



## Application of role-playing learning model to improve students' theater skills

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the application of role-playing learning methods in improving students' theater skills. The study was conducted in class XI B of SMA Negeri 10 Malang using the Kemmis & Mc. Taggart Classroom Action Research (CAR) model consisting of two cycles. Each cycle involves four stages, namely planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. In cycle I, students are introduced to basic theater techniques and asked to practice acting techniques, as well as practice reading scripts together. In cycle II, students further practice basic theater techniques and do space processing (blocking) using the scripts that have been studied. The results of the study showed that although in cycle I students' scores were still below the KKM, after cycle II, there was a significant increase in students' ability to play roles according to the characters they played. In addition, the Role-Playing method has also proven effective in improving students' interpersonal communication and self-confidence. This study shows that the application of the role-playing method can improve students' theater skills, while also having a positive impact on their social and emotional development.

## 1. Introduction

Education is an important aspect in character formation and improvement of student competence. One of the fields that has a big role in the development of creativity and self-expression is the art of theater. Students can learn how to communicate verbally and nonverbally, interact with others and the surrounding environment, and convey messages effectively and engaging through body movements, expressions, and voices. These skills are practiced through classroom performance experiments, role-playing activities, scriptwriting, rehearsal exercises, and rehearsals. Theatre education can develop critical thinking, cultivate imagination and feelings, foster empathy, feel, imagine situations experienced by others, and manage conflicts in an organized manner (Effendy & Karyanto, 2023).

The subject of theater arts does not solely emphasize the theoretical aspect but also aims to develop students' practical competencies which include expression, interpretation, and communication skills. Learning the art of theatre contributes to forming confidence through performative experiences in public spaces as well as exploration of diverse characters. The process of creating roles and designing the stage world also encourages the development of creativity and imagination of students. In addition, theater art has a strategic role in fostering empathy and social understanding through the internalization of various perspectives and the processing of social themes raised in performances. Collaborative skills are also facilitated through teamwork in the theater production process. In line with Prusdianto (2018) which states that theater as an art medium functions well as a learning tool that can provide a fun and engaging learning experience. Through a playful and acting approach, theater art can be a means of developing oral language skills, personality formation, the ability to work together, expressing ideas, and increasing aesthetic appreciation and cultural understanding for students.

Role-playing or role-playing learning is one of the learning strategies that can be used in theater arts. According to PGRI Palembang et al. (2023), the method *role playing* is a technique for conveying educational information or subject matter by researching, illustrating, or exhibiting a situation or event experienced by others, or by exhibiting behavior or approach to social relations (Jas et al., 2020). Students participate in role playing exercises as part of the role-playing learning methodology. Role-playing aims to investigate behavior and problem-solving abilities as well as different approaches to learning things (Wirachman & Kurniawati, 2023). The role-playing learning approach uses activities that encourage student interaction, social activities that occur in society and daily life. In addition, students can fully appreciate how putting their soul into the psyche of others during role-playing practice can help them succeed in the workplace later in life because it teaches them how to interact with others and manage their emotions, all of which are part of intellectual, emotional, and even spiritual intelligence.

Based on some of these statements, it can be concluded that the role-playing learning model can be used in theater arts subjects because it provides interactive learning materials, students use the role-playing method, which involves acting out certain social events or behaviors. By putting yourself in the shoes of others, this approach not only improves understanding of the subject matter but also trains social skills, problem-solving skills, and empathy. Additionally, role-playing helps students develop spiritual, emotional, and intellectual intelligence and interpersonal skills that will help them in the workplace and in life in general. Although it requires careful preparation and effective facilitation, role playing has been proven to improve learner engagement, concept understanding, and 21<sup>st</sup> century skill development. This model allows learners to learn through hands-on experience by playing a variety of roles in specific situations. In addition to exploring characters and understanding storylines, students can also improve communication skills, cooperation, confidence, and creativity, especially in performing theater performances.

