EVALUATING ROLE-PLAY INSTRUCTION TO IMPROVE MAHARAH KALAM: A MIXED-METHODS

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ABSTRACT
Effective Arabic learning requires innovative methods that are able to improve students' communicative skills, especially in speaking skills (Maharah Kalam) which are often a challenge at the madrasah level. This study aims to determine the effectiveness of the application of the Role Play method on increasing the Maharah Kalam of grade VII students at MTs Ar-Riyadh Pangkalan Balai. This study uses a mixed method method by combining quantitative and qualitative data through a one group pretest–posttest design, where all students receive learning treatment using the Role Play method. The results of the study show that the Role Play method has a significant positive influence on improving students' speaking skills. This can be seen from the increase in the average score from 64.90 in the pretest to 87.80 in the posttest, with a difference of 22.90 points and a significance value of $p < 0.001$, which confirms the existence of a very statistically significant increase. These findings are in line with Vygotsky's scaffolding theory which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in language acquisition, as well as the theory of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which makes language production the core of learning. Thus, Maharah Kalam learning based on Role Play is considered effective in increasing students' fluency in speaking, courage, and activeness, and is feasible to be applied as a strategy to improve the quality of Arabic learning in madrasas.

Keywords: Maharah Kalam; Arabic Language Learning; Role Play

INTRODUCTION

Arabic is one of the international languages that has its own characteristics and uniqueness compared to other languages (Irmansyah et al., 2023). This uniqueness can be seen from the complex phonology, morphology, and syntax aspects, thus posing its own challenges for learners who are not native speakers (Shabrina et al., 2025). This challenge can be seen in the way Arabic letters are pronounced, changes in the form of words, and grammatical rules that must be understood well (Jumhur & Wasilah, 2023). In the context of learning a foreign language, the main goal of learning Arabic is to develop students' ability to use the language orally and in writing, which generally includes four language skills: listening (istima'), speaking (kalam), reading (qira'ah), and writing (kitabah)(K. I. I. Muhammad, 2024) . These four skills are an inseparable unit in achieving comprehensive language mastery (Mukmin et al., 2025).

In the world of education, the term learning refers to activities that are planned and directed to achieve a specific goal(Nazarmanto & Ilma, 2025) . The learning process not only involves the delivery of information, but also develops critical thinking skills, character, and active participation between teachers and students(Hidayah & Nofiasari, 2024). (Savannah, 2025) Explains that learning includes interactions between interrelated objectives, curriculum, methods, media, and evaluations to achieve optimal learning outcomes. In the 21st century, learning demands a more in-depth approach (Purnama & Permatasari, 2025), meaningful, and contextual, so that students are able to apply knowledge to real situations and compete globally. Thus, innovative, fun, and effective learning strategies are needed so that learning goals can be achieved (Tarmizi & Qaaf, 2025).

One of the important aspects of learning Arabic is the speaking skill (maharah kalam)(Wasilah, 2022) . These skills not only demonstrate mastery of vocabulary and language structure, but also the ability of learners to express ideas (Yuniar et al., 2020), feelings, and opinions verbally. Maharāh al-kalām is

developed through various methods, such as dialogue (al-hiwar), sentence pattern exercises (tatbiq al-namudhaj), and oral essays (al-tarkib al-shafawi), which aim to improve fluency and accuracy of speech(Irmansyah et al., 2022) . In practice, these skills are often the biggest challenge in many educational institutions due to the lack of training opportunities, low self-confidence, and learning methods that are still passive and teacher-centered(K. Muhammad & Purnama, 2025).

This problem was also found at Mts Ar-Riyadh Pangkalan Balai, an educational institution that has implemented maharah kalam learning since grade VII. Based on pre-research, learning is still taking place in monotony because it only relies on books as the only medium. Learners do not get enough speaking practice opportunities, there is no variety of methods, and there is a lack of context-based learning that allows students to practice in person. This condition shows that there is a gap between the ideals of learning (das sollen) and the reality that occurs (das sein). Theoretically, the learning of maharah kalam should provide space for practice, two-way interaction, the use of media, and a real communicative situation. But in reality, learning is still limited, passive, and does not facilitate students to communicate actively.

