing. However, the present finding provides a more specific picture of how the teacher dealt with students' different levels of understanding. The teacher did not rely on one explanation only but repeated the instructions and gave examples when students did not immediately understand. This suggests that instructions in role play need to be adapted to students' needs rather than simply delivered once.

The use of simple instructions and examples was also important because role play requires students to understand both the language and the procedure of the activity. If students do not understand their roles or what they have to do, they may have difficulty participating in the activity. Therefore, the teacher's instructions functioned not only as classroom directions but also as initial support for students' participation. In this study, the teacher's approach helped students move from receiving instructions to practicing and performing the dialogue.

b. Grouping Students

The findings indicate that the teacher used pairs or small groups to organize students during the role-play activity. Students were assigned different roles and practiced the dialogue with their partners before performing in front of the class. This finding is consistent with Dwiyanti and Lolita 2023, who also found that assigning students to groups or pairs and giving them specific roles was an important part of role-play implementation.

Grouping students is particularly relevant to the communicative nature of role play. Unlike individual speaking activities, role play requires students to interact with other participants according to particular roles or situations. In the present study, students had the opportunity to practice the dialogue with their partners before performing in front of the whole class. This provided a less demanding environment for students to become familiar with the language and their roles.

The grouping process may also be particularly useful for students who have lower confidence in speaking English. Practicing with a partner gives students an opportunity to repeat the dialogue and receive support from their peers before speaking in front of a larger audience. However, the findings also show that grouping created challenges for classroom management because students were practicing simultaneously. This indicates that grouping has both instructional benefits and management demands. Therefore, the effectiveness of grouping depends on the teacher's ability to organize and monitor the groups appropriately.

c. Facilitating Learning

The findings demonstrate that the teacher played an important facilitating role during the role-play activity. When students experienced difficulties with vocabulary, pronunciation, or understanding the dialogue, the teacher provided assistance through prompts, repetition, and examples. Importantly, the teacher did not take over the students' roles or perform the

dialogue for them. Instead, students were encouraged to try again and continue the activity themselves.

This finding is consistent with Dwiyanti and Lolita 2023, which shows that teacher guidance is needed during role-play activities. The present study further demonstrates that teacher support was mainly focused on helping students overcome language difficulties while maintaining their opportunity to communicate independently. This balance is important because the main purpose of role play is to provide students with opportunities to use English rather than simply listen to the teacher.

The teacher's facilitating role also reflects the students' different levels of English ability. Students who had limited vocabulary or pronunciation difficulties required more direct assistance than students who were already able to communicate relatively easily. Therefore, the teacher's role as facilitator allowed the activity to remain flexible according to students' individual needs. The teacher could provide more support to students who needed it while allowing more capable students to continue practicing independently.

d. Monitoring

The findings show that monitoring was continuously conducted while students were practicing their roles. The teacher moved around the classroom, listened to students' conversations, observed their performances during practice, and provided assistance when difficulties appeared. This finding is related to Dwiyanti and Lolita 2023, who describe teacher guidance and observation as important elements during role-play implementation.

Monitoring was important because students did not participate at the same level. Some students were able to practice without much assistance, while others experienced difficulties with vocabulary, pronunciation, or confidence. Through monitoring, the teacher could identify these differences directly and provide assistance to the groups that needed it. Thus, monitoring was not only a form of classroom control but also a way of identifying students' learning needs.

At the same time, the findings show that monitoring became more difficult when students worked in groups. Because several groups were practicing simultaneously, the teacher had to move between groups and ensure that students remained focused. This finding is connected with the classroom management challenges identified in the study. Therefore, monitoring is an important part of role-play implementation, but it also requires teachers to manage their attention and classroom time effectively.

e. Performing the Role Play

The performance stage provided students with the opportunity to use the language they had practiced in front of their classmates. The teacher called groups one by one and asked them to perform their assigned roles. This finding is consistent with Dwiyanti and Lolita 2023, who found that performance was one of the main stages in the implementation of role play. It is also related to Fiani and Nahak 2025, who found that role play provides opportunities for students to practice speaking and participate actively in English learning.

The performance stage can be considered the central communicative component of role play because students are required to use English according to a particular role and situation. In the present study, students were able to apply the vocabulary and dialogue that they had practiced previously. However, the findings also showed differences in students' confidence. Some students performed confidently, whereas others were hesitant, spoke quietly, or were afraid of making mistakes.

This finding indicates that the performance stage can reveal both students' language ability and their willingness to communicate. Students who have limited vocabulary may find it difficult to deliver the dialogue, while students who lack confidence may hesitate even when they understand the material. Therefore, the practice stages before performance were important because they provided students with preparation before facing the whole class. The performance stage should not be viewed only as an assessment of students' speaking ability but also as an opportunity for them to develop their confidence through actual language use.

f. Providing Feedback

The findings show that the teacher provided feedback after the students completed their performances. The teacher usually started with positive comments and then explained aspects that needed improvement, particularly pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. The teacher also encouraged students not to be afraid of making mistakes. This finding is consistent with Dwiyanti and Lolita 2023, who identified feedback as one of the stages of role-play implementation.

