Enhancing English Communication Skills Through Palliative Contexts for Secondary Students

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Abstract
Kegiatan ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara bahasa Inggris siswa kelas X melalui penerapan kegiatan role play dengan konteks paliatif melalui Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK). Penelitian dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus, masing-masing terdiri atas tahap perencanaan, tindakan, observasi, dan refleksi. Subjek 32 siswa SMAN 19 Jakarta. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes berbicara dan observasi kelas. Tes berbicara menilai aspek kefasihan, ketepatan, kosakata, pelafalan, dan kesesuaian pragmatik, sedangkan observasi kelas mendokumentasikan partisipasi siswa, keterlibatan, serta respon mereka selama kegiatan role play. Hasil pada Siklus I menunjukkan bahwa 46,87% siswa mencapai kategori "Baik," sedangkan 53,13% berada pada kategori "Cukup," dengan nilai rata-rata 49,35. Hasil observasi memperlihatkan keterlibatan siswa yang moderat, dengan 62,50–78,13% siswa menunjukkan perilaku positif seperti partisipasi aktif, perhatian, dan kesediaan menggunakan bahasa Inggris dalam role play. Namun, sebagian siswa masih ragu-ragu dengan persentase ku negatif antara 25–37,50%. Peningkatan terlihat pada Siklus II. Proporsi siswa yang mencapai kategori "Baik" meningkat signifikan menjadi 84,37%, sedangkan hanya 15,63% yang masih berada pada kategori "Cukup." Tidak ada siswa yang termasuk dalam kategori "Kurang" maupun "Sangat Kurang." Hasil observasi juga mengonfirmasi keterlibatan yang lebih kuat, dengan lebih dari 87% siswa menunjukkan perilaku positif, termasuk antusiasme, diskusi aktif, serta kepercayaan diri dalam menggunakan bahasa Inggris. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa integrasi role play dengan konteks paliatif secara efektif meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara bahasa Inggris dan partisipasi siswa di kelas. Saran dengan memberikan perbaikan berulang maka mampu meningkatkan kompetensi linguistik sekaligus kepercayaan diri komunikatif siswa.

Kata kunci: Penelitian tindakan kelas, Keterampilan berbicara, Role play, Konteks paliatif, Pembelajaran bahasa Inggris

Abstract
This activity aims to improve the English speaking skills of tenth-grade students through the implementation of role play activities in a palliative context through Classroom Action Research (CAR). The research was conducted in two cycles, each consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. The subjects were 32 students of SMAN 19 Jakarta. Data were collected through speaking tests and classroom observations. The speaking test assessed aspects of fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, and pragmatic appropriateness, while the classroom observations documented student participation, engagement, and their responses during the role play activities. The results in Cycle I showed that 46.87% of students achieved the "Good" category, while 53.13% were in the "Fair" category, with an average score of 49.35. The observation results showed moderate student engagement, with 62.50–78.13% of students showing positive behaviors such as active participation, attention, and willingness to use English in the role play. However, some students were still hesitant with a negative percentage of 25–37.50%. Improvement was seen in Cycle II. The proportion of students achieving the "Good" category increased significantly to 84.37%, while only 15.63% remained in the "Sufficient" category. No students fell into the "Poor" or "Very Poor" categories. Observations also confirmed stronger engagement, with over 87% of students demonstrating positive behaviors, including enthusiasm, active discussion, and confidence in using English. It can be concluded that the integration of role play with a palliative context effectively improved students' English speaking skills and participation in class. Suggestions for repeated improvement were found to improve both linguistic competence and students' communicative confidence.

Keywords: *Classroom action research, Speaking skill, role-play, Palliative care context, English learning*

INTRODUCTION

The capability to communicate proficiently in English is increasingly acknowledged as a crucial skill in today's globalized, information-driven society. English transcends being just a school subject; it serves as a means of engagement in academic, professional, and intercultural fields. For high school students, especially in Indonesia, skill in spoken English plays a crucial role in academic achievement, job prospects, and their readiness to engage in varied, multilingual settings. However, even after years of formal education, numerous students still face difficulties with speaking skills—an issue that highlights larger systemic challenges in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching methods.