In overcoming these problems, the role play method is one of the relevant alternative learning strategies(Ferawati, 2023). Role play allows learners to bring a certain character or situation to life so that they can practice speaking in a contextual, interactive, and fun way (Najib & Supardi, 2022). This method has been proven to improve students' fluency in speech, confidence, and argumentation skills(Amen, 2021). In addition, role play provides real experience through simulating daily life situations so that it helps develop more applicative communication skills. Some previous studies have shown that role play is effective in improving speaking skills in foreign language learning (Nur et al., 2024). However, research related to the application of this method in learning maharah kalam in Islamic boarding schools, especially at Mts Ar-Riyadh Pangkalan Balai, is still limited. This is the novelty of the research (state of the art) because it focuses on the implementation of role play in the context of institutions that tend to apply traditional and passive methods.

Based on the gap analysis and learning needs at Mts Ar-Riyadh, this study was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the role play method in improving the ability of maharah kalam grade VII students. Thus, the objectives of this study are: (1) to know the learning of maharah kalam before the use of the role play method; (2) to know the learning of maharah kalam after the use of the role play method; and (3) analyze the effectiveness of the role play method in improving students' speaking skills at Mts Ar-Riyadh Pangkalan Balai.

METHOD

This research was carried out at MTs Ar-Riyadh Pangkalan Balai, an Islamic educational institution that emphasizes learning Arabic, especially speaking skills (Maharah Kalam). The research activities were carried out from October 15 to October 25, 2025. This time span is used to make initial observations, understand the conditions of the learning process, and see the activities of students and teachers in the context of Maharah Kalam learning. This study focuses on grade VII students, who are the subjects as well as respondents in the study entitled "The Effectiveness of Maharah Kalam Learning with the Role Play Method in Class VII at MTs Ar-Riyadh Pangkalan Balai."

This study uses a mixed methods approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methods in one systematic research design. This approach was chosen because researchers not only need to obtain numerical data from test results, but also require an in-depth understanding of the learning process, teacher and student responses, and the dynamics of the application of the Role Play method in the classroom. At the qualitative stage, data was obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation to describe the implementation of learning before and after the method was applied. The quantitative stage is used to measure the improvement of students' speaking skills through pre-tests and post-tests. This dual approach

is in line with the opinion of Creswell (2009) who states that the combination method is used when one approach alone does not provide a comprehensive picture of the research problem.

