



Drama-Based Pedagogy to Improve Students' Fluency: A Classroom Action Research

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Abstract

This study addresses low English-speaking fluency among ninth-grade students at SMPN 5 Singaraja who often lack confidence. The research aimed to determine if Drama-Based Pedagogy (DBP), using Roald Dahl's "The Giraffe, The Pelly, and Me" as the literary text, could enhance their speaking fluency. This study employed a two-cycle Classroom Action Research (CAR) design involving 35 ninth-grade students. Data was collected via mixed-methods, including quantitative fluency tests (pre- and post-tests) and qualitative data from classroom observations and interviews. Findings revealed significant improvement. Quantitatively, the students' average score progressively increased from a baseline of 49.34 to 57.31 in Cycle One, and ultimately to 65.29 in Cycle Two. The classical achievement rate of students meeting the minimum passing score rose from 17% to 68.57%, surpassing the research's success indicator. Qualitatively, observations and interviews indicated a marked increase in student confidence and motivation, fostering an engaging and supportive classroom atmosphere. The study concludes that DBP is an effective strategy for enhancing speaking fluency in an Indonesian EFL context, offering a viable and motivating alternative to traditional teaching methods.

Keywords: Drama-Based Pedagogy; Fluency; Classroom Action Research; EFL

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1. Introduction

In today's world, learning fluency is essential for students as it allows them to express their ideas naturally. They will also feel confident when they use English in real-life situations. Even small grammatical mistakes are acceptable as long as the speech remains understandable (Mudofir et al., 2019; Rasinski, 1989; Ugli, 2018). Fluency plays a very important role, especially in speaking; with proper fluency, students can communicate effectively without a lot of hesitation or pauses. If students speak fluently, they can engage in discussions, answer questions, and share opinions more freely (Evanchan, 2010). Enhancing fluency not only improves students' academic performance but also prepares them for professional environments where effective communication is a vital skill (Cid Uribe & Cavallieri, 2018). Mastering English fluency can open doors to many opportunities, allowing students to connect with diverse cultures and collaborate with peers worldwide (Subihah, 2012).

However, a significant gap exists between this global imperative and the reality within many educational settings. Traditional language learning in Indonesia often focuses on memorization and grammar, which means students may not receive relevant instruction to improve their practical speaking



skills (Purbani, 2020). This issue was of particular importance at SMPN 5 Singaraja, as the preliminary observation revealed several problems that severely restricted students' fluency growth. The main issues were a lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes, which resulted in a lack of verbal engagement in English lessons. In addition, since learning relies on textbooks, classroom time is mostly spent on writing and reading. As a result, students do not have adequate opportunities to practice English orally. This teacher-centered education method further limits students' communicative participation (Çubukçu, 2012). A preliminary survey of grade 9B students shows how great this disparity is: 85% of students expressed no confidence when speaking English, and almost all students expressed a strong desire to be more fluent. These results show how important it is to use more interactive and student-centered educational methods. Therefore, the importance of this study lies in the direct attempt to resolve this noted discrepancy. The purpose of this research is to study drama-based pedagogy as an alternative instructional approach that can be used to address the linguistic and psychological challenges that hinder students in achieving fluency in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

In recent years, there have already been a lot of innovative teaching methods for engaging students. Traditional language teaching methods, like grammar-focused instruction or direct learning methods, are often criticised because of their lack of effectiveness in fostering spontaneous and fluent speech (Anburaj, 2014). Because of that, educators increasingly turn to alternative approaches that engage students, such as drama-based pedagogy, which applies creative and experiential learning strategies to encourage students to actively use language in real-life contexts (Göksel, 2020). Drama-based pedagogy is a teaching method that uses various drama techniques, such as role-playing, improvisation and story-telling, to make students feel an interactive also engaging learning environment (Dawson & Lee, 2023). By implementing these techniques, students can enhance their language skills in a dynamic setting that encourages creativity and collaboration. The drama-based pedagogy approach not only helps students to boost language proficiency but also helps build confidence and social skills so that students can express themselves more freely and effectively in both academic and everyday conversations (Gácsi, 2019; Schenker, 2020). The Giraffe, The Pelly and Me by Roald Dahl is used as the story for implementing drama-based pedagogy, which is full of unique characters. The story has a dynamic plot and engaging language for the children in order to inspire students to engage with the content more imaginatively.

Previous research shows that traditional teaching methods often prioritize grammar over practical communication, hindering fluency development (Farooqui et al., 2024; Labenko, 2023). This study addresses that gap by employing Drama-Based Pedagogy, an approach that uses interactive activities to foster more effective language acquisition (Salim, 2025). To implement and evaluate this method, the research is designed as Classroom Action Research (CAR). Following the model by Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon (2014), CAR provides a cyclical framework of planning, action, observation, and reflection, empowering teachers to investigate and improve their own teaching practices (Stecanela et al., 2019).