Studies and classroom observations consistently show that Indonesian EFL students encounter restricted chances for genuine communication and an excessive dependence on teacher-led, grammar-oriented teaching. As a result, language use in classrooms frequently turns mechanical and disconnected from context, prioritizing precision rather than fluency or meaningful communication. This disparity limits the advancement of communicative competence—a complex concept that includes linguistic precision, sociolinguistic suitability, discourse control, and strategic language application (Canale & Swain, 1980). Additionally, emotional factors like language anxiety, a lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes intensify students' hesitation to engage in oral communication. These teaching and psychological obstacles require creative educational methods that place language acquisition within genuine, emotionally resonant, and socially significant settings.

A promising method to tackle this problem is incorporating palliative care settings into English education. Palliative care inherently focuses on compassionate, empathetic, and clear communication—traits that align with the aims of effective language use. Incorporating language learning into emotionally and socially vibrant contexts not only improves linguistic skills but also fosters interpersonal sensitivity and humanistic consciousness. From an educational perspective, this coincides with the tenets of contextual learning theory and communicative language teaching (CLT), which both assert that language is most effectively acquired through genuine interaction reflective of real-life situations (Richards, 2006). In these contexts, understanding becomes more important than memorization, allowing learners to effectively and compassionately utilize English.

Experiential proof backs this teaching justification. Wittenberg et al. (2017) emphasize that successful palliative communication necessitates both language accuracy and emotional awareness, indicating its value as an interdisciplinary educational environment. In the same way, Bosher and Smalkoski (2002) showed that language instruction grounded in context—especially in health communication—greatly improves learners' capacity to employ language accurately and purposefully. Role-play, as a hands-on educational approach based on socio-constructivist theories, serves as a link between conceptual knowledge and real-life application. It allows learners to absorb communication styles via simulation, reflection, and collaboration with peers, thus fostering both language and emotional development (Suikkala et al., 2022).

In the Indonesian education setting, research by Yoniswan (2017), Cintassa et al. (2021), and Hidayat (2021) confirms that role-play consistently enhances students' speaking fluency, confidence, and involvement. Nonetheless, many of these studies utilize neutral or routine situations, resulting in a conceptual void regarding how emotionally intense or empathy-based environments—like those found in healthcare—could affect communicative growth. To fill this gap, the current research presents role-play scenarios based on palliative care situations to investigate whether emotionally significant contexts can enhance students' engagement and communication skills. In addition to linguistic skills, these contexts can enhance students' emotional intelligence, moral judgment, and interpersonal relationships—traits vital for comprehensive education.

Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions: 1) How does the integration of palliative care contexts through role-play activities enhance the English communication skills of Grade 10 students at SMAN 19 Jakarta? 2) How does the use of role-play in palliative care scenarios

influence students' participation, enthusiasm, and confidence in using English during classroom activities?

This study explores the use of role-play activities in palliative care settings as a novel approach to improve the English communication skills of Grade 10 students at SMAN 19 Jakarta. It seeks to enhance fluency, precision, and vocabulary while also fostering empathy and self-assurance in genuine communication. This educational innovation aims to enhance the wider conversation on contextualized EFL learning by illustrating how the inclusion of socially relevant situations can change classroom interaction into an environment for linguistic and emotional growth.

METHOD

This research utilized a classroom action research (CAR) framework to improve the English communication skills of Grade 10 students by incorporating palliative care scenarios into speaking activities. The choice of CAR was based on its cyclical and reflective characteristics, enabling ongoing educational enhancement through repeated stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). This methodological selection was especially significant because language acquisition is a dynamic process that demands flexible teaching approaches that correspond to learners' developmental and emotional requirements. Through the use of CAR, the research aimed not just to evaluate a teaching method but to change the classroom into a space for reflective practice and educational innovation.

This study was carried out at SMAN 19 Jakarta, a public high school recognized for its varied student population and vibrant English learning atmosphere. A specific group of 32 Grade 10 students was intentionally chosen to reflect a typical variety of English proficiency levels at the institution. The study's practical emphasis on enhancing communication in real-life situations rather than attaining statistical generalization validated the purposive sampling method. Additionally, the selected group exhibited a balanced gender mix, collaborative classroom conduct, and willingness to participate in communication activities, rendering them a suitable cohort for an intervention focusing on empathy and interpersonal skills.

