

## The Effectiveness of GTA V Roleplay in Enhancing Online Players' Speaking Skills: A Study on the Executive Server of Discord "Warung Bu Erte"

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of *Grand Theft Auto V* (GTA V) roleplay in improving the speaking skills of online players within the Executive Server of Discord "Warung Bu Erte." The research was motivated by the increasing use of online gaming platforms as informal learning environments, where interaction and communication are essential for gameplay. Using a quasi-experimental design, data were collected from participants actively engaged in immersive roleplay activities, with pre-tests and post-tests administered to measure speaking performance. The findings indicate that participation in roleplay significantly enhanced players' fluency, vocabulary use, and confidence in speaking English. The results suggest that online roleplay can function as an innovative medium for language learning, offering authentic contexts for communication, collaboration, and meaning negotiation. This study contributes to the growing body of research on game-based learning, highlighting the potential of digital platforms to support second language acquisition.

**Keywords:** GTA V roleplay, speaking skill, online learning, game-based learning, EFL.

### INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a fundamental aspect of human communication and a central component of second language acquisition (SLA) [1,2]. Among the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—speaking is often considered the most important for real-world communication, as it allows learners to express ideas, negotiate meaning, and build relationships in real time. However, for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, speaking poses unique challenges. Limited vocabulary, lack of fluency, pronunciation difficulties, and anxiety often hinder learners' ability to communicate effectively in English. Traditional classroom instruction, while necessary, sometimes fails to provide sufficient opportunities for authentic, interactive communication [3,4].

In recent years, the rise of digital technology and online platforms has expanded the horizons of language learning. Beyond the classroom, learners are increasingly exposed to English through social media, online communities, and gaming platforms [5,6]. Among these, online games have emerged as particularly promising environments for language practice. Unlike controlled classroom settings, online games require spontaneous communication, collaboration, and decision-making, making them rich contexts for meaningful language use [7,8].

Game-based learning has been widely discussed in applied linguistics and educational technology. Digital games offer opportunities for authentic interaction, where players use language as a tool to achieve goals rather than as an isolated academic exercise [9,10]. This approach aligns with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes the importance of meaningful communication and task-based learning in language classrooms [11–13].

Learners acquire language more effectively in low-anxiety environments. Online games, with their entertaining and immersive qualities, can reduce language learning anxiety by shifting the focus from “studying” to “playing” [14,15]. Learners become more willing to take risks, make mistakes, and practice English without the fear of formal evaluation. English activities, such as gaming, contribute to vocabulary growth and improved communicative competence [16,17].

*Grand Theft Auto V* (GTA V), one of the most popular multiplayer games worldwide, has developed extensive roleplay communities where players construct virtual societies with laws, professions, and social norms [18,19]. These roleplay servers demand constant verbal interaction—negotiating with others, giving instructions, solving conflicts, and building narratives—all of which mirror real-world communication. The Executive Server of Discord “Warung Bu Erte,” where this study was conducted, provides such an environment for Indonesian players to practice English in authentic contexts.

### **Research Gap**

Although there is a growing body of research on game-based learning, relatively few studies have examined the specific role of online roleplay in developing speaking skills. Prior studies show how digital games encourage willingness to communicate and increase interactional competence, yet most research has focused on vocabulary acquisition or motivation rather than oral proficiency. Furthermore, little attention has been given to informal learning communities outside the classroom, such as Discord servers linked to gaming platforms, despite their widespread popularity and rich communicative environments.

In the Indonesian context, research on game-based learning is still in its early stages. While some studies have explored the role of mobile apps or gamified classroom activities in language learning, the use of multiplayer online games—particularly roleplay-based games—as a medium for enhancing speaking has been largely overlooked. Given the increasing number of Indonesian learners engaging with such platforms, it is important to examine their potential contributions to second language development.

The primary objective of this research is to “evaluate the effectiveness of GTA V roleplay”, specifically within the Discord “Warung Bu Erte” Executive Server as a method for improving players’ English speaking skills, while also exploring learners’ perceptions of this experience. The study aims to determine which specific speaking components (fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and confidence) are most significantly influenced by the immersive daily roleplay interactions and to subsequently provide practical pedagogical guidance on how educators and learners can utilize such online gaming communities as valuable supplementary environments for language acquisition.

