

Improving Elementary Students' Speaking Skills through Contextual Learning and Folktale-Based Role Play

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ABSTRACT

This study was motivated by the low speaking skills of elementary school students, particularly in terms of expression and confidence. The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the Contextual Learning Model combined with role play based on folk tales in improving the speaking skills of students at Mojo 58 Sragen Public Elementary School. This study used a One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design with 26 students ($N = 26$) as subjects. Data were obtained through speaking ability tests before and after the model was implemented, which were then analyzed using Normalized Gain to measure learning outcome improvement. The results of the analysis showed that the application of the Contextual Learning Model with the integration of videos and role-play provided a significant improvement in students' speaking skills, with a Normalized Gain score of 0.778, which is classified as high according to Hake's criteria. These findings indicate that speaking learning based on real contexts and role-playing activities is effective in building students' communication performance, especially in terms of expression, fluency, and confidence. Based on these results, it is recommended that teachers apply contextual and role-play approaches continuously in language learning activities to foster more natural and meaningful communication skills for elementary school students.

Keywords: Confidence, Contextual, Performance, Speaking, Video

INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills are a fundamental language skill in primary education because they form the basis for the development of communication skills, critical thinking, and social participation among students. Hoff & Core (2021) emphasize that speaking skills are not merely a linguistic aspect, but also reflect children's social and emotional development. In elementary school, speaking skills are not measured solely by verbal fluency, but also by children's ability to express ideas, interact with peers, and adapt to the socio-cultural context that exists in the classroom and society (Fitrianingsih et al., 2025). These skills are multidimensional, encompassing phonological, semantic, pragmatic, emotional, and adaptive elements in diverse communication (Pradita et al., 2021; Linggasari & Rochaendi, 2022).



In practice, a number of studies show that the speaking skills of elementary school students in Indonesia, including in the Java region, are still relatively low. Students often show shyness, lack of confidence, and reluctance to speak in public (Rofiqah et al, 2023; Aziz & Nafeesa, 2022). This condition is generally influenced by a teacher-centered learning approach, a lack of contextual speaking experience, and a lack of emotional support from the learning environment (Suhartono et al., 2025; Alwa, 2025). As a result, students' oral participation is low, and their ability to express ideas coherently and meaningfully is not yet optimal.

To overcome this, the implementation of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) is one relevant alternative. Mulyaningsi et al, (2021) explain that CTL seeks to link teaching materials with students' real experiences so that learning becomes more meaningful and relevant to their lives. This model places students as active subjects who construct knowledge through social interaction and their surrounding environment (Rogoff, 2023; Rofingatun & Putri, 2025). When integrated with role-play methods, CTL can create a lively and interactive learning atmosphere. Ulviani (2025) and Yulianeta et al, (2024) found that role-play activities encourage students to speak up, boost their confidence, and enrich their communication experiences.

Folktales as a context in speaking learning through the CTL and role play approaches have strategic value. Folktales not only serve as literary reading material, but also as a medium for cultural value inheritance, character building, and preservation of local wisdom. Yulisetiani & Sutrisno (2022) reveal that Banyumas folk tales, for example, contain ecological and moral wisdom that can be used to foster awareness of the balance of nature and human values. The integration of these values in speaking learning provides space for students to understand the meaning of the story while developing their social empathy and ecological awareness. In the context of Javanese culture, learning based on folk tales such as Timun Mas not only fosters emotional intelligence and environmental awareness, but also reinforces Javanese values such as *andhap asor*, *tepa selira*, and *eling marang lingkungan* (Taufiq et al, 2024).

In addition, the use of video media in speaking lessons can strengthen students' visual and auditory comprehension. Video media presents real communication models through story performances or dialogues that can be observed and imitated (Endrawati, 2024). Lestari & Rhokhayati (2024) show that the use of audio-visual media integrated with innovative learning models can improve the musical, expressive, and linguistic abilities of elementary school students. Video media allows students to observe the intonation, expressions, and speaking style of characters in folk tales before they practice them in role-play activities (Al Hudzaifah, 2022; Alpiani, 2025).