The choice to place the study in this context demonstrates a keen understanding of Indonesian classroom dynamics, where English is instructed as a foreign language, and chances for genuine interaction are constrained. Through the integration of communicative tasks into palliative care situations, the study aimed to question conventional exam-focused teaching and to develop emotionally and socially relevant learning experiences that reflect the communication needs encountered in real life.

Two primary data collection tools were employed: speaking evaluations and classroom observations, both crafted to reflect complementary aspects of language acquisition.

The speaking exercises were structured role-play scenarios that mimicked real-life interactions in palliative care environments. These encompassed scenarios like extending condolences to a patient's relatives, offering support to a sick friend, or talking about treatment compliance with compassion. Every role-play was linguistically structured to match the students' skill level while preserving communicative genuineness.

The evaluation rubric assessed five essential areas of speaking ability—fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, and pragmatic suitability—mirroring a communicative competence model (Canale & Swain, 1980). To improve content validity, the tools were validated by two specialists in English language education and one expert in palliative care, guaranteeing that both linguistic and emotional aspects were adequately covered. The rubric allowed for systematic, measurable assessment of progress throughout action cycles, providing empirical proof of communicative advancement.

Classroom observations yielded qualitative insights that reflected the social and emotional aspects of learning, which quantitative metrics could not completely uncover. The researcher, along with a collaborating teacher, methodically observed students' engagement, interaction styles, and emotional reactions during role-play activities. Field notes centered on metrics like initiative, empathy, peer assistance, and emotional involvement—vital traits in both effective communication and palliative care.

Observational data acted as a perspective for analyzing the interaction between cognitive (language application) and affective (empathy, self-assurance) aspects of communicative competence. This qualitative perspective was crucial for grasping how role-play in health-related settings influenced learners' views on language usage and interpersonal relationships.

Data analysis utilized a mixed-method strategy, combining quantitative and qualitative aspects via methodological triangulation to improve validity and richness. Using Quantitative Analysis, the speaking scores from pre-test and post-test were evaluated to identify quantifiable advancements in students' speaking skills. Descriptive statistics, such as average scores, percentage increases, and progress evaluations across cycles, were employed to demonstrate language development. This quantitative data offered a solid foundation for assessing the educational effect of the intervention. For the Qualitative Analysis, thematic analysis was conducted on observation notes and reflective journals to uncover recurring patterns concerning students' communication strategies, emotional involvement, and participation in the classroom. Themes like empathetic expression, confidence development, cooperative interaction, and language pragmatics arose as significant markers of communicative progress.

The combination of both data types enabled a comprehensive grasp of language acquisition, where linguistic performance was analyzed alongside social behavior and emotional growth—thus tackling the multifaceted aspects of communication.

The study was carried out in two action cycles, with each cycle containing the four CAR stages. Cycle 1 included investigation and foundational execution. Students engaged in fundamental role-play scenarios related to palliative care, including offering comfort to an ill classmate or showing empathy for a bereaved friend. The aim was diagnostic: to evaluate initial communication skills, recognize obstacles, and analyze students' responses to emotionally framed language tasks. Reflections after this stage showed students' eagerness and reluctance to share emotions in English, along with a restricted vocabulary for empathetic expression. Cycle 2 comprised enhancement and broadening. Changes were implemented according to the results of the initial cycle. The second cycle presented more intricate interactions (e.g., conversations between doctors and patients, discussions regarding health choices, dialogues for emotional support). The scaffolding was lessened to promote independence and unplanned expression. Reflection at this point highlighted advancements in linguistic confidence, pragmatic understanding, and social awareness, demonstrating that repeated feedback and emotional involvement greatly improved communicative skills.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are shown through students' speaking test scores and the outcomes of classroom observations from two cycles of Classroom Action Research (CAR). The data show a distinct improvement in students' English-speaking skills and classroom engagement following the incorporation of role-play in palliative care scenarios.

