



Role Playing Reveals Student Communication and Collaborative Interaction in IPAS

Role Playing Mengungkap Komunikasi dan Interaksi Kolaboratif Siswa dalam IPAS

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Abstract

General Background: Communication skills are a core component of 21st-century learning, particularly in integrated Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS), where students are required to actively express ideas and engage in social interaction. **Specific Background:** Role-playing is applied as an active learning strategy to facilitate communication practice among grade IV students in IPAS learning contexts. **Knowledge Gap:** Previous studies primarily emphasize general communication outcomes using quantitative approaches, while detailed qualitative exploration of communication processes and indicators remains limited. **Aims:** This study aims to explore students' communication skills through role-playing activities in IPAS learning. **Results:** Using a descriptive qualitative design involving 22 students, findings indicate that most students demonstrate clear pronunciation (90.91%) and fluency (86.36%), alongside increased confidence, appropriate gestures, and improved mastery of subject content. Students also begin to utilize facial expressions, eye contact, and collaborative interaction during group activities. **Novelty:** The study identifies the emergence of collaborative communication through group discussion, role distribution, and peer feedback, extending beyond traditional communication indicators. **Implications:** These findings suggest that role-playing supports holistic communication development, integrating verbal, nonverbal, affective, and social dimensions, and provides a practical strategy for fostering interactive and meaningful IPAS learning.

Highlights

- High clarity and fluency observed in student dialogue performance
- Group interaction fosters peer feedback and shared understanding
- Learning activities integrate conceptual mastery with expressive behavior

Keywords: Student Communication; Role Playing Method; IPAS Learning; Collaborative Communication; Elementary Education

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INTRODUCTION

The demands of 21st-century learning increasingly emphasize the urgency of communication skills. In this era, students are required to master four main competencies or 4Cs, namely *critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and Creativity* (Indarta et al., 2021). Communication is one of the fundamental skills that students must have to actively participate in learning activities and social life (Apriani et al., 2025).

Communication is the process of transferring meaning through sounds, gestures, body language, and symbols that aims to achieve commonality of meaning, understanding, and perception between individuals who act as sources (communicators) and recipients (communicators) through speech, hearing, seeing, and cognitive abilities (Mubin & Aryanto, 2024; Ahmad & Utami, 2024). Effective communication is characterized not only by the clarity of the message conveyed but also by its accuracy and feasibility in a social context (Nashruddin, 2019). This means that communication is not only the process of conveying ideas, but also involves the ability to understand and adjust to the interlocutor. Communication skills play an important role for every individual in interacting with the surrounding environment.

Daily life shows that a person uses verbal communication more than any other form of communication (Rahmah & Nasution, 2024). This shows that speaking skills are the most commonly used and needed basic skills in a variety of social and academic situations. Communication skills not only affect the academic aspect but also have an impact on children's social development. Children who have good communication skills tend to be more easily accepted in their social environment (Nugroho & Wijaya, 2025). Thus, it can be concluded that communication skills, especially oral communication, have an important role in supporting the learning success and social development of elementary school students.

One of the subjects that requires active communication skills is Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS). As a new subject in the current curriculum, IPAS plays an important role in supporting the realization of the Pancasila Student Profile (Farhan et al., 2025). IPAS is an integration of science and social studies subjects designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of natural phenomena and social dynamics, including the study of living things and inanimate objects and their interactions, as well as human life as individuals and social beings in the environment (Azzahra et al., 2023). Social studies learning also includes scientific and social aspects, such as nature, technology, environment, geography, history, and culture (Suhelayanti et al., 2023). In this context, communication skills are an important requirement because they allow students to express ideas, understand the material in depth, and actively participate in discussions and information exchanges with teachers and fellow students (Alfira & Izzah, 2024; Dewi et al., 2020).

Based on the results of an interview with a grade IV

teacher of SDIT Mutiara Insan Sukoharjo, student communication in IPAS learning is a part that is considered in the learning process in the classroom. The teacher explained that grade IV students are at a developmental stage that requires guidance and stimulus in communicating, both with teachers and with peers. In learning activities, students are directed to dare to express opinions, ask questions, and respond to the material presented. Therefore, teachers need a learning strategy that is able to provide space for students to practice communication in a directed manner and in accordance with the learning context in the classroom.