However, research examining the integration of CTL, role play methods, and story-based video media in speaking learning is still limited, especially in public elementary schools in semi-rural areas such as Sragen Regency. Most previous studies have focused more on reading and writing skills rather than on developing speaking abilities that are contextually and culturally grounded. Studies by Mulyaningsi et al. (2021) and Suhartono et al. (2025) have shown improvements in verbal expression; however, their approaches were still limited to classroom-based simulations that lacked integration with

authentic socio-cultural contexts. Meanwhile, Yulianeta et al. (2024) and Ulviani (2025) emphasized the role of role-play but did not combine it with contextual models that connect linguistic performance to students' real-life environments. These similarities namely the focus on linguistic fluency without embedding cultural values constitute a methodological limitation that this study seeks to address. Therefore, this research is important to bridge that gap by integrating the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model, role-play, and local folk tales as an innovative framework that not only enhances speaking competence but also fosters environmental awareness, empathy, and appreciation for local wisdom among elementary school students.

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of the Contextual Learning Model combined with role play based on folk tales in improving the speaking skills of students at Mojo 58 Sragen Public Elementary School.

METHOD

This study was conducted on November 6, 2025, in classroom 6B of Mojo 58 Sragen Public Elementary School, Sragen Regency, Central Java Province (See Figure 1). The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of applying the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model combined with a role-play method based on folk tales in improving the speaking skills of elementary school students. This study used a pre-experimental design with a Pretest–Post-test Design without a control group, so that all research subjects received the same treatment. The research subjects were all 26 students in class 6B of Mojo 58 Sragen Public Elementary School in the 2025/2026 academic year, consisting of 11 male students and 15 female students. The class was purposively selected based on three main criteria: (1) students in grade VI have reached a developmental stage that enables them to express opinions fluently in structured speech; (2) the class teacher had previously implemented preliminary contextual-based learning, making it suitable for integration with role-play; and (3) the results of the school's internal evaluation indicated that this class demonstrated lower confidence and participation in speaking activities compared to other classes. Thus, class 6B was considered representative for observing the effectiveness of contextual and role-play-based speaking learning interventions in an authentic classroom environment.



Figure 1. Mojo 58 Sragen Public Elementary School

This research design uses a pre-experimental model of the One Group Pretest–Post-test Design as described by Sugiyono (2019). In this design, one group of students was given a pretest to determine their speaking ability before the treatment, then given treatment in the form of applying a contextual learning model using the role play method based on folk tales, and finally given a post-test to measure the improvement in speaking ability after the treatment was given. The research procedure was carried out in several stages, starting from planning, pre-test implementation, treatment delivery, to post-test. In the planning stage, the researcher prepared learning tools in the form of a Lesson Plan (RPP), observation sheets for teacher and student activities, and a speaking assessment rubric. The folktale employed in the learning activities was *Timun Mas*, a well-known Javanese folktale, with the narrative adapted from a commercially published book (Asa, 2021), which was used as the context for role-play activities to strengthen the connection between local culture and language learning.

The selection of *Timun Mas* as the instructional folktale is particularly appropriate for this study because it contains clear narrative structures, strong characterizations, and moral values that are easily understood by elementary school students. The story presents an “easy-to-follow” linear plot with distinct stages, such as introduction, conflict, climax, and resolution. These stages will support students in organizing their spoken narratives coherently. Moreover, the *Timun Mas* folktale has central themes of courage, perseverance, and problem-solving which will improve students’ soft skills in everyday experiences. Showing how the story is effective for stimulating meaningful oral expression. *Timun Mas* is a widely recognized folktale in Javanese culture that opens the possibility of enhancing students’ cultural familiarity, reducing cognitive load during speaking activities and allowing learners to focus more on pronunciation, fluency, and expressive delivery during role-play performances.

The pre-test was conducted by asking all students to participate in a speaking activity with the theme “Memorable Personal Experiences.” This theme was selected because it allows students to speak based on personal and familiar events, minimizing anxiety and providing a baseline of their natural speaking ability. The post-test, themed “My Favorite Folktale,” was chosen to directly align with the learning treatment, as it reflects students’ understanding of and engagement with local folk tales through the CTL and role-play approaches. Both themes were pedagogically relevant from a practical perspective, these findings have significant implications for elementary school teachers. The integration of CTL and role-play using folk tales can be implemented within routine classroom activities without requiring major curriculum adjustments. Teachers can apply the model by combining short video observations and storytelling sessions within two to three meetings per unit. This model encourages active participation and helps build students’ confidence in public speaking through culturally relevant narratives. one measured spontaneous self-expression, while the other assessed applied speaking performance within a cultural and contextual frame thus ensuring alignment with the study’s objectives to evaluate improvement in contextual and expressive speaking skills.