Table 1. Results of English Speaking Test Using Role-Play Model in Cycle I

Category	Number of students	Percentage of students' scores	Average Score
Excellent			49,35
Good	15	46,87	
Fair	17	53,13	
Poor			
Very Poor			

Table 1 reveals that during the initial action cycle, no students reached the "Excellent" proficiency level, with almost half (46.87%) achieving a "Good" status and just over half (53.13%) designated as "Fair." The average score of 49.35 indicates that, while most students participated in the communicative process, their spoken English skills fell short of the anticipated proficiency level.

The score distribution illustrates the transitional phase of Cycle I, where students were still adjusting to the new learning method that combined role-play with palliative care situations. Although participation was clearly evident, students exhibited uncertainty in their language use and emotional restraint, especially when required to convey empathy or handle emotional topics in English-abilities that are generally not prioritized in traditional language classes.

A thorough analysis of classroom observations supported these quantitative results. Numerous students demonstrated scripted or practiced speech, restricted vocabulary, and challenges in maintaining spontaneous conversation. Frequent errors in pronunciation and grammar indicated that learners remained focused on language structure instead of communicative purpose. These trends correspond with previous research findings (e.g., Wittenberg et al., 2017; Suikkala et al., 2022), suggesting that students need time and continual exposure to genuine, emotionally charged communicative contexts to show comfort and fluency.

Moreover, the findings suggest that while the role-play framework effectively promoted engagement, it had not yet cultivated profound linguistic assimilation or assurance in empathetic interaction. The students' performance in this phase can be seen as an initial stage of communicative competence growth, marked by a partial grasp of pragmatic functions and restricted expressive confidence.

From a critical pedagogical viewpoint, these results highlight the conflict between linguistic ability and emotional involvement. Numerous students understood intellectually how to convey sympathy or reassurance, but felt emotionally reluctant to authentically express these sentiments in English. This gap underscores the necessity of creating scaffolded emotional literacy activities in language education, particularly when addressing sensitive or human-focused situations like palliative care.

In methodological terms, the Cycle I findings offered diagnostic understanding of both student requirements and teaching efficacy. They indicated the need for increased linguistic support, clear demonstrations of empathetic language frameworks, and improved feedback loops to connect mechanical involvement with significant communication.

To summarize, although Cycle I did not produce significant linguistic success, it played an essential role in preparing students both cognitively and emotionally for more genuine communicative engagement. The outcomes influenced the adjustments in Cycle II, in which tasks were revised to incorporate more intricate, realistic, and emotionally impactful role-play scenarios aimed at stretching students' expressive abilities and enhancing their communicative self-assurance.

Table 2. Results of Student Observation in Cycle I

No	Category of Student Activity	Positive (Frequency)	Positive (%)	Negative (Frequency)	Negative (%)
1	Students pay attention and respond enthusiastically (asking questions, giving responses, taking notes)	22	68.75	10	31.25
2	Students actively participate in group discussion activities	24	75.00	8	25.00
3	Students respond positively (enjoy) to learning through the role-play technique	25	78.13	7	21.87
4	Students actively answer and always ask when encountering learning activities	21	65.63	11	34.37
5	Students speak in English with an appropriate attitude	20	62.50	12	37.50

Table 2 offers a detailed insight into classroom interactions in the initial cycle, highlighting both positive engagement levels and ongoing emotional and behavioral difficulties among students. The findings show that the majority of learners engaged actively—especially in group discussions (75%)

and in sharing their enjoyment of the role-play method (78.13%)—implying that the transition from teacher-centered teaching to interactive, scenario-based education effectively heightened student motivation and focus.

Nonetheless, the existence of a significant minority (25–37.5%) who exhibited negative or uncertain behaviors indicates that involvement did not consistently lead to assured communication. Although more than two-thirds of students were attentive, involved, and showed enthusiasm, a significant portion stayed passive, anxious, or hesitant to use English freely. This phenomenon highlights the emotional aspect of language learning, where mental preparedness and self-belief are as important as language skills.

A more thorough analysis indicates that the varied outcomes arise from multiple overlapping factors. Initially, linguistic anxiety continues to be a significant barrier. Several students voiced concerns about committing errors or facing peer judgment, a result that aligns with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) notion of foreign language anxiety, which often restricts unimpeded verbal expression. Additionally, expectations of roles and lack of experience in emotionally intense situations (such as providing comfort or expressing empathy) may have increased discomfort, since students needed to not only use correct English but also to express sensitivity and emotion—abilities that are seldom highlighted in standard classroom exercises.