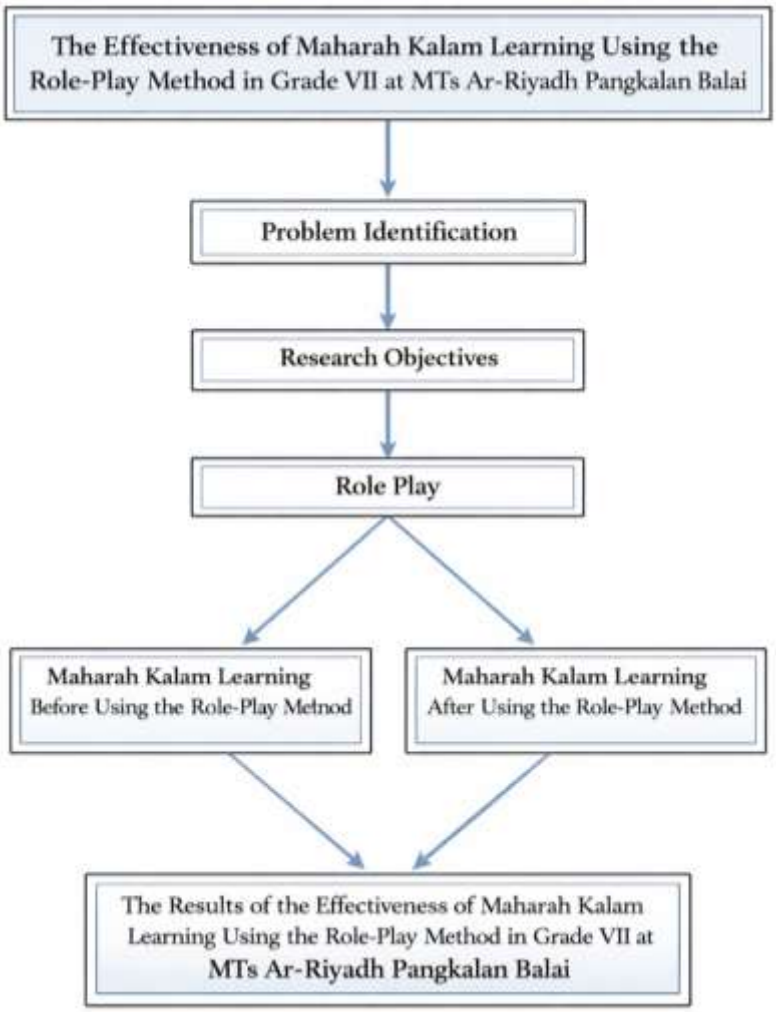


Figure 1. Research Design

The research population includes all students of grade VII MTs Ar-Riyadh which totals 20 students. This entire population was also sampled through purposive sampling techniques. This selection was made because the researcher directly taught the class and aimed to measure the effectiveness of the Role Play method in real life in the relevant group. Thus, this sample is an accurate representation to see the change in Maharah Kalam's ability after the treatment is given.

The data collection procedure is carried out through several techniques. Observation is used to directly observe the implementation of Maharah Kalam learning, including student activity, interaction between teachers and students, and how the Role Play method is applied in the classroom. Interviews were conducted with Arabic teachers to obtain an initial overview of the learning conditions before the application of the Role Play method, as well as the teacher's understanding of the purpose and benefits of the method. Documentation is used to collect supporting data in the form of photos of activities, lesson schedules, teaching materials, classroom conditions, and other relevant learning archives. In addition to these qualitative techniques, this study also uses tests as quantitative instruments in the form of pre-test and post-test to measure differences in students' speaking ability before and after treatment. The research

instruments are in the form of observation guidelines, interview guidelines, documentation sheets, and Maharah Kalam ability test sheets. Assessments on the speaking test include aspects of fluency, sentence structure accuracy, vocabulary selection, and pronunciation, all of which are combined into a final score. This instrument is designed to provide a comprehensive overview of students' speaking skills in Arabic.

Qualitative data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman model which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. At the data reduction stage, the researcher selected important information from observations, interviews, and documentation, then grouped it into categories such as students' responses to Role Play, suitability of the material with speaking practice, level of student involvement, and learning obstacles. The reduced data is then presented in the form of narratives, tables, interview excerpts, and field notes. The last stage is carried out by drawing conclusions based on emerging patterns and findings, then verifying through triangulation of sources and techniques to ensure the validity of the data. Quantitative data analysis is carried out through several stages, starting with the process of scoring pre-test and post-test results, then continued with normality tests to ensure data distribution. The homogeneity test was performed to determine the similarity of variance between the data before and after treatment. The final stage is a hypothesis test using a one-sample t-test to find out if there is a significant improvement in students' speaking skills after the Role Play method is applied. The use of this t-test aims to ensure the statistical effectiveness of the method so that the results of the research can be scientifically accounted for. The overall procedure and analysis are designed to answer research questions about the effectiveness of Maharah Kalam learning using the Role Play method and to provide a comprehensive picture of the changes that occur in students after participating in learning with this approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on Table 1, the normality test using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk shows that the pretest and posttest data are normally distributed. This is indicated by a significance value (Sig.) greater than 0.05 on all variables tested.

Table 1. Normality Test Results

Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Statistic	df	Sig.	Shapiro-Wilk Statistic	df	Sig.
Pretest	0.105	20	0.200	0.960	20	0.541
Posttest	0.088	20	0.200	0.986	20	0.987

Note:
0.200 is the lower bound of the true significance.
Lilliefors Significance Correction.

Table 2. Homogeneity Test Results

Variable	Test Basis	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Value	Based on Mean	0.836	1	38	0.366
	Based on Median	0.824	1	38	0.370
	Based on Median and with Adjusted df	0.824	1	33.835	0.370
	Based on Trimmed Mean	0.834	1	38	0.367

Based on the Variance Homogeneity Test table, the results of the Levene test show that all calculation methods—whether Based on Mean, Median, Median with adjusted df, or Trimmed Average—have significance values (Sig.) between 0.366 and 0.370. Since the total value of Sig. > 0.05, it can be concluded that the data has a homogeneous variance. In other words, there was no significant difference in variance between the data groups tested.

Table 3. Test Results One sample t-test

Variable	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Lower (95% CI)	Upper (95% CI)
Value	0.678	39	0.251	0.502	1.35000	-2.6769	5.3769
Group	-918.015	39	<0.001	<0.001	-73.50000	-73.6619	-73.3381

The One-Sample Test Table shows the test results with a reference value of 75. In the "value" variable, t = 0.678 was obtained with p = 0.502 (p > 0.05). This means that the average variable "value" does not differ significantly from the number 75. The average difference is only 1.35 and the 95% confidence interval also includes the number 75, so the difference is considered meaningless. In contrast, in the "group" variable, the value of t = -918.015 with p < 0.001. This very small p-value indicates that the average of the "group" variable differs significantly from the figure 75. The average is 73.50 lower than the benchmark, and the confidence interval is very narrow, confirming the strong divergence. In short, the "value" variable is no different from 75, while the "group" variable differs significantly from 75.