An important aspect of the teacher's feedback was that she did not interrupt every student mistake during the performance. Instead, important errors were discussed after the students had completed their role play. This approach allowed students to maintain the flow

of communication while still receiving correction afterward. The finding suggests that the teacher attempted to balance accuracy and fluency during the activity.

The positive feedback given by the teacher was also important because some students experienced low confidence when speaking English. Statements such as "Good job" and "You did well" recognized students' efforts before the teacher pointed out areas for improvement. Therefore, feedback in this study served two functions: improving students' language performance and encouraging them to continue participating in English activities. This is particularly relevant in role play because students need confidence to perform in front of their classmates.

2. The teachers challenges in implementing role play technique in teaching english

a. Student-Related Challenges

The results showed that differences in student English skills, small vocabulary, low confidence, and unequal speaking time were major problems. Students who are not very good at English needed more help and extra time to practice, and some students were scared of making errors and felt nervous when speaking in front of their classmates. More confident students sometimes dominated the activity. These results match what Songbatumis found in 2017, who said that having a small vocabulary and not feeling confident are common problems when learning English. They are also backed by Fiani and Nahak 2025, who identified issues connected to student involvement. This shows that a student's language skills and how confident they feel can greatly affect how much they take part in role-play activities. So, teachers should give extra help with vocabulary, more practice, and positive support to assist students who aren't as confident in speaking up.

b. Classroom Management Challenges

The results showed that managing the classroom was another problem because students worked in groups, which sometimes made the classroom too noisy. The teacher also had trouble keeping track of all the groups, especially when there were a lot of students. In addition, role play needed a lot of time for explaining, giving roles, practicing, and acting out the scenes. This result matches what Fiani and Nahak 2025 found, as they also talked about problems with managing the classroom and keeping track of time. Songbatumis 2017 also pointed out that English teachers face the challenge of having limited time for teaching. This shows that doing role play needs careful handling of both the students and the time. So,

putting students into the right groups and handling each part of the activity well is key to making the whole thing work.

c. Hindering Factors

The results indicated that the activities were affected because of things like having a small vocabulary, not being very confident, different levels of English skill, not enough time for teaching, difficulties with managing the classroom, and not having enough good facilities. These results match what Songbatumis found in 2017 and what Fiani and Nahak studied in 2025.They both pointed out that students' language skills, confidence, how the classroom is managed, the time available, and the learning materials all play a role in how English lessons are taught. This shows that how well role play works is because of both things about the students and things about the classroom. So, having a good classroom environment and teachers who are properly trained is important for making role-play activities work well.

3. The Teacher's Strategies for Overcoming the Challenges

The teacher applied several strategies to deal with the challenges encountered during role-play implementation. These strategies included simplifying the dialogue, introducing vocabulary before the activity, dividing students into smaller groups, providing sufficient practice time, and gradually encouraging passive students to participate. The teacher also suggested future improvements, such as providing more vocabulary and examples, planning sufficient time and materials, and using more varied and interesting scenarios.

These strategies show that the teacher adapted the role-play technique according to the students' needs and classroom conditions. The use of simpler dialogues was appropriate for students who had limited English proficiency because it reduced the linguistic difficulty of the task. Similarly, introducing vocabulary before the activity gave students the language resources they needed to participate in the dialogue. These strategies are related to the challenges identified by Songbatumis 2017, particularly those concerning limited vocabulary and students' speaking difficulties.

The use of small groups was another strategy used by the teacher. Smaller groups could provide students with more opportunities to practice and could make the teacher's monitoring more manageable. However, the findings also show that group work could create classroom noise. Therefore, the teacher needed to balance the benefits of group work with effective classroom management.

Providing sufficient practice time was also important. Since some students required more time to understand the dialogue and become confident with their roles, additional practice could help them prepare before performing. This strategy is particularly relevant to students who were afraid of making mistakes. Rather than immediately requiring passive students to perform, the teacher encouraged them gradually. This approach indicates that the teacher recognized that students have different levels of confidence and therefore may require different forms of support.

The teacher's suggestions for future improvement also show an effort to make role play more engaging. The teacher wanted to provide more vocabulary and examples and use more varied and interesting scenarios. This is relevant because the success of role play depends partly on how understandable and meaningful the scenario is for students. More varied scenarios may provide students with different communicative situations and encourage them to participate more actively.

The findings therefore suggest that the teacher's strategies were mainly directed toward reducing the difficulties experienced by students and making the activity more manageable. Rather than abandoning the technique because of the challenges, the teacher adjusted the activity to suit students' language abilities, confidence levels, and classroom conditions. This demonstrates that implementing role play requires teacher flexibility and adaptation.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that the teacher implemented the role-play technique through several stages, including giving instructions, grouping students, facilitating and monitoring the learning process, performing the role play, and providing feedback. The teacher gave clear instructions, introduced vocabulary and dialogue, assigned roles, and allowed students to practice before performing in front of the class. This finding is consistent with (Dwiyanti & Lolita, 2023), who found that role play should be implemented through organized stages, including explaining the activity, assigning roles, practicing, performing, and providing feedback. The similarity indicates that a structured procedure is important because students need sufficient preparation before using English in a role-play situation. In this study, the teacher's guidance also helped students understand their roles and participate in the activity according to their abilities.