Additionally, the 62.5% rate of suitable English usage indicates some advancement in pragmatic competence, but it also shows that learners are still at an initial phase in internalizing sociolinguistic standards and expressing empathy organically. This corresponds with Wittenberg et al. (2017), who assert that effective communication in palliative settings necessitates not just linguistic structure but also emotional intelligence and relational consciousness—dimensions that need consistent modeling and directed practice to cultivate.

The finding that 78.13% of students liked the learning experience is educationally important. Enjoyment and involvement are essential foundations for intrinsic motivation, which, as noted by Dörnyei (2009), can convert temporary classroom engagement into lasting confidence in communication. Nevertheless, pleasure alone is inadequate without simultaneous increases in linguistic agency—the capacity to begin and maintain communication willingly. Consequently, the remaining negative feedback (21.87–34.37%) emphasizes the necessity for additional scaffolding, especially in alleviating fear of making mistakes and offering linguistic assistance through organized interactional frameworks like guided conversations and pre-task vocabulary preparation.

From a critical pedagogical perspective, these results also highlight disparities in student engagement. Some students, typically those with more advanced skills or outgoing personalities, led the conversations, whereas more reserved students usually retreated. This disparity necessitates inclusive facilitation techniques, guaranteeing that all students feel a sense of voice and belonging during communication activities. Reflective strategies—like implementing rotating responsibilities, peer support, or joint reflection-might reduce these inequalities in future cycles.

The Cycle I observation findings indicate that the role-play method successfully stimulated behavioral engagement, signifying a transition to more interactive learning dynamics. However, it also revealed the emotional and practical constraints that need to be tackled before complete communicative competence can develop. In accordance with the tenets of classroom action research, these findings guided the adjustments in Cycle II-particularly, the addition of clearer empathy modeling, improved peer feedback, and gradual enhancements in communicative complexity. These improvements sought to change involvement from superficial excitement to lasting, assured, and significant English communication based on emotional awareness and cultural sensitivity.

Figure 1. Comparison of the English Speaking Test Results in Cycle I & II

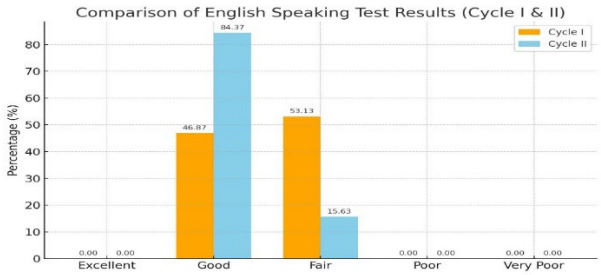


Figure 1 shows a significant increase in students' speaking performance from Cycle I to Cycle II. The percentage of students reaching the "Good" category rose significantly—from 46.87% in Cycle I to 84.37% in Cycle II—while the "Fair" category dropped noticeably to 15.63%. Significantly, in Cycle II, no students fell under the categories of "Poor" or "Very Poor," indicating a total eradication of the lowest performance tiers. This numerical change represents not only enhancements in language skills but also significant advancements in students' confidence, ability to express themselves, and flexibility in communication.

The mean speaking scores rose significantly, indicating that the improvements made in the second cycle—especially clearer task organization, scaffolded role descriptions, and more contextually genuine palliative care situations—were successful in enhancing both the quality and depth of learner performance. The cyclical action research method allowed the teacher to adjust instruction flexibly, guaranteeing that language input, feedback, and emotional involvement were more in tune with the students' learning pathways.

From a critical pedagogical viewpoint, these advancements signify more than mere score increases—they illustrate a change in learners' communicative focus. Students in Cycle II showcased a more cohesive understanding of language and emotion, employing English not just as a mechanical tool but as a means of connection and empathetic interaction. This change corresponds with the communicative competence framework (Canale & Swain, 1980), highlighting the interaction among grammatical precision, sociolinguistic knowledge, and strategic skills.