This research is motivated by the results of observations conducted at SMA Negeri 10 Malang, which shows that there is an inequality in the learning process of theater arts. The observational findings indicate that students face obstacles in understanding complex theoretical concepts, such as script analysis, character development, and staging techniques. The high level of complexity of the material has implications for the low ability of students to appreciate and play roles in depth. This has an impact on the suboptimal interpretation of the role, so that the expression of emotions and the delivery of the message contained in the script becomes less than optimal. In line with Erranan et al. (n.d.), the performers have the difficult task of conveying the play's message to the audience. They have to bring the people in the storyline to life through contact, communication, and the interweaving of events. As a result, the actors had to play the characters on stage as if they were real characters. Actors can do this through training in basic acting techniques.

In addition to the difficulties in understanding the theory, the observations made by the researcher also highlight another problem, namely the lack of availability of materials or learning materials provided by teachers. The limitation of these resources is an obstacle for students in conducting adequate training and exploring various aspects of theater art independently. In fact, the availability of materials is very important to facilitate understanding of concepts, skill development, and spark students' creativity in theater arts. According to Adip (2022), the use of learning resources is a crucial aspect in the learning process and contributes significantly to the achievement of students' skills. The combination of difficulties in understanding complex theories and the limitations of available teaching materials encouraged researchers to pursue more in-depth studies.

To improve students' learning outcomes in theater arts subjects, a role-playing learning model is applied. The selection of this model is based on its ability to create a more interactive and enjoyable learning atmosphere. In addition, this approach is also effective in helping students understand abstract concepts. In line with opinion Anggraeni et al. (2024) through role-playing methods, students are given the opportunity to take an active role and engage in engaging learning scenarios. This active involvement can reduce the feeling of boredom during the learning process. This learning model allows students not only to passively accept theories, but also to actively participate in acting out various characters and situations, so that their understanding of the concept of theater becomes more in-depth and contextual. It is hoped that with the application of this model, students will be able to face various challenges, strengthen their understanding of theater theory, hone their skills, and ultimately achieve maximum learning outcomes in learning theater arts.

Various studies have proven that the role play learning model is widely applied to improve student learning outcomes in the field of theater arts. Findings from a number of previous studies reveal that this model is effective in deepening students' understanding of concepts, developing communication skills, and increasing their confidence when acting a character. For example, research by Nurseptiah and Roekmana (2024) it shows that the role-playing method is able to strengthen students' understanding of the content of the drama script while encouraging their increased participation in the learning process. Meanwhile, another study by Ibrahim et al. (2021) the following paraphrase of the sentence emphasizes that this model has a positive influence on students' expressive abilities and creativity in theater arts. However, there are limitations in some previous studies, such as focusing only on understanding the text, without evaluating its impact on other aspects such as cooperation between students.

This study is different from the previous one because it looks at the application of the role playing model more comprehensively. The focus is not only on understanding the script, but also on student involvement, the role of teachers, and the use of learning media. In addition, this method is also tested in formal and non-formal settings. It is hoped that the results can provide a more complete picture and help teachers design more interesting and effective theater learning.

## 2. Method

This research was conducted in class XI B SMAN 10 Malang in the even semester of the 2024/2025 school year, with a total of 36 students, consisting of 24 women and 12 men. The researcher uses the Classroom Action Research (PTK) approach because it is considered effective in improving the learning process and outcomes directly in the classroom. In accordance with the statement Budiman and Riyanto (2013) Classroom Action Research (PTK) is a research approach that aims to improve learning practices in the classroom through actions that are carried out repeatedly in a cycle.

This research was carried out through two cycles, each consisting of three learning meetings. Each cycle includes four main stages: planning, execution of actions, observation, and reflection. If the results in the first cycle have not reached the expected target, then it will be continued to the second cycle with improvements based on the results of the previous evaluation.

Kemmis and Taggart in Purba et al. (2021) argues that classroom action research is a form of collective reflection in a social environment, which allows all participants to understand more deeply the practices and situations in which they find themselves. Through this process, they can improve their critical thinking towards educational and social practices. In the PTK model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart, each cycle consists of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. In the planning stage, teachers identify learning problems and design solutions, for example by applying a role-playing model that emphasizes character development. Furthermore, at the action stage, teachers carry out learning using the model, provide materials, examples, and ensure that the learning process runs easily and effectively.