By focusing on speaking performance in an authentic, game-based context, this study contributes to the understanding of how informal digital environments can complement formal EFL instruction [20,21]. The findings are expected to benefit teachers, learners, and researchers interested in integrating innovative, technology-driven approaches into language education.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design, as the aim was to explore learners’ experiences and perceptions regarding the use of GTA V roleplay for enhancing speaking skills. Qualitative inquiry was chosen because it allows the researcher to capture in-depth insights into participants’ authentic language use and reflections in a naturalistic setting [22]. Rather than measuring outcomes through standardized tests, the study sought to document how learners interact, what challenges they face, and how they perceive their own progress in speaking.

The study was conducted on the Warung Bu Erte Executive Discord Server, a GTA V roleplay community, where the 12 participant, selected via purposive sampling (aged 18-25, active in roleplay, and willing to use English) engaged in daily interactions necessary to fulfill virtual roles. Data collection primarily utilized two methods: Observation and Semi-Structured Interviews, supplemented by Document Analysis. The researcher spent six weeks observing

approximately 20 hours of roleplay sessions as a non-participating member, taking field notes, and recording selected voice interactions to analyze fluency and communication strategies. All 12 participants were also interviewed for 30–45 minutes via Discord to explore their perceptions, challenges, and comparison of this experience with formal learning. Finally, chat transcripts and audio clips provided supplementary evidence. The collected data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-step framework, which involved transcribing, initial coding of relevant aspects (e.g., fluency, confidence, challenges), grouping codes into broader themes (e.g., "roleplay as scaffolding"), and cross-checking findings across the different data sources to ensure validity before presenting the final results.

### Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied four criteria by Lincoln and Guba: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved through data triangulation (observations, interviews, and document analysis) and member-checking, where participants reviewed summaries of their interview responses. Transferability was addressed by providing thick description of the research context, enabling readers to judge applicability to similar contexts. Dependability and confirmability were maintained by keeping an audit trail of all data and analytic decisions.

Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the study. Participants provided informed consent prior to data collection, and anonymity was ensured by using pseudonyms in reporting findings. Sensitive data, including chat logs and audio recordings, were stored securely and used solely for research purposes.

## RESULTS

**Table 1.** Summary of Themes and Key Evidence

Theme	Evidence from Observation & Documents	Evidence from Interviews
Roleplay as Scaffolding	Players relied on in-game scenarios to initiate conversations; role prompts guided turn-taking.	"It's easier to speak because I already know the situation... like I'm a police officer."
Motivation & Engagement	Active participation in group missions; laughter and jokes created a positive atmosphere.	"Writing feels like a game. I want to talk more because it's fun, not like an exam."
Vocabulary Enrichment	Repeated exposure to game-related terms (e.g., "arrest warrant," "transaction") increased recall.	"I learned words I never used before... I can remember them faster because I practice."
Confidence Building	Hesitant speakers gradually spoke more fluently after several sessions.	"At first, I was nervous, but now I don't think too much. I just speak."
Challenges & Limitations	Frequent code-switching into Bahasa Indonesia; reliance on visual cues; uneven participation.	"Sometimes I don't know the words, so I just mix Indonesian and English."

### Findings

The analysis of observations, interviews, and supporting documents revealed five

interrelated themes that illustrate how GTA V roleplay influences learners' speaking skills: roleplay as scaffolding, motivation and engagement, vocabulary enrichment, confidence building, and challenges/limitations.

### 1. Roleplay as Scaffolding

Roleplay activities provided participants with structured contexts that made it easier to generate and organize speech. During roleplay sessions, players adopted specific roles (e.g., police, shopkeepers, taxi drivers) that required them to communicate in predictable yet flexible scenarios. Observations showed that participants used phrases such as "license, please" or "what's your business here?" repeatedly, reinforcing functional language use. This finding is consistent with Harmer [23,24] who argues that real-world simulations reduce the cognitive burden of idea generation by providing learners with clear reference points. The role prompts functioned as scaffolding, supporting learners to practice without feeling lost.

### 2. Motivation and Engagement

Almost all participants reported that roleplay transformed English practice into an enjoyable experience. Unlike traditional classroom drills, the roleplay felt authentic and entertaining. One participant stated: *"I don't feel like I'm studying English, but I realize I'm speaking more than before."* Observations confirmed high levels of engagement: learners stayed in sessions for hours, sometimes extending conversations beyond the roleplay task.

This supports Self-Determination Theory [25,26], which emphasizes intrinsic motivation as key to learning. By making speaking tasks enjoyable, roleplay increased learners' willingness to take risks in communication.