During Cycle I, numerous students showed only superficial engagement; nonetheless, in Cycle II, learners started to demonstrate practical adaptability and relevance to context, incorporating tone, gestures, and affirming expressions that aligned with palliative communication standards. This advancement indicates that emotional context—when combined with repetitive practice and structured reflection—can improve both fluency and authenticity in language application.

Additionally, the results reinforce Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where learners progress most efficiently when aided by collaborative interaction and enhanced by scaffolded feedback. The slow shift from organized role-plays to more impromptu interactions in Cycle II offered exactly this type of support, enabling students to take linguistic chances and explore emotionally expressive language.

Table 4. Student Observation Results in Cycle II

No	Category of Student Activity	Positive (Frequency)	Positive (%)	Negative (Frequency)	Negative (%)
1	Students pay attention and respond enthusiastically (asking questions, giving feedback, taking notes).	30	93.75	2	6.25
2	Students actively participate in group discussion activities.	29	90.63	3	9.38
3	Students respond positively (enjoyment) to learning through the role-play technique.	28	87.50	4	12.50
4	Students actively answer and always ask questions when encountering activities.	29	90.63	3	9.38
5	Students speak English with a good attitude.	30	93.75	2	6.25

Table 4 supports the quantitative results shown in Figure 1, providing behavioral proof of students' heightened engagement and confidence in communication. Over 90% of Cycle II students exhibited positive learning behaviors, such as attentiveness, engagement, and proper use of English during discussions. The significant decline in negative behaviors—from a previous range of 25–37.5% in Cycle I to a minimal 6.25–12.5%—demonstrates a profound change in classroom atmosphere, where anxiety, uncertainty, and disinterest were supplanted by eagerness and collaboration.

This behavioral development indicates that role-play is not just linguistically advantageous but also emotionally uplifting. Students seemed to adopt communicative routines more effortlessly

when learning activities reflected actual human experiences instead of abstract language exercises. The palliative care setting, focused on understanding and compassionate listening, offered an emotionally significant framework that inspired learners to associate language with intent, thus enhancing their intrinsic motivation.

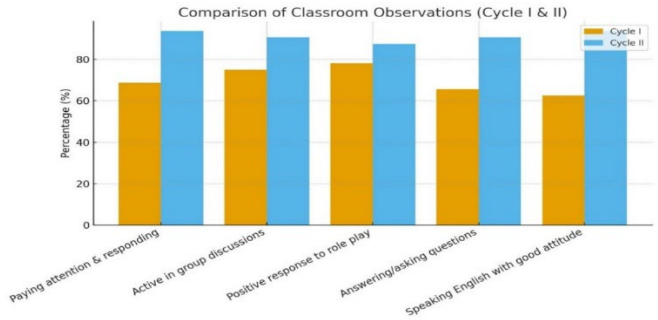
Data from observations also showed more equitable participation patterns among students. While in Cycle I, a handful of assertive learners often led discussions, by Cycle II, participation was more balanced, with softer-spoken students demonstrating greater engagement in group conversations. This shift indicates the establishment of a cooperative classroom culture, where communication was seen as a collective, helpful endeavor rather than a competitive activity.

Through a critical reflective perspective, these behavioral advancements represent what Freire (1970) refers to as "dialogic learning"—a pedagogical transformation where students are not merely passive recipients of linguistic knowledge but active collaborators in creating meaning. The interactive aspect of role-play, particularly in emotionally charged situations, promotes empathy, mutual respect, and collective accountability in creating meaning—qualities vital for language acquisition and human relationships.

The distinction between Cycles I and II highlights the importance of iterative educational improvement within the action research model. The significant enhancement in Cycle II results confirms the value of more explicit role instructions that alleviate uncertainty and mental effort during speaking activities. Next, contextual authenticity allows learners to utilize emotional intelligence for creating significant communication. Subsequently, ongoing feedback cycles enable learners to engage in self-reflection and practically internalize the language. The final aspect is affective scaffolding, where the educator actively fosters a psychologically safe atmosphere to reduce the fear of making mistakes.