According to Nuraeni et al. (2023), the proposed planning strategy is to clearly define the learning problem. Teachers need to observe and analyze the problems that exist in the learning process in the classroom. This can be done through data collection, observation, interviews or literature studies. The planning process carried out in this study includes the preparation of a Learning Implementation Plan (RPP), the creation of drama scenarios that are in accordance with the context of students, and the preparation of research instruments such as observation sheets, theater skill assessment rubrics, and interview guidelines. At the stage of implementing the action, the teacher applies the role-playing in learning, where students are asked to play characters in scenarios in groups or individually.

At the observation stage, the researcher and the accompanying teacher observe the activities of students and teachers during the learning process. The focus of observation includes students' participation in role-playing activities as well as their abilities in vocals, expression, appreciation, cooperation, and improvisation. Meanwhile, at the reflection stage, the researcher analyzes the learning results to assess the effectiveness of the actions that have been taken and formulate improvement steps for the future. This is in line with Purnomo (2020) which states that During the implementation of the action, observation is carried out directly at the same time as the collection of

the necessary data. Teachers and research teams observe the course of the learning process, take notes, and document various aspects related to the learning process and outcomes. The data in this study was collected through a variety of methods, including observation to see the level of student engagement, interviews to explore their views and experiences during learning, and documentation to record activities that took place in the classroom. Novianti et al. (2023) stated that many factors affect the preparation of social instruments, including research subjects, data sources, availability of time, and available funds. These factors also determine the number of researchers involved and the methods used to process the data after it has been collected. The instruments used in this study include observation sheets of student and teacher activities, interview guidelines, theater skill assessment rubrics, and documentation formats. The theatrical skills assessment rubric covers three aspects, namely: facial expressions, body language and vocals.

According to Pratiwi et al. (2023), data analysis is an important stage where the data that has been collected through various techniques such as observation, interviews, and surveys is processed and presented to help researchers find solutions to the problem being studied. In this study, a quantitative and qualitative descriptive data analysis approach was used. Qualitative data from observations and interviews were analyzed through the process of data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawn. This research is considered successful if students' theater skills improve from cycle I to cycle II, with at least 75% of students in the 'Good' or 'Very Good' category based on the assessment results. Success is also marked by increased student activity and enthusiasm during the learning process

### **3. Results and Discussion**

#### **3.1. Results**

This research aims to improve the theater skills of students in class XI B SMAN 10 Malang by using the role-playing learning method. The results showed significant improvements in various aspects, such as facial expressions, body language, vocals, and the ability to work together in groups. Here are the steps taken in this class action research:

##### **3.1.1. Pre-Cycle**

Pre-cycle is the initial stage of research before the application of the role-playing learning model as a strategy to be tested in this study. In line with the statement Wakoyah (2013) which states that before the classroom action research begins, the pre-cycle serves as an orientation stage for the researcher. At this stage, the researcher first made observations to see the objective conditions of learning activities in class XI B SMA Negeri 10 Malang. The researcher observed the teaching and learning process, the interaction between teachers and students, and the level of student participation in learning acting material. The results of the observation showed that students were less interested in participating in learning, which was caused by the dominant method of delivering material using lectures without any direct practice. According to Sulandari (2020) the impact of the lecture method, namely the learning process that is not varied and does not consider the differences in students' learning styles, tends to have negative impacts, such as low student participation, increased boredom, and the emergence of discomfort in receiving material. When the method used is monotonous and one-way, students become passive, easily sleepy, and feel compelled to listen. This is especially felt by students with visual learning styles who do not get the appropriate learning stimulus. In addition, the absence of clear achievement indicators makes learning evaluations difficult to control and less effective.

After observation, it was found that the average completeness in this pre-cycle was only 46% or 16 people. Then the researcher continued to the reflection stage by holding a discussion with the teacher of Cultural Arts subjects. In the discussion, researchers and teachers discussed various problems found during observation, including the low active involvement of students in the learning process. Researchers work with teachers to find solutions to these problems. One of the recommendations that emerged was to use the role-playing learning model, which gives students the opportunity to practice and act out characters directly, so as to improve their interest and skills in the art of theatre. In line with research PGRI Palembang et al. (2023) the role-playing method is a learning approach that focuses on character acting activities. Through this activity, students can explore interpersonal relationships by demonstrating and discussing their roles. Together, they learn to explore the feelings, attitudes, values, skills, and knowledge related to the problems they face.

Based on the results of this reflection, researchers and teachers agreed that the application of the Role Playing will be used in future actions to improve students' learning outcomes in acting materials. Figure 1 shows the pre-cycle learning outcomes.