2. Method

This research employs Classroom Action Research (CAR) as its research design. Classroom Action Research (CAR) is a type of research where teachers examine and go deeper into the problems, challenges, and concepts they wish to better understand in the classroom (Kunlasomboon et al., 2015; Stecanela et al., 2019)

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 5 Singaraja during the 2024/2025 academic year. This school was chosen purposefully because it has implemented the Merdeka Curriculum, which supports creative learning approaches, and it provides facilities that are conducive to drama-based activities. The participants were 35 ninth-grade students. The selection was based on the



recommendation of the English teacher, with a specific focus on students who were identified as having significant difficulties with English speaking fluency.

To adapt the learning process for your article on fluency, this study also employs Dawson and Lee's (2023) 5E learning model, which consists of five stages: engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate. During this stage, students participate in interactive activities such as simple role-playing and improvisational warm-ups to generate interest and active participation in spontaneous communication. In the explore stage, students are encouraged to experiment with expressing ideas smoothly and naturally through drama-based activities, allowing them to practice conversational flow in a contextualized manner. The explain stage allows students to receive explicit feedback and specific instruction on their fluency, focusing on aspects like pacing, managing pauses, and using fillers to maintain a natural rhythm. In the elaborate stage, students employ their developing fluency skills in more complex drama performances and scripted scenes, strengthening their learning through repetition and meaningful practice in longer conversations. Finally, the evaluate stage assesses students' progress in fluency through self-assessment and teacher feedback, allowing them to reflect on their accomplishments and set goals for future improvement.

To gather comprehensive data, a combination of quantitative and qualitative instruments was used, including speaking fluency tests (pre-test and post-test), classroom observations, and student interviews. Data collection began with a pre-test to establish a baseline of the students' abilities. Following the implementation of Drama-Based Pedagogy in each cycle, a post-test was administered to measure progress, while observations and interviews were used to collect data on student engagement and perceptions. The collected data were analyzed using a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data from the fluency tests were analyzed using descriptive statistics to track improvements in student scores. Qualitative data from observations and interviews were analyzed thematically to identify patterns related to motivation and confidence. The findings from each cycle were then used to reflect and guide refinements for the subsequent cycle.

A pre-test and post-test were applied in this research to measure the development of students' speaking fluency. Before the drama-based pedagogy was introduced, the pre-test was used to gauge the students' initial fluency skills. A post-test was then administered at the end of each cycle to evaluate students' fluency changes following the intervention. The test, which was the same for both the pre-test and post-test, took the form of a dialogue script adapted from Roald Dahl's story, "The Giraffe, the Pelly and Me". Students were instructed to read the dialogue aloud while being assessed. The assessment was guided by a fluency rubric and included criteria such as Flow and Coherence, Pace, Pronunciation, and Confidence. The evaluation focused on the students' ability to deliver the dialogue smoothly and naturally, conveying the meaning of the text expressively.

The data collected were analysed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Quantitative data from the speaking fluency tests were analysed using descriptive statistical analysis in SPSS version 26.0 to observe improvements in students' performance across cycles, specifically focusing on the mean and standard deviation. Meanwhile, qualitative data from classroom observations and student interviews were analysed through thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns related to students' engagement, motivation, and confidence. Reflections were conducted after each cycle to critically evaluate the process and guide the refinement of subsequent interventions. The research continued until the desired outcomes were achieved, defined by the success criteria of students reaching a minimum score of 60 and a classical success rate of over 60% for the class.

3. Findings

This study utilized a classroom action research process to measure the development of students' speaking fluency. An initial pre-test was administered to measure the students' baseline ability in speaking fluently and coherently before the implementation of drama-based pedagogy. The test, in the form of a dialogue script adapted from Roald Dahl's "The Giraffe, the Pelly and Me," required students



to read the dialogue aloud. Students were assessed on criteria including flow and coherence, pace, pronunciation, and confidence. The results of this pre-test are detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The Students' Pre-Test Score

N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
35	31	75	1727	49.3429	10.83552