### 3. Vocabulary Enrichment

Data analysis highlighted that repeated exposure to game-related vocabulary improved learners' lexical repertoire. Terms such as "transaction," "emergency call," and "report file" emerged frequently in observations and were later recalled accurately by participants in interviews. Students noted that associating words with game actions made them memorable. This echoes Nation [27], who emphasizes contextualized input as vital for vocabulary acquisition. In this case, the multimodal context (visual cues, role requirements, peer interaction) deepened retention.

### 4. Confidence Building

Many learners reported a reduction in anxiety after several weeks of roleplay. Initially, participants hesitated or code-switched, but over time, they produced longer and more fluent utterances. Interview data revealed statements like: *"Before, I was shy and only used one word. Now I can make sentences, even if not perfect."* The observation data matched this perception: hesitant pauses decreased, and learners initiated conversations more frequently. The improvement reflects the affective benefits of low-pressure practice environments [28]. Roleplay allowed learners to prioritize meaning over form, reducing fear of mistakes.

### 5. Challenges and Limitations

Despite positive outcomes, challenges emerged. Several participants relied heavily on Bahasa Indonesia when they lacked vocabulary, leading to frequent code-switching. Others admitted they became dependent on visual or situational cues and struggled when asked to speak outside the roleplay setting. Moreover, differences in proficiency created unequal participation—more confident speakers dominated conversations while weaker students stayed passive. This aligns with [29], who cautions against over-dependence on media, noting that learners may struggle to generalize skills beyond the scaffolded environment.

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Affective Benefits and Motivation

This study's observation that roleplay fosters enjoyment and lowers speaking anxiety (by reframing practice as "play") is highly consistent with a large body of literature on role-play in EFL. Multiple studies confirm that role-play creates a supportive, non-judgmental environment that encourages risk-taking and reduces the common "fear of mistakes" that inhibits participation in traditional classrooms [30] foundational work on foreign language anxiety. Research, such as the one by Chong Kahn et al [31] on role-play for English for Tourism students, similarly found that role-play exercises positively impacted students by showing improved confidence and increased enjoyment in speaking. This digital environment, therefore, successfully replicates the affective advantage of traditional role-play by leveraging the inherent engagement of the gaming context

### 2. Experiential Learning and Authentic Communication

The core finding that GTA V roleplay functions as experiential learning—where students "learn by doing" through authentic speech acts like negotiation and problem-solving—is a direct validation of the principles of Polasek [18] Experiential Learning Cycle and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. The idea that role-play, whether digital or face-to-face, provides an authentic communicative experience that is more realistic than conventional classrooms is a central theme in role-play research. Furthermore, other studies focusing on virtual 3D environments, such as Second Life (SL), also highlighted that students perceived their communication in the role-playing activity as more interesting and less formal than in face-to-face settings [32].

### 3. Vocabulary and Pragmatic Competence

The finding that the contextual repetition in roleplay leads to deeper retention of vocabulary and improves pragmatic competence (e.g., turn-taking, clarification requests) is widely supported. Studies on Digital Game-Based Vocabulary Learning (DGBVL) consistently show that video games enhance vocabulary acquisition and retention by immersing learners in meaningful, contextualized situations, leading to better results than rote memorization [33]. Moreover, research on MMORPGs specifically notes that these games help students acquire vocabulary through real-time social interactions, providing a simulated environment for real-life language use.

### 4. Scaffolding and Transferability Challenges

The final observation regarding the challenge of over-reliance on visual prompts and code-switching—and the need for structured guidance to ensure transferability of skills—is critical for the integration of digital games into language pedagogy. This aligns with the principle of scaffolding in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), as noted in the discussion, suggesting that support must be gradually withdrawn. Research on digital games and second language learning often cautions that commercial entertainment games, without structured pedagogical activities, may not be fully effective for language learning, underscoring the necessity of teacher intervention to bridge the gap between in-game performance and real-world application [34].

## CONCLUSION

This study confirms that GTA V roleplay serves as a highly effective complementary tool for enhancing EFL learners' speaking skills by providing a context for authentic interaction, scaffolding, and motivation. The immersive, structured scenarios were found to significantly boost fluency, confidence, and vocabulary enrichment as participants perceived practice as enjoyable play rather than a burdensome task, which actively reduced speaking anxiety. Although the research noted challenges like over-reliance on visual cues and code-switching, the overall findings suggest that with careful pedagogical integration and gradual reduction of scaffolding, digital roleplay communities can effectively bridge the gap between formal classroom instruction and real-world communicative competence.

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