These enhancements collectively suggest that students' communicative competence is not a separate linguistic concept but a comprehensive skill that merges language proficiency, empathy, and self-assurance. The progress seen between the two cycles illustrates how contextualized, reflective, and human-centered teaching can enhance students' involvement and linguistic empowerment. Essentially, Cycle II signifies both the peak of educational achievement and a confirmation of the transformative power of language teaching when rooted in empathy, teamwork, and thoughtful examination. The significant increase in both test scores and behavioral signs indicates that students have come to view English as a dynamic, relational medium—able to convey care, emotion, and comprehension—instead of just a topic to be mastered.

Figure 2. Comparison of Classroom Observation in Cycle I and I



The comparison of classroom observations between Cycle I and Cycle II shows a significant change in the way students participated in English-speaking activities. The results highlight that incorporating role-play in palliative care settings acted as a strong driver for improving students' communication skills, emotional expressiveness, and confidence in English usage. This development supports prior empirical research, which demonstrated that role-play offers learners genuine communicative environments that reflect actual interactions (Ladousse, 1987; Huang, 2008). Nevertheless, the current study enhances these insights by highlighting thematic contextualization—specifically, integrating role-play within emotionally significant and professionally pertinent situations—thus enriching both linguistic and emotional involvement.

Between Cycle I and Cycle II, the noticeable changes in behavior and language were significant. Students progressed from uncertain involvement and limited engagement to seamless

collaboration, compassionate conversation, and instinctive language use. This development indicates that role-play, when thoughtfully crafted, functions not just as a means of communication but as a transformative educational resource that alters learners' understanding of language—transitioning from mechanical output to relational, intentional interaction. The results align with Richards' (2006) claim that meaningful communicative tasks enhance learner motivation and lessen emotional obstacles, like fear of making mistakes and anxiety about public performance.

The significant drop in negative behaviors from Cycle I to Cycle II backs this assertion: students exhibited increased emotional preparedness and cognitive engagement, indicating that repeated experiences with organized interaction in nurturing environments improve both fluency and self-confidence. Viewed through a socio-cognitive perspective, this result corresponds with Bandura's (1997) notion of self-efficacy in language acquisition, where confidence increases via mastery experiences and social exemplification. Teacher facilitation—offering feedback, demonstrating genuine expressions, and affirming learners' emotional reactions—seems crucial in fostering this development.

In addition to the numerical enhancements, these findings aid in the theoretical advancement of role-play theory within language teaching. Conventional viewpoints frequently emphasize its ability to enhance fluency and communicative proficiency. The current study broadens the conversation by demonstrating that role-play grounded in empathetic and ethically significant settings, like palliative care, promotes a comprehensive learning experience that encompasses cognitive, linguistic, and emotional aspects. Students were practicing English as well as cultivating compassion, sensitivity, and interpersonal understanding—key components of both nursing professionalism and genuine communication.

The combination of linguistic and emotional literacy signifies a crucial theoretical change: it contests the practical perspective of language acquisition and emphasizes language as social action—a method of connecting with others within humanistic and ethical contexts. These results reflect Kramsch's (1993) idea of the "symbolic dimension" of language, in which communication serves as a space for negotiating identity, fostering empathy, and constructing shared meanings. Thus, role-play in palliative care goes beyond merely imitating dialogue; it fosters interpersonal connection and ethical creativity, crucial for building authentic communicative skills in upcoming healthcare practitioners.

Importantly, the iterative nature of the Classroom Action Research (CAR) model enhanced these results. The continuous enhancement of teaching methods—transitioning from Cycle I's trial phase to Cycle II's refined framework—allowed the educator to identify learning obstacles and tackle them adaptively through adjusted scaffolding, enriched context, and emotional support. This methodological approach reflects Burns' (2010) model of reflective action research, where the teacher-researcher's developing understanding is essential to teaching innovation. This cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection illustrates how CAR operates as a structured mechanism for ongoing instructional improvement.

The comparison shown in Figure 2 offers strong proof that incorporating role-play in emotionally genuine and socially relevant settings enhances students' English-speaking skills—especially in fluency, accuracy, and pragmatic competence—while also fostering empathy, confidence, and communicative responsibility. These comprehensive learning outcomes emphasize the all-encompassing aspect of language education, combining affective, cognitive, and sociocultural elements to cultivate not only skilled speakers but also thoughtful, empathetic communicators who can participate meaningfully in both professional and personal interactions.