The teacher also explained that social studies learning is carried out by applying the role-playing method as one of the active learning strategies. This method is used in social studies materials related to social events and daily life phenomena, so that students can understand the material through hands-on experience. The teacher said that the application of role-playing was carried out by dividing students into several groups, providing an overview of the role to be played, and directing students to display roles expressively according to the learning flow. IPAS learning through role play has been carried out several times in grade IV of Laila Al Ghifariyah. In general, teachers said that students responded positively to social studies learning through the role-playing method because learning activities were more interesting and actively involved students.

In line with this, Tarigan (2016) explains that the role-playing learning model (*role-playing*) is one of the social learning models that assigns students to act out characters or situations raised from subject matter and events of daily life in the form of simple stories. This model is closely related to the development of students' communication skills because it provides opportunities for learners to practice communicating in a variety of contexts and social roles (Wahyuningsi, 2019). Through role-playing activities, students gain experience in speaking directly in various communication situations, so that they are trained in composing arguments, adapting language styles according to the context, increasing confidence, and encouraged to dare to communicate and adapt to social situations that resemble real life (Lailiyah et al., 2025; Widyari et al., 2018). Furthermore, explaining that the role-playing model is based on three main aspects of the role experience in social life, namely role-taking, role-making, and role negotiation, which reflects the student's ability to understand social expectations, develop roles according to learning needs, and negotiate the meaning and rules of interaction with other role actors.

Research on the application of the model *role-playing* has been done a lot, especially at the elementary level. Research conducted by Rokmanah et al. (2024) shows that *role-playing* is an interesting and effective learning strategy in developing students' speaking skills. Furthermore, (Saesari et al., 2023). This shows that the method plays an effective role in improving students' communication skills in grade IV science learning. Meanwhile, research conducted by Nurahma & Sugiharti (2025) shows that *role-playing* can be an interesting learning alternative to optimize the quality of students' speaking skills in Indonesian subjects.

However, most of these studies still focus on the results or improvement of communication skills in general and use quantitative or experimental approaches. Research that specifically explores students' communication processes during

social studies learning through *role-playing methods* is still limited. In addition, studies that describe student communication based on oral communication indicators in detail, such as speech or pronunciation, word choice (diction), reasonable and calm attitude, facial movements and expressions, speaking fluency, and mastery of material topics, have not been widely reported.

Therefore, qualitative research is needed that focuses on an in-depth exploration of student communication in social studies learning through *role-playing methods*. This study is directed to describe how each of these communication indicators appears and develops during the learning process in grade IV students of SDIT Mutiara Insan Sukoharjo.

METHODS

This study uses an exploratory qualitative research design with the aim of exploring and understanding in depth the phenomenon of student communication in social studies learning through *role-playing*. Based on the Perception of the Research Subject (Syafri Hafni Sahir, 2022). Through this approach, researchers can describe the patterns and dynamics of student communication that arise naturally during the learning process.

This research was conducted in one of the private SDIT located in Sukoharjo Regency. The subject of this study is grade IV student Laila Al Ghifariyah, who consists of 22 students, all of whom are female, with an age range of 9–10 years. In addition to students, grade IV teachers act as supporting informants to obtain additional data related to the planning and implementation of learning to play the role and communication patterns of students in science learning.

Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation is carried out systematically using observation guidelines that refer to student communication indicators. Interviews are conducted in-depth in a semi-structured form with teachers and classroom students. Interviews with teachers aim to explore learning planning and teachers' observations of student communication based on indicators, while interviews with students aim to obtain information about students' experiences related to student communication indicators. Documentation is used to complete the research data, including the script or role-playing scenario and the student's LKPD. The following are indicators of student communication in role-playing activities.

[Table 1 About here]

The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation techniques and source triangulation (Abubakar, 2021). Technical triangulation is carried out by comparing observation, interview, and documentation data, while source triangulation is carried out by comparing information obtained from students and classroom teachers. The data obtained were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis techniques and presented in the form of narratives to describe the phenomenon of student communication in science learning through role-playing methods.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the initial stage, educators carefully prepare learning tools that include teaching modules, role-playing scenarios, Student Worksheets (LKPD), and map media used in role-playing activities. Scenarios designed based on IPAS materials serve as a means for students to understand learning concepts as well as practice communication skills through dialogue arranged according to the material. Thus, this preparation stage not only supports mastery of the material but also becomes the basis for the development of student communication indicators, such as the ability to convey information clearly, use the right language, and adjust the content of the dialogue to the concepts learned.