Table 4. Paired sample test results

Pair	Variables Compared	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower (95% CI)	Upper (95% CI)	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Pretest – Posttest	-22.90000	1.80351	0.40328	-23.74407	-22.05593	-56.785			

Based on the results of the Paired Samples Test, it can be concluded that there is a very significant change between the pretest and posttest scores after the application of the Role Play method. The average score increased from 64.90 to 87.80, with a difference of 22.90 points, and a smaller standard deviation of the posttest showed more consistent results. High correlation values (r = 0.974; p < 0.001) also showed a strong association between before and after learning scores. The results of the t-test showed a value of t = -56.785 with p < 0.001, which confirmed that the increase in the posttest value did not occur by chance. Overall, this test proves that the Role Play method has a significant and effective influence in improving student learning outcomes.

This research was carried out on Sunday, October 19, 2025 for 2 × 40 minutes, starting with greetings, prayers, and checking the condition of students, then the teacher explained the learning flow using the role play method and asked students to apply it. The steps of role play include: (1) Preparation/warm-up, the teacher presents a conversation and gives an overview of the content of the story; (2) Forming a group, students are divided into pairs containing two people; (3) The selection of players, teachers and students determines who plays each character; (4) Location arrangement, teachers and students determine the place and how role play is carried out; (5) Implementation of role play, each group plays its role until all perform; and (6) Discussion and evaluation, the teacher assesses the student's performance and gives suggestions for improvement.

During the activity, the teacher explained the learning objectives of Maharah Kalam, but at first the students seemed less enthusiastic. Their enthusiasm increased after the teacher explained that the learning would use the Role Playing method. After the group is formed and the material is explained, students become more active, excited, and confident. Even students who at the initial observation tend to be passive turn out to be more critical and dare to ask questions. This change in attitude is evident during the activity, where all students show better analytical skills and higher participation. In the final stage, the researcher

tests students' understanding through a posttest arranged according to the material, and all students show a noticeable improvement in understanding. Based on the results of the study, the application of the Role Play method has been proven to have a significant influence on the improvement of Maharah Kalam of grade VII students of MTs Ar-Riyadh Pangkalan Balai. This is shown by the increase in the average score from 64.90 in the pretest to 87.80 in the posttest, with a difference of 22.90 points and a significance value of $p < 0.001$. Lower standard deviations of posttest showed more consistent student scores, while strong correlations between pretest and posttest ($r = 0.974$; $p < 0.001$) indicated that all students improved equally. These findings show that the Role Play method is very effective in improving students' speaking skills. Furthermore, the increase that occurred was in line with Vygotsky's theory of constructivism which emphasized the importance of social interaction and scaffolding in the development of language skills; Role Play provides a real communication context that allows students to build understanding through hands-on experience. This method is also supported by the Communicative Language Teaching approach, where students are actively involved in the use of language so as to increase fluency, courage, and spontaneity in communicating. Thus, the Role Play method not only increases students' grades, but also enriches affective, social, and overall learning experiences.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research obtained, the application of the Role Play method has been proven to have a positive and significant impact on the improvement of Maharah Kalam of grade VII students of MTs Ar-Riyadh Pangkalan Balai. This can be seen from the very high average increase in scores, from 64.90 (pretest) to 87.80 (posttest), with a difference of 22.90 points and a significance value of $p < 0.001$, which shows a very statistically significant difference. This finding is strengthened by the results of the Paired Sample T-Test which confirms that the improvement of students' speaking skills does not occur by chance, but is a direct effect of Role Play learning. Theoretically, the results of this study are in line with Vygotsky's scaffolding concept which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in language development, as well as the theory of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which states that language will be mastered more effectively when students are directly involved in real communication situations. With the support of these theories and empirical evidence, Maharah Kalam learning using the Role Play method can be assessed as an effective strategy to improve students' fluency in speaking, courage, activeness, and overall communicative skills. Therefore, the Role Play method is worthy of being used as a relevant and applicable learning alternative in improving the quality of Arabic language learning at the madrasah level.

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