The instruments used in this study included a speaking skills assessment rubric, student activity observation sheets, and documentation of learning outcomes. The content validity of the instruments

was consulted with two Indonesian language education experts, while reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha formula and produced a value of $\alpha = 0.89$, indicating a high level of reliability. The pre-test and post-test data were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics. The pretest and post-test mean scores were compared to see the improvement in students' speaking skills, then the effectiveness of the learning model was calculated using the Normalized Gain (N-Gain) score as formulated by Hake (1998). The N-Gain value was interpreted into categories of high improvement ($g > 0.70$), moderate improvement ($0.30 \leq g \leq 0.70$), and low improvement ($g < 0.30$). Data normality was tested using the Shapiro–Wilk test, while the difference between the pre-test and post-test results was tested using a paired sample t-test with a significance level of 0.05. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS software version 26. This study also adhered to research ethics principles by obtaining official permission from the school principal and the consent of the students' parents. All participant data were managed anonymously to maintain the confidentiality and integrity of the research in accordance with the academic code of ethics at Sebelas Maret University.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of the Contextual Learning Model combined with role play based on folk tales in improving the speaking skills of students at Mojo 58 Sragen Public Elementary School. The results show that the application of this model has a positive impact on all aspects of students' speaking skills, both linguistically and affectively. Based on a pre-experimental One Group Pretest-Post-test Design with 26 students ($N = 26$), the data shows that there was a significant increase in scores after the learning treatment was given.

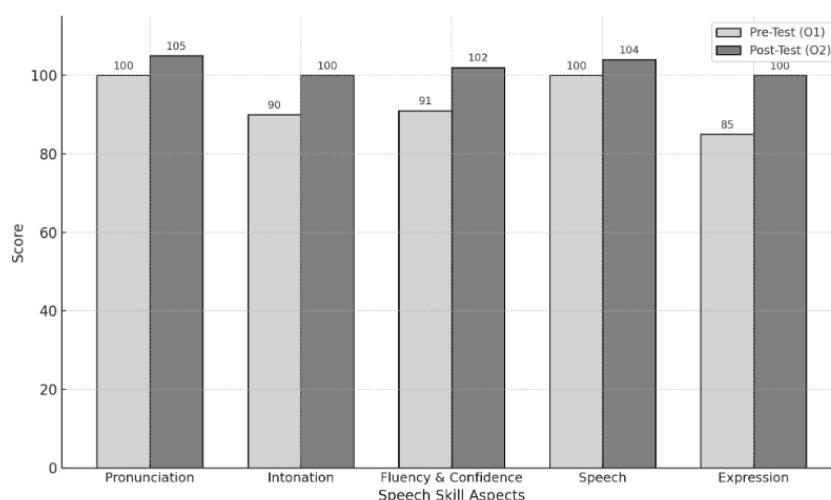


Figure 2. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Scores for Speaking Ability

The increase depicted in Figure 2 indicates that the integration of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model with folk-tale-based role play has a comprehensive impact on students' speaking skills. Improvements are evident across key indicators such as pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary use,

intonation, and self-confidence. This suggests that contextual learning does not merely enhance technical speaking components but also supports students' affective readiness to speak. By situating speaking activities within familiar narrative structures and cultural contexts, students are able to express ideas more naturally and meaningfully, reducing anxiety and hesitation during oral performance.

Furthermore, the role play of folk tales provides an authentic communicative environment in which students actively construct meaning rather than passively reproduce language patterns. Through character enactment, students are encouraged to internalize dialogue, understand situational language use, and respond spontaneously according to the storyline. This process aligns with the principles of CTL, which emphasize learning through experience, relevance, and active participation. As a result, students demonstrate better coherence in speech and improved ability to convey messages clearly, reflecting not only linguistic development but also narrative and pragmatic competence.

From a socio-cultural perspective, the observed improvement can also be explained by the collaborative nature of role play activities. Students engage in peer interaction, negotiation of meaning, and shared problem-solving during rehearsal and performance. Such interactions foster a supportive learning atmosphere that enhances confidence and speaking courage, particularly for students who were previously reluctant to speak. This finding supports Vygotsky (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, where learners achieve higher levels of performance through guided social interaction and scaffolding provided by teachers and peers.