The pre-test was taken by 35 students, with scores ranging from a minimum of 31.00 to a maximum of 75.00. The class average (mean) was 49.3, which indicates that the initial mastery of the task was modest. A fairly high standard deviation of 10.84 shows that student performance was widely dispersed around the mean, with a noticeable difference in the overall scores. Based on the minimum passing score of 60, only 6 out of 35 students (17%) passed, confirming that intervention was necessary. This pre-test analysis served as a benchmark to evaluate the success of the intervention. In the planning stage of Cycle One, the researcher, in collaboration with the English teacher, developed a learning design centered on "The Giraffe, the Pelly, and Me". The action phase consisted of two meetings. The first meeting, held on Tuesday, March 11, 2025, began with the researcher telling the students the story's synopsis and playing an audio recording of a key dialogue section to familiarize them with the text's language and tone. Students were then divided into small groups to analyze character roles and create character maps. The second meeting on Wednesday, March 12, 2025, focused on creating and performing dialogues based on the previous analysis. Students practiced with printed scripts, focusing on intonation and expression, before rewriting and performing their own dialogues. During the observation phase, the researcher noted that students responded with varying levels of engagement; some were eager, while others hesitated and relied on their native language. Fluency varied, with some speaking smoothly while others struggled with hesitation. A post-test was administered at the end of the cycle to measure progress.

Table 2. The Students' Post-Test 1 Score

N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
35	44	81	2006	57.31	9.08

The results from post-test 1 showed an improvement in student performance. The average score increased to 57.3, and the minimum score rose from 31 to 44, indicating that even low achievers had made progress. The maximum score also increased to 81. Based on the minimum score of 60, the number of students who passed increased from 6 to 10, improving the classical achievement from 17% to 28%. However, this was still below the success indicator. The reflection between the researcher and teacher identified several issues: overall fluency scores were still low, student abilities varied significantly, and participation was still hampered by a lack of confidence and challenges in using the drama-based method. This underscored the need for a more focused intervention in the next cycle. To address the weaknesses of Cycle One, several corrective actions were planned for Cycle Two. These included revising lesson plans to focus more on specific pronunciation exercises, designing more interactive and participatory activities, creating more structured scripts from the story, and enhancing learning strategies with short pronunciation drills, more intensive guidance, and more frequent feedback sessions.

Table 3. The Students' Post-Test 2 Score

N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
35	53	94	2006	65.29	9.11

The post-test 2 scores showed a significant and more consistent increase. The average score rose to 65.29, which was significantly higher than both post-test 1 (57.31) and the pre-test (49.34). The minimum score increased to 53.00 and the maximum reached 94.00.

Crucially, the classical completion rate was calculated. Out of 35 students, 24 achieved a score of ≥ 60 , resulting in a classical completion rate of 68.57%. This surpassed the success indicator of 60% and was a dramatic improvement from the 28% in Cycle One. Qualitative observations in Cycle Two supported these findings; the classroom atmosphere was more lively and dynamic, and students appeared more confident and ready to speak English. Active engagement improved, with previously quiet students daring to speak and interact.

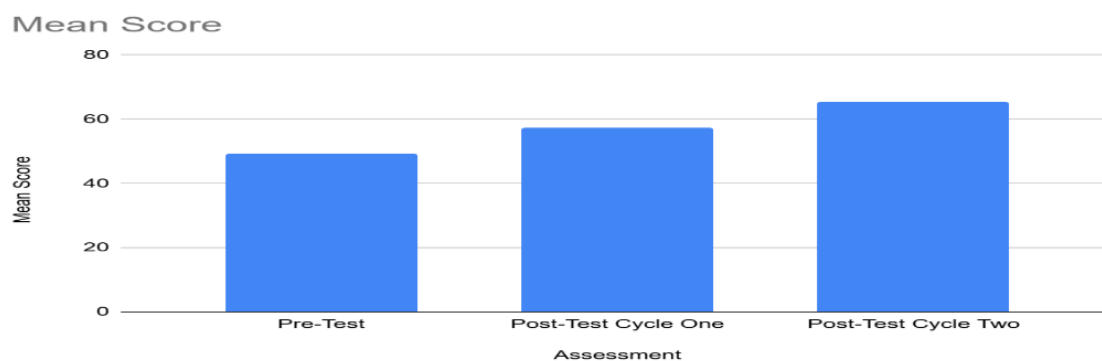


Figure 1. Frequency Distribution

The mean pre-test score of 49.34 demonstrated a clear need for improvement. After the implementation of Cycle One, the average score increased to 57.31, indicating the learning actions were heading in the right direction. In the second cycle, after refining the strategies, the students' average score improved again to 65.29, and the classical success rate reached 68.57%. The combination of quantitative improvements and positive qualitative observations—including increased student confidence, participation, and enthusiasm as noted in interviews—led the researcher to conclude that the classroom action research had successfully achieved its objectives.

4. Discussions

The findings of this classroom action research demonstrate a notable improvement in students' speaking fluency through the application of Drama-Based Pedagogy. The research, conducted in two cycles, reveals a progressive development in the students' ability to speak in a more structured, confident, and fluent manner. Initially, a pre-test established a baseline mean score of 49.34 for the 35 participating students, indicating a modest initial command of speaking fluency. The standard deviation of 10.84 highlighted a wide disparity in performance among the students at the outset.