The findings also show that the teacher acted as a facilitator and monitor during the role-play activity. The teacher helped students with vocabulary, pronunciation, and understanding the dialogue while still allowing them to perform independently. This finding is in line with (Dwiyanti & Lolita, 2023), who emphasized the importance of teacher guidance during role-play activities. The teacher's role in this study was therefore not only to provide instructions but also to support students when they experienced difficulties. This support was important because the students had different levels of English proficiency and confidence.

The performance and feedback stages provided students with opportunities to use English directly. However, the findings showed that some students were hesitant, spoke quietly, or were afraid of making mistakes. This finding is related to (Fiani & Nahak, 2025), who found that role play can provide opportunities for students to participate and practice speaking, but teachers may still face challenges related to students' confidence and participation. In the present study, the teacher addressed this condition by providing encouragement and positive feedback before discussing students' weaknesses. This suggests that role play can create opportunities for speaking practice, but teacher support is still needed to encourage less confident students to participate.

The study also found several challenges in implementing role play, including differences in students' English ability, limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, passive participation, classroom noise, large numbers of students, limited time, and limited facilities. These findings are consistent with (Songbatumis, 2017), who identified limited vocabulary, speaking difficulties, classroom conditions, time, and facilities as challenges in English teaching. They are also similar to (Fiani & Nahak, 2025), who reported challenges related to students' abilities, participation, confidence, classroom management, and time in implementing role play. These similarities indicate that the challenges found at MAS IB Silaping are related to common difficulties in conducting interactive English learning activities.

To overcome these challenges, the teacher simplified the dialogue, introduced vocabulary before the activity, used small groups, provided sufficient practice time, and encouraged passive students gradually. These strategies show that the teacher adapted the implementation of role play to the students' needs and classroom conditions. The strategies are consistent with the problems identified by (Fiani & Nahak, 2025), particularly regarding

students' confidence, participation, and classroom management. Therefore, the findings suggest that the effectiveness of role play does not depend only on the technique itself but also on how the teacher organizes, guides, monitors, and adapts the activity to the students' abilities and the classroom situation.

Overall, the findings of this study support previous research by showing that role play can provide students with opportunities to practice English through interaction and performance. At the same time, its implementation requires appropriate teacher guidance because students have different levels of ability and confidence, while classroom conditions such as time, class size, and facilities can influence the learning process. Thus, the role-play technique can be implemented effectively when it is supported by clear instructions, adequate practice, teacher assistance, classroom management, and constructive feedback.

Research Implications. The findings imply that the implementation of role-play requires careful preparation, effective classroom management, clear instructions, and appropriate teacher facilitation. The findings may help English teachers identify potential challenges and develop strategies to support more effective and communicative role-play activities.

This study was limited to one English teacher and one school, namely MAS Islamiyah Batahan Silaping. The study also focused primarily on the teacher's experience and classroom implementation of role-play; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to other schools or teaching contexts.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the English teacher at MAS IB Silaping implemented the role-play technique through several organized stages, namely giving instructions, grouping students, facilitating and monitoring the learning process, performing the role play, and providing feedback. The teacher provided clear instructions, introduced vocabulary and dialogue, assigned roles, and gave students opportunities to practice before performing in front of the class. During the activity, the teacher acted as a facilitator and monitor by helping students with vocabulary, pronunciation, and understanding the dialogue while still allowing them to perform independently. These stages show that role play was implemented as a structured activity that gave students opportunities to practice using English in a communicative situation.

The study also found that the teacher faced several challenges in implementing role play. These challenges included differences in students' English proficiency, limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, passive participation, classroom noise, large numbers of students, limited learning time, and limited facilities. To overcome these challenges, the teacher simplified the dialogue, introduced vocabulary before the activity, organized students into small groups, provided sufficient practice time, and encouraged less active students to participate gradually. Therefore, the implementation of role play requires not only a structured procedure but also appropriate teacher guidance and adaptation to students' abilities and classroom conditions. Overall, role play can provide meaningful opportunities for students to practice English through interaction and performance when it is supported by clear instructions, adequate preparation, effective classroom management, teacher assistance, and constructive feedback.

This study contributes to the understanding of how role-play is implemented in an EFL classroom and the challenges experienced by teachers in a specific Indonesian educational context. It also provides contextual evidence regarding the practical factors that may influence the implementation of communicative teaching techniques.

Future researchers are encouraged to involve more teachers and schools and include students' perspectives to obtain broader and more diverse findings. Further studies may also use different research approaches or longer observation periods to examine the implementation and effectiveness of role-play in various EFL contexts.

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