CONCLUSION

The results of this Classroom Action Research (CAR) project offer strong support that incorporating role-play in palliative care situations can significantly improve students' English-speaking skills while also fostering empathy, confidence, and communicative awareness. Over the two action cycles, the students' changes in language and behavior illustrate the success of a contextually relevant, emotionally significant method of teaching language.

Quantitative enhancements in speaking performance—from an average score of 49.35 in Cycle I to a majority of "Good" scores (84.37%) in Cycle II—demonstrate significant progress in fluency, accuracy, and pragmatic suitability. These developments were not attained via mere

repetition, but through ongoing interaction with genuine communicative challenges that necessitated students to negotiate meaning, convey emotions, and show comprehension in real social situations. The removal of the "Poor" and "Very Poor" performance categories in the second cycle highlights the transformative impact of experiential and reflective learning on developing communicative competence.

Alongside these numerical trends, classroom observations indicated a significant change in emotional and behavioral areas. During Cycle I, engagement was enthusiastic but inconsistent, frequently limited by language-related anxiety and hesitation in demonstrating empathy. By Cycle II, over 90% of students exhibited active involvement, equal participation, and favorable attitudes toward English communication. This change indicates that emotional support, along with learning environments that resonate emotionally, can significantly alleviate anxiety and enhance self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). As learners absorbed communicative standards and emotional language, English started to operate not as an alien system to conquer, but as a human channel for connection and compassion.

Importantly, the results enhance the theoretical discussion surrounding role-play in language teaching. Although current research (Ladousse, 1987; Huang, 2008) emphasizes the ability of role-play to enhance fluency and interaction, this study illustrates that when placed within empathetic and ethically based contexts—like palliative care—role-play goes beyond simple language practice. It transforms into a comprehensive teaching approach that combines cognitive, linguistic, and emotional intelligence. The classroom evolves into a moral and communicative environment, where students engage in not just verbal interactions but also empathy, mindfulness, and ethical creativity (Kramsch, 1993). The merging of language skills and emotional intelligence signifies an important progress in teaching communication, especially in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) areas such as healthcare.

From a methodological perspective, the cyclical framework of CAR was vital in maintaining progress. By engaging in repetitive cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, the teacher-researcher consistently identified challenges, improved teaching methods, and modified resources to meet students' changing requirements. This approach illustrates Burns' (2010) framework of reflective practice, in which teacher inquiry functions as a tool for both research and professional growth. The transition from Cycle I's trial execution to Cycle II's improved practice demonstrates how action research facilitates flexible, evidence-driven teaching that adapts proactively to learner circumstances.

The research additionally provides wider implications for teaching language through communication. First, it emphasizes the importance of contextual authenticity—choosing themes and situations that hold emotional and social significance for learners. Additionally, it showcases the educational significance of emotional literacy alongside linguistic precision. Ultimately, it highlights the teacher's dual function as a facilitator and co-learner, where their reflective involvement influences both student education and the development of classroom culture.

In conclusion, this study shows that incorporating role-play into palliative care settings can change language learning into a profoundly humanizing experience. By using this method, students gain English not just as a language tool but as a means of empathy, comprehension, and interpersonal skills. The CAR framework guarantees that this growth is measurable and sustainable, merging pedagogical innovation with ethical consciousness.

SUGGESTION

Despite the positive outcomes of this study, several limitations need to be acknowledged and addressed in future research. This study was conducted within a limited educational context and involved a relatively small sample size, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future studies are recommended to involve a larger and more diverse population of secondary students from different schools, regions, and socio-cultural backgrounds to strengthen the external validity of the results.

In addition, the instructional implementation was limited to a specific time frame and learning setting. Future research could apply a longer intervention period to examine the sustainability of students' English communication skill development. Further studies are also encouraged to integrate comparative research designs, such as control and experimental groups, to

more clearly measure the effectiveness of palliative-context-based English learning models. Moreover, future researchers may incorporate qualitative instruments such as interviews, reflective journals, and classroom observations to obtain deeper insights into students' emotional, communicative, and empathetic development in palliative-based learning contexts.

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