After the preparation is complete, the role-playing method begins to be applied in the classroom. The teacher starts with a brief explanation of the topic of IPAS, then divides the class into three groups of 7–8 students each. Next, educators share role-playing scenarios with students. Each group engages in collaborative discussions to define roles and practice role-playing according to their group. At this stage of training, students begin to develop various aspects of communication, such as **clarity of pronunciation during dialogue, fluency in delivering sentences, and the use of gestures and facial expressions** that support the facial expressions that are played. In addition, the practice process also helps students build **a confident, calm, and non-rigid attitude** when delivering dialogue in front of others. Entering the presentation stage, each group presents the results of its role-playing, while the other group acts as an observer, providing constructive feedback. This phase becomes a transparent assessment space for student communication indicators. Through this performance, communication competence is no longer seen as an abstract concept, but is manifested in the form of real practice that is directly integrated into learning activities.

This study is based on the observation of communication skills indicators in the learning process of science class IV with the role-playing method. The use of this role-playing method has an impact on the communication skills of grade IV students. The following is an overview of the observation results based on the observed aspects. Table 2.

[Table 2 About here]

Students' Verbal Communication Skills a. Speech, Pronunciation, and Fluency

The observation data in Table 2 showed that 20 students (90.91%) were able to speak the dialogue clearly and loudly. On the other hand, 2 students (9.09%) still had difficulty with pronunciation, so the delivery of dialogue sounded stunted. An interview with teacher An reinforces these findings with the statement that *"Overall, students can pronounce sentences and pronunciation clearly; There was one student who was not fluent because of speech delay."*

Based on these results, role play makes a real contribution to improving students' verbal communication competence, especially in the aspects of pronunciation and pronunciation (Sayyidah & Setyowati, 2025). These findings suggest that role-playing methods help students use language more fluently and structurally. Students' good pronunciation and pronunciation

skills are due to the influence of learning experiences and communicating with friends who are carried out in daily life. However, less clear pronunciation is still found in students with speech delays. This underscores the correlation between individual limitations and the development of speaking skills. Students with these limitations often show a lack of fluency in reading, so they have difficulty pronouncing dialogue fluently.

b. Attitude, Confidence, and Calmness

The results of the observation showed that in the first group, almost all students showed confidence and calmness during the dialogue. The second group initially appeared less confident and less calm, but showed significant improvement as the activity progressed. The third group has generally shown confidence and composure, although there are some students who are less serious about their roles. *The Tsa student* stated that "At the beginning of the role, he felt embarrassed, confused, afraid of making mistakes, had been used to it for a long time", and the *Ka student* added, "When I played that role, I felt nervous, I had been used to it for a long time". At the elementary level, shame and fear of being wrong are normal because students are still at a stage of social-emotional development that requires the support of a safe learning environment.

These findings show that the method plays an effective role in creating a pleasant learning atmosphere and increasing students' confidence and calmness in the context of IPAS learning. The variety of attitudes shown by each group proves that confidence can develop progressively through active participation in role-playing exercises (Stuart et al., 2024). Students with low confidence levels experience an increase after direct involvement in role-playing activities. Perspective Yulianto et al. (2020) emphasize that role-playing methods can facilitate students' mastery of their roles and increase confidence in carrying out the roles. Students' experiences of transitioning from shy to habituation show that this method provides room for students to adapt, thereby improving their communication skills (Wicaksono, 2024). The difference in communication skills shown by students in role-playing activities is inseparable from several factors that affect their learning process. One of the factors that is seen is the level of confidence of students when appearing in front of the class. Students who have higher confidence tend to be more active in conveying dialogue smoothly and expressively. In contrast, students who still feel embarrassed or afraid of making mistakes take longer to adapt to role-playing activities. In addition, previous learning experiences also affect students' communication skills. Students who are used to discussing or actively interacting in learning show better communication skills compared to students who rarely engage in speaking activities in class.

Pedagogically, educators have a significant responsibility in developing students' self-skills by providing verbal encouragement, positive feedback, and opportunities for active engagement between students. The application of repetitive exercises and continuous reflection can further facilitate students' awareness of their own developmental progress (Halawa et al., 2025). Thus, role-playing practices not only improve communication skills but also support the development of students' affective aspects, especially in

fostering resilience and calmness during interpersonal interactions.