In addition, the use of local folk tales as learning material strengthens students' cultural connection to the content, which further increases motivation and engagement. Cultural familiarity allows students to focus more on language expression rather than struggling to understand unfamiliar contexts. Consequently, speaking activities become more enjoyable and meaningful, contributing to sustained improvement in speaking performance. This indicates that the combination of CTL, role play, and culturally grounded materials is an effective pedagogical strategy for developing elementary students' speaking skills holistically.

Table 1. Results of Pre-Test and Post-Test Speaking Skill Score Analysis

Assessment Aspects	Pre-Test Score (O₁)	Post-Test Score (O₂)	Improvement (Gain)	Maximum Score (Max)	N-Gain (<g>)	Effectiveness Category
Pronunciation	103	104	1	104	1.000	High
Intonation	90	99	9	104	0.643	Moderate
Fluency & Confidence	90	101	11	104	0.786	High
Content	100	104	4	104	1.000	High
Expression	83	100	17	104	0.810	High
CLASS TOTAL	466	508	42	520	0.778	High

Table 1 shows that there was a significant improvement in all aspects of speaking skills after the learning treatment. Quantitatively, the pre- and post-test results showed an increase in the total score from 466 to 508 out of a maximum score of 520. This increase is equivalent to an N-Gain of 0.778, which falls into the high effectiveness category according to Hake's (1999) classification. These findings show that the application of the contextual learning model through video media and role-play techniques has proven to be practically effective in improving the speaking skills of elementary school students.

The most notable improvement was in the areas of expression, fluency, and confidence, with N-Gain values of 0.810 and 0.786, respectively, indicating that role-play activities provided students with the opportunity to express themselves more naturally, speak boldly in public, and interact actively with their peers. These findings are in line with Suryani's (2019) research, which found that the application of role-play in a local cultural context can significantly increase students' confidence and verbal participation. Meanwhile, the aspects of pronunciation and content of speech achieved a perfect N-Gain value of 1.000, indicating that students were able to imitate pronunciation models and compose speech content logically after receiving context-based learning. These results reinforce the findings of Wibowo & Nurhayati (2020), who stated that the use of visual media in contextual learning makes it easier for students to understand the relationship between language and meaning in everyday situations.

Cognitive and Affective Mechanisms of CTL and Role Play in Speaking Development

From the cognitive and affective mechanisms perspective, the application of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model with the role play method works through two main channels. First, CTL emphasizes the importance of meaningful learning, where students relate their speaking experiences to real-life situations and cultural values contained in the folk tales they act out. Second, role play encourages social-interactive learning that facilitates courage to speak, empathy, and understanding of other people's perspectives. This is in line with the Zone of Proximal Development theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which asserts that children's language skills develop optimally through directed and contextual social interaction.

The role of video media in this study was also very significant. Video media was used as a means of modelling and reflection, where students learned to imitate the pronunciation, intonation, and expressions of characters in the Timun Mas folk tale. This activity not only improved phonological accuracy but also fostered sensitivity to speech style and emotional expression. These results support the findings of Hapsari (2021) and Sari & Hartati (2022), which confirm that the use of audiovisual media strengthens learning motivation and improves students' speaking accuracy through observation and imitation. In addition, the integration of video media helps teachers provide more objective and visual feedback on student performance.

The improvement in students' speaking skills can be further explained through the principles of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), which emphasize meaningful learning by connecting

academic content with real-life situations. In this study, students were not merely asked to practice speaking mechanically, but were encouraged to understand, interpret, and perform dialogues rooted in familiar cultural narratives. This contextualization enabled students to construct meaning more effectively, thereby reducing anxiety and increasing confidence when speaking in front of peers.

The Role of Folklore as a Cognitive and Affective Stimulus

The use of folktale-based role plays also played a crucial role in enhancing students' engagement and emotional involvement. Folklore narratives, which are culturally familiar to students, functioned as cognitive scaffolding that helped them organize ideas, sequence events, and express thoughts coherently. Moreover, the moral values embedded in folktales contributed to students' intrinsic motivation, making speaking activities feel less like formal assessments and more like meaningful storytelling experiences.

Role play activities provided opportunities for students to practice speaking in interactive and collaborative contexts. Through dialogue exchange, turn-taking, and character interpretation, students developed not only linguistic competence but also social communication skills. These findings align with sociocultural learning theory, which views language development as a socially mediated process, where interaction becomes a key factor in improving speaking performance (Johnson, 2020).