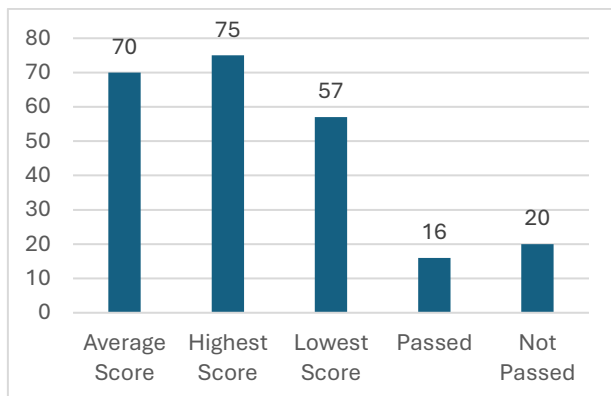


Figure 1. Pre-Cycle Learning Outcomes

### 3.1.2. Cycle 1

After the pre-cycle stage is completed, the implementation of Cycle I begins with the planning stage. Researchers and teachers prepare Learning Implementation Plans (RPP) based on the Role Playing model, prepare student activity observation sheets, documentation tools, and learning outcome assessment instruments. They also equalized perceptions related to the learning model to be implemented.

Based on the implementation of three actions in cycle I, it can be concluded that the application of the learning model *Role Playing* began to have a positive impact on students' involvement and ability in acting materials. In line with (Zhao & Huang, 2016) stating that role-playing is an effective method of bringing real-life situations into the classroom. Through this activity, students can develop understanding and creativity by experiencing firsthand and diving into the storyline that is being acted out.

In the first action, although some students still showed shyness and lack of confidence, follow-up efforts were made through improvement in the second action with a more interactive method. As a result, there has been an increase in student activities, although there are still several obstacles such as lack of focus and confidence. In the third action, students showed better development in basic acting techniques, both in terms of vocal exercises, taste, and body exercises. Most students began to be able to memorize the script and play the characters more confidently. However, the final reflection suggests that acting learning still needs to be strengthened, particularly in understanding basic techniques and elements of acting, which will be the main focus in the next cycle. It is evidenced by the bar chart below, which has increased by 94% or 34 people from the previous precycle. Figure 2 shows the Learning Outcomes Cycle 1.

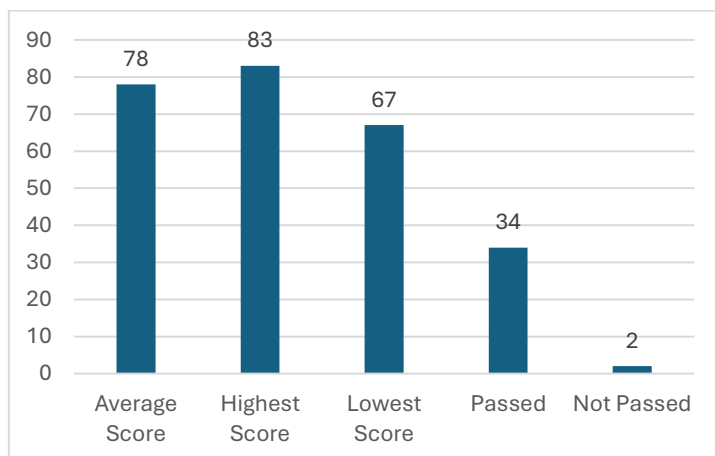


Diagram 2. Learning Outcomes Cycle 1

### 3.1.3. Cycle 2

After carrying out actions and observations in cycle II, the researcher reflected on theater learning in class XI B SMAN 10 Malang. The action begins with careful preparation, such as the preparation of lesson plans, learning media, and observation instruments. In its implementation, students do role playing based on the script that has been prepared. The results of the observation showed that students began to be able to compose blocks and memorize scenarios independently, although some still needed guidance in dialogue. Overall, there was an increase in students' interest and effort in playing a role.

In the second action, students continue learning while still using *the Role Playing* method. Observations show that the students are better able to master their roles, with a better level of focus and concentration than before. The students' performance in role playing began to run smoothly, and they were better prepared when performing in front of the class. Each group managed to perform the script of "Senandung Syarif Abdurrahman" quite well, although encouragement is still needed to improve the expression and appreciation of the role.