Non-verbal communication (gestures and facial expressions)

The results of the observations showed that the students' nonverbal communication practices, including body movements, facial expressions, and eye contact, still showed variation and had not been done consistently. A total of 17 students (77.27%) have implemented nonverbal communication with the ability to convey facial expressions according to roles, use hand gestures to explain dialogues, and maintain eye contact with the interlocutor and the audience. In contrast, 5 students (22.73%) who were inconsistent appeared stiff, showed reduced expression, and concentrated on their scripts, resulting in minimal visual engagement with peers. This variation suggests that students' skills in nonverbal communication are still in the early stages of development. In primary education, the ability to consciously articulate emotions and realize roles requires practice and repetitive habituation. Inconsistencies in nonverbal communication can be attributed to factors such as unstable confidence, reliance on dialogue texts, and a lack of understanding of the importance of expression in conveying the meaning of the message. Theoretically, nonverbal communication is crucial in reinforcing verbal messages because facial expressions, body movements, and eye contact serve to clarify meaning and encourage emotional engagement. In the context of role-playing, proficient nonverbal communication apps can improve the effectiveness of messaging so that it becomes more dynamic and interactive.

These findings show that role-playing activities have significant potential in improving students' nonverbal communication competencies. However, more targeted teacher mentoring is needed, for example, through the provision of illustrative examples of facial expressions, special exercises that focus on expressions and movements before implementation, and reflective practice after the activity is completed. Continued participation in role-playing scenarios facilitates students' adaptation and allows them to articulate themselves more confidently. In this context, educators play an important role in providing constructive feedback, fostering a safe learning environment, and nurturing students' progress in nonverbal communication (Halawa et al., 2025).

Mastery of IPAS material through role-playing

The results of observations in Table 2 show that 19 students (86.36%) were able to deliver map material according to their roles. Students can deliver dialogues according to the material with the support of map integration as a pedagogical tool. In addition, students also show parts of the map that include orientation, cardinal direction, etc. These results prove that the method plays an effective role in providing students with a conceptual understanding of the content of IPAS. Students not only demonstrate first-hand memorization of information, but also the capacity to understand and apply map concepts within the framework of role-playing exercises. This observation is in line with constructivist theory that emphasizes learning through students' active involvement in knowledge development (Scott,

2019).

The relationship between role-playing activities and improving concept understanding can be clarified by providing examples of interactions or learning processes that occur during activities. As an illustration, the activity of playing a road guide and tourist requires students to be proficient in using the cardinal directions and understand the symbols on the map in real life. The discussions that arise in these scenarios help students see the relevance of the subject matter to real-world situations. As a result, the understanding formed is more permanent because students build this knowledge through direct involvement, rather than just passive theory. This perspective is reinforced by Sayidah & Setyowati (2025), which affirms that *role-playing* enables students to face and overcome challenges, which are important skills in daily life. Based on the interview, Guru An commented that "*Students already understand the material as evidenced by their performance in LKPD.*" The following is an example of the results of the Student LKPD:

[Figure 1 About here]

Based on Figure 1, students are able to recognize map elements such as symbols, legends, and cardinal directions well. The answers given show that students are not only copying from books, but also understanding the function of each component of the map and relating it to the situation at hand. This shows that the student's ability is not only at the level of remembering (C1), but has reached the level of understanding (C2) because it can explain the function of the map components as well as the level of application (C3). After all, it uses these concepts in the context of role-playing scenarios.

However, 3 students (13.64%) still had difficulty identifying the cardinal symbols and directions. These difficulties indicate that not all students have the same level of understanding, so they need additional support from teachers. These findings suggest that methods play an effective role in improving the understanding of most students, but still require different strategies to adapt to different individual abilities. The difference in the level of student understanding is influenced by individual factors and the teacher's support in the social studies learning process through the role-playing method. Students who have a better understanding tend to understand the material more easily from the beginning of learning. In contrast, students who have a lower level of understanding need more intensive guidance and learning support from teachers in order to understand the material better. For example, the interactions that arise during role-playing activities show that students are not only memorizing the material, but also using it contextually. For example, when students play the role of a road guide who explains directions to tourists, students must understand the concept of cardinal directions and symbols on the map to be able to correctly explain the travel route. This process requires students to relate their knowledge to the situation they are playing out so that learning becomes more meaningful. Thus, role-playing activities help students build an active understanding of concepts through hands-on learning

experiences.

Overall, the application of the method of playing a role in learning social studies not only has a positive impact on students' communication skills but also helps with conceptual mastery of the material (Saesari et al., 2023). The active involvement of students in character role play and explanatory materials encourages a more meaningful knowledge formation process compared to the one-way learning approach. Thus, the role method can be an alternative learning strategy that supports a deeper and contextual understanding of the concept of map material in grade IV of elementary school.