The integration of video media strengthened the learning process by enabling students to observe and reflect on their own speaking performance. Watching recorded role-play activities allowed students to recognize pronunciation errors, intonation patterns, and body language, fostering metacognitive awareness. This reflective process supported self-correction and encouraged students to set personal improvement goals, which is essential in developing sustainable speaking skills.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research indicating that contextual and performance-based learning strategies significantly improve students' speaking abilities. Studies on CTL and role play in language learning have reported similar outcomes, particularly in terms of increased confidence, fluency, and student participation. However, this study adds novelty by integrating local folklore and video-based reflection, highlighting the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy in elementary education.

Pedagogical Implications

Pedagogically, this learning model fosters an active, communicative, and contextual learning climate. The Timun Mas folktale serves not only as literary teaching material, but also as a vehicle for internalizing cultural values and environmental awareness. Values such as responsibility, perseverance, and ecological awareness contained in the story are interpreted by students through speaking and performing activities. Thus, this model not only develops linguistic abilities but also shapes students' character and social-emotional intelligence. This is in line with the findings of Wahyuni & Hartono (2025), which emphasize that learning based on local wisdom is effective in strengthening cultural identity and fostering social empathy in elementary school students.

Although the results of the study show high effectiveness, it must be acknowledged that this study has limitations. The One Group Pretest-Post-test design without a control group has not been able to fully isolate the influence of external variables such as students' experiences outside the classroom or differences in individual learning styles. Therefore, further research is recommended to use a quasi-experimental design with a comparison group and involve qualitative analysis to understand the dynamics of student interaction during role-play activities.

Overall, this study confirms that the Contextual Learning Model combined with Role Play Folktales is significantly effective in improving elementary school students' speaking skills, especially in terms of expression, fluency, and confidence. The novelty of this study lies in the integration of CTL, role play, and video media based on local folk tales as a comprehensive strategy to improve speaking skills while instilling cultural values and environmental awareness. From a practical perspective, these findings have significant implications for elementary school teachers. The integration of CTL and role-play using folk tales can be implemented within routine classroom activities without requiring major curriculum adjustments. Teachers can apply the model by combining short video observations and storytelling sessions within two to three meetings per unit. This model encourages active participation and helps build students' confidence in public speaking through culturally relevant narratives. These findings are important because they confirm the relevance of culture-based learning in strengthening children's communication skills, character, and cultural literacy from an early age. In terms of methodological improvement, future research should extend the duration of the intervention ideally over six to eight sessions to observe long-term effects on language retention and fluency. It is also recommended to employ data triangulation techniques, such as incorporating classroom observations, student reflections, and interviews with teachers, to enrich the interpretation of learning outcomes and validate quantitative findings.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the application of the Contextual Learning Model combined with the Role Play method based on folk tales is effective in improving the speaking skills of students at Mojo 58 Sragen Public Elementary School. The findings of this study quantitatively demonstrate a significant improvement in students' speaking performance, with a normalized gain (N-Gain) score of 0.778 categorized as high effectiveness. The most substantial increases occurred in the aspects of expression and confidence, confirming the model's success in fostering communicative competence. This model is able to create meaningful and interactive learning, helping students express themselves more confidently, fluently, and expressively through role-playing activities that are relevant to their lives. The integration of video media also strengthens the language modeling process, so that students obtain examples of correct pronunciation and intonation. Speaking lessons that highlight local cultural values have been proven to not only improve linguistic aspects but also foster appreciation for regional cultural wisdom. The novelty of this study lies in the integration of the CTL model, role-play technique, and

folk tale media within a single framework that combines linguistic development with cultural and character education. This approach not only enhances speaking ability but also nurtures students' empathy, moral awareness, and appreciation of local heritage. Practically, teachers can adopt this model in regular Indonesian language classes to cultivate student engagement, support cooperative learning, and build social interaction patterns that encourage confidence in speaking. For future studies, it is recommended to conduct comparative experiments across different grade levels and treatment durations to examine how prolonged exposure to CTL-role play integration influences students' engagement and communication patterns. For further research, it is recommended that experiments be conducted with control groups and longer learning durations so that the long-term effectiveness of this model on students' prosodic aspects and communication performance can be tested more thoroughly.

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