In the third action, learning is focused on strengthening role playing techniques. Students began to show more significant improvements in terms of memorization of scripts, mastery of character, and the ability to control themselves when appearing in front of the class. The researchers noted that students no longer chatted frequently during practice and were able to maintain focus throughout the performance. The results of the evaluation showed that students were able to accept the teacher's challenge to play the character better and could maintain consistency in playing their roles.

Overall, the reflection of the three actions in cycle II shows that the Role Playing method is effective in improving students' theater skills, especially in mastering scripts, acting techniques, concentration when performing, and interaction with co-stars. These findings are in line with the results of previous studies that support the effectiveness of this method. (Nurfauzi et al., 2023) which states that skills such as cooperation, communication, and understanding of an event can be honed through the role playing method. In addition, (Saputri & Yamin, 2022) also argues that by actively engaging students and providing hands-on experience, role-playing learning models can support the development of social intelligence as well as their problem-solving abilities.

Collaboration between researchers and teachers in designing learning and conducting joint evaluations also strengthens the success of this learning. However, further efforts are still needed to further hone the expression, improvisation, and appreciation of the role of students in theater performances. This is evidenced by the bar chart below, which has increased the average completeness by 100% from the previous cycle. Figure 3 shows the Learning Outcomes Cycle 2.

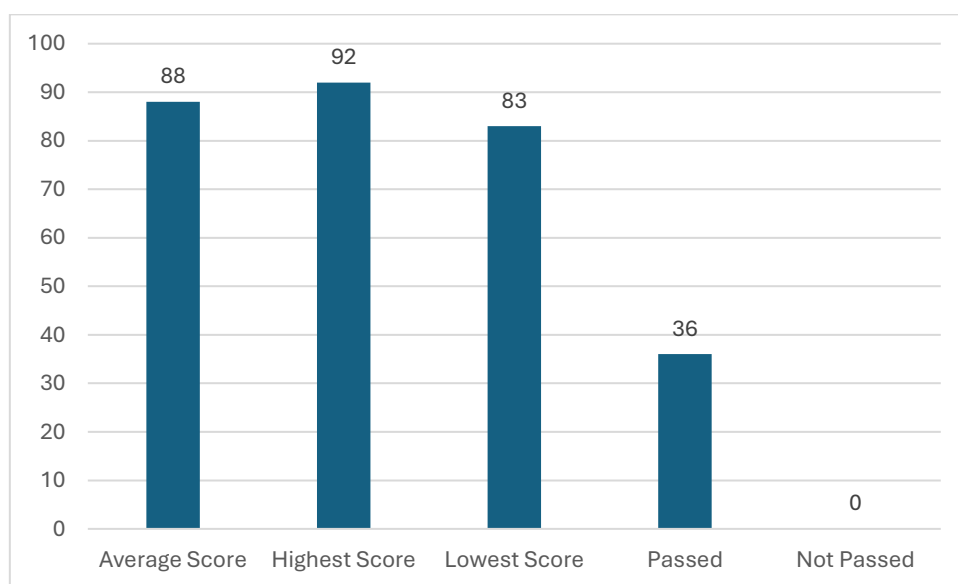


Figure 3. Learning Outcomes Cycle 2

## 3.2. Discussion

### 3.2.1. Improvement of Theatrical Skills Through Role Playing Model

The results of the study showed that the application of the Role Playing learning model succeeded in improving the theater skills of students in grade XI B SMAN 10 Malang. In the first cycle, there were still some students who lacked confidence, looked shy, and were not able to play the character optimally. However, through the application of continuous actions in cycle II with blocking exercises, script memorization, vocal processing, taste, body exercises, and space, there was a significant increase in students' role playing skills. This increase is marked by an increase in the courage of students to appear in front of the class, a smoother mastery of dialogue, and the ability to express the character of the character more lively. These results are in line with similar research conducted by (Azizah & Salam, 2023) stated that the use of the role playing method can help students become more confident and brave to appear in front of the class.