Collaborative Communication and Social Interaction

Another important finding in this study is the emergence of forms of collaborative communication that are not covered in the five initial indicators of the study. Students are seen actively communicating when determining roles, discussing, practicing together, giving feedback to other groups, and paying attention to the appearance of friends while role-playing. One of the students gave an assessment of the group that performed without the help of the media by stating that "*the disadvantage in playing a role is not using a map*".

These findings suggest that the process of role-playing not only hones speaking skills but also encourages reflective and evaluative social interaction. This is in accordance with the opinion of Tabina et al. (2025), which states that role-playing activities encourage the emergence of collaborative behaviors in student communication. Through interactions with peers, students share ideas, build mutual understanding, and learn to give and receive feedback openly. This process contributes to the development of critical and evaluative thinking skills that are an important part of communication skills. In addition, collaborative communication skills that emerge in role-playing activities are also related to the development of **21st century skills**, especially communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. In this activity, students not only convey information, but also work together in groups, arrange dialogues, and respond to ideas conveyed by friends. This is in line with the opinion that 21st-century learning needs to provide space for students to develop communication and collaboration skills through interactive and participatory learning activities.

This shows that successful role-playing methods encourage social interaction that involves cooperation between students, rather than just focusing on personal verbal skills. Through discussion and role-sharing, students learn to exchange ideas to build a harmonized understanding. In the context of 21st century learning, communication and collaboration are two main competencies that must be developed through interactive activities. Therefore, role-playing simulation is present as the right solution to accommodate the development of these skills while ensuring that students actively participate in their learning process.

CONCLUSIONS

This study highlights how the simulation of role-playing in grade IV of SDIT Mutiara Insan Sukoharjo is able to comprehensively describe the development of student communication, which includes verbal, nonverbal, affective, and social aspects. The results showed that students were able to speak dialogue clearly and fluently (90.91%), speak fluently (86.36%), and showed increased confidence and calmness during the role-playing process. Students also began to utilize facial expressions, gestures, and eye contact to reinforce the delivery of the message, although the consistency still needed to be improved.

The novelty of this research lies in the findings regarding the emergence of **collaborative communication** during role-playing activities, which can be seen through the process of group discussions, role sharing, and providing feedback between students. These findings suggest that role-playing methods not only develop individual communication skills but also strengthen social interaction and support the understanding of IPAS concepts, particularly map materials.

In practical terms, these findings provide an alternative for teachers to increase student engagement in the classroom in a more enjoyable yet still substantive way. In the future, the application of similar methods to different materials is highly recommended to expand the research horizon regarding students' social abilities.

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Conflict of Interest Statement: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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List Of Table

1. Indicators of student communication, according to Rahmah & Nasution (2024).....59
2. Summary of the results of observation of students' communication skills in social studies learning through the role-playing method.....60

Table 1/ Indicators of student communication, according to Rahmah & Nasution (2024)

Indicator	Description
Speech/ Pronunciation	Clarity of students' pronunciation when dialoging in role-playing.
Reasonable, calm, and non-rigid attitude	The student's body attitude, confidence, and calmness when role-playing.
Proper gestures and facial expressions	Use of facial expressions, hand gestures, and eye contact
Smoothness	Students are fluent in delivering dialogue without many pauses.
Mastery of the subject matter	Understanding of the concept and accuracy of the content of the material

Table 2/ Summary of the results of observation of students' communication skills in social studies learning through the role-playing method

Communication Indicators	Key Findings
Speech/ Pronunciation	20 students (90.91%) were able to speak the dialogue clearly and loudly. Meanwhile, 2 students (9.09%) still had difficulty with pronunciation, so the delivery of dialogue sounded stammered.
Reasonable, calm, and non-rigid attitude	First group: almost all students show confidence and calmness. The second group: initially lacking confidence, but showing significant improvement. The third group generally showed confidence, although some students were less serious about carrying out the role.
Proper gestures and facial expressions	17 students (77.27%) had implemented nonverbal communication with facial expressions, hand movements, and eye contact. 5 students (22.73%) have not been consistent.
Smoothness	19 students (86.36%) were able to conduct the dialogue smoothly and without many pauses. Meanwhile, 3 students (13.64%) were still not fluent with many breaks.
Mastery of the subject matter	19 students (86.36%) were able to deliver map material according to their roles. 3 students (13.64%) are still struggling.
Other findings	Students actively communicate in defining roles, discuss, practice, give feedback, and pay attention to the appearance of friends.

List Of Figure

1. Student LKPD Results.....	62
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Figure 1/ Student LKPD Results