Following the intervention in Cycle One, which involved activities like story analysis and guided role-playing, the post-test showed an increase in the average score to 57.31. This initial improvement affirmed the positive impact of the drama-based approach. The standard deviation decreased to 9.08, suggesting that the first cycle's interventions began to make the group's abilities slightly more homogeneous. The refinements made in Cycle Two led to more substantial gains, with the mean score rising to 65.29. The standard deviation for the second post-test was 9.11, a marginal increase from the first. This does not indicate a negative outcome, but rather reflects differential rates of improvement, where particularly responsive students made exceptionally large gains, extending the upper range of scores while the overall proficiency of the class was significantly lifted. The method's



effectiveness for all students was further evidenced by the steady increase in the minimum score from 31 in the pre-test to 44 in post-test one, and finally to 53 in post-test two.

The success of using drama techniques to create a supportive, low-anxiety learning environment aligns with the findings of Nguyen (2023) and Astiandani & Mustofa (2021), who noted that such activities reduce speaking anxiety and increase confidence. Furthermore, the use of role-play and enacting scenes offered students meaningful language opportunities in authentic contexts, which supports research by Even (2011) and Dawoud and Hasim (2024). The selection of Roald Dahl's "The Giraffe, The Pelly and Me" was validated by high student engagement, reflecting the value of children's literature in enhancing vocabulary and enjoyment in the learning process, as noted by Wang (2023) and Al-Jarf (2021). By implementing a cyclical process of planning, action, observation, and reflection, this study also puts into practice the Classroom Action Research (CAR) model described by Kemmis and McTaggart.

The findings carry significant practical implications for English language educators. The study suggests that teachers should consider integrating drama-based activities into their lessons to create a more engaging and interactive atmosphere where students feel comfortable expressing themselves in English. For this to be effective, schools and curriculum developers are encouraged to provide the necessary training and resources to support teachers in implementing such innovative methodologies. The study's setting in a school that has adopted the Merdeka Curriculum, which supports creative learning, suggests a policy-level alignment that could facilitate broader adoption.

This research contributes to the field of English language learning by providing empirical evidence of the effectiveness of Drama-Based Pedagogy in an Indonesian EFL classroom. It addresses the common issue where traditional methods often fail to develop practical speaking skills by presenting a viable alternative that helps bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical communication ability. The research also provides a clear, replicable Classroom Action Research model that can serve as a reference and guide for other educators and researchers in similar fields.

5. Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the implementation of Drama-Based Pedagogy through Classroom Action Research is effective in improving the speaking fluency of ninth-grade students at SMPN 5 Singaraja. The use of structured stages—engage, activate, reflect, and apply—fostered an interactive learning environment where students actively participated in activities like expressive reading, discussion, dramatization, and role-play. This approach not only enhanced students' ability to speak coherently with appropriate pace and phrasing but also significantly boosted their confidence. The progressive improvement observed from Cycle One to Cycle Two, marked by an increase in mean scores and a reduction in score disparity, confirms that the drama-based method successfully addressed the linguistic and psychological barriers that previously hindered students' fluency.

Reflecting on the findings and discussion, this study concludes that the implementation of drama-based pedagogy using Roald Dahl's "The Giraffe, The Pelly and Me" had a positive and significant impact on the speaking fluency of ninth-grade students at SMPN 5 Singaraja. This is quantitatively evident from the students' average scores, which markedly increased from 49.34 in the pre-test to 57.31 in the first post-test, and finally to 65.29 in the second post-test. In addition, the proportion of students meeting the minimum passing grade rose significantly from 17% in the pre-test to 68.57% in the final post-test, thus surpassing the classical success benchmark. Moreover, the study shows that the drama-based approach fostered an engaging, interactive, and supportive learning environment. This was reflected in heightened student engagement and motivation, a decrease in speaking-related anxiety, and greater confidence in using English, as observed qualitatively and corroborated by student interviews. The refined strategies in Cycle Two, which included a directed focus on role-play and pronunciation drills, successfully addressed early gaps and were crucial for strengthening student fluency.



Future research is encouraged to build upon the findings of this study. It would be beneficial to conduct similar studies across various grade levels and in different educational contexts, such as in schools with different demographic profiles or curriculum frameworks, to explore the broader applicability and effectiveness of Drama-Based Pedagogy. Further research could also investigate the long-term impact of this pedagogy on students' language retention and their general academic performance. Additionally, future studies might explore the integration of different literary genres or digital storytelling tools within the drama-based framework to further enhance student engagement and fluency development.

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