If the role playing method is applied, students tend to be more involved and actively participate in class activities. Conversely, the use of the lecture method makes students more dependent on the teacher's explanations and tends to be passive during the learning process. Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the use of *the Role Playing* method in theater learning is able to improve students' acting skills gradually and systematically. Teachers are expected to optimize this learning model to increase students' creativity, courage, and communication skills in learning cultural arts and other practice-based subjects

### 3.2.2. Active Learning and Emotional Engagement of Students

Application *Role Playing* It has also been proven to encourage active involvement of students in theater learning. When learners are given the opportunity to practice in groups and take turns role-playing, social interaction between them increases. Students learn to understand the characters, situations, and feelings of the characters they play. This is in line with some of the following findings (Jas et al., 2020) George Shafteel developed the role-playing learning model because he believed that this method could help students express their feelings and increase self-awareness. He believes this is achieved through spontaneous involvement and analysis of real-life problem situations or conditions that describe social issues in daily life. And also the findings (Haliza & Nugrahani, 2021), With this method, students can learn to communicate better with others while also overcoming their reluctance or shyness.

Based on the explanation above, the Role Playing learning method is a strategy that puts students in situations where they have to play a character according to the scenario. In theater learning, this method is very effective because it encourages active student engagement. When taking turns role-playing in groups, students learn not only cognitively, but also socially and emotionally. They learn to understand the characters and emotions while improving their ability to interact with friends. In cycle II, especially after the third act, students begin to be able to control their emotions on stage, understand the character's character, and improvise to face unexpected situations in the performance.

### 3.2.3. Comparison of Research Results with Previous Research

This research is in line with research conducted by (Anggraeni et al., 2024) Role-playing is expected to develop various important aspects, such as creativity, memory stages, group cooperation, language skills, self-control, understanding of family relationships, and skills in seeing from the perspective of others. (Karnengsih, 2020) also argues that the learning model *role playing* Make learning more enjoyable for students, encourage active participation, and help improve their learning outcomes. (Andriani, 2013) stated that the role playing learning method has been proven to be effective in improving students' speaking skills when performing in drama performances. This effectiveness is supported by the opportunity for open discussion, freedom to express ideas and imagination, and group interaction based on mutual trust and openness. Through constructive group dynamics, learners not only develop expressive skills, but also build knowledge, attitudes, values, and morals that are relevant to the goals of learning theater arts. In addition, this study also supports the results of the study by (Nurseptiah & Roekmana, 2024) Based on the results of the discussion and assessment, it can be concluded that the Role Playing model is an effective method to improve student learning outcomes. Through group role-playing activities, students not only learn to work better together, but also become more confident to perform in front of the class. These findings

reinforce that Role Playing is the right approach in learning, in particular to develop students' skills and active participation.

From this statement, we can understand that *role playing* is a useful activity to develop various important skills. Through role playing, a person can exercise their creativity by imagining new characters and situations. This activity also helps strengthen memory as players have to remember the storyline and dialogue. In addition, role playing teaches the importance of cooperation, because it is usually done in groups and requires collaboration. Language skills are also improved through conversations and interactions between players. Not only that, role playing helps to understand the concept of social relationships, such as roles in the family and society. This activity also trains self-control, because players must follow the rules and manage emotions while role-playing. Finally, role playing develops the ability to think from the perspective of others, thus enriching the way of thinking and understanding various situations. Fitriani found that students trained with this method are better able to understand character emotions and are more skilled in expressing various types of feelings through movement and dialogue.

#### **3.2.4. Obstacles and Solutions in the Implementation of Actions**

In the implementation of the action, several obstacles were found, such as students who were less focused, still embarrassed when performing, and forgetting dialogue. To overcome this obstacle, small group divisions, intensive independent exercises, and the teacher gives examples or character demonstrations before students practice. This approach is in line with the advice of (Santosa, 2019) in (see Meisner, Longwell, & Pollack, 1987) states that Meisner did not directly teach text-based improvisation as a performance technique. Instead, he emphasized the importance of the improvisational abilities that actors must have when interacting with text. One example is repetition exercises, which are designed to help actors develop spontaneity and naturalness in the play, as highlighted through improvised scenes.

Based on this statement, Sanford Meisner did not directly teach improvisation techniques using texts, but rather emphasized the importance of improvisational qualities that actors must have when dealing with scripts. Actors are trained to remain spontaneous, honest, and natural in their playing. Through repetition practice, they learn to respond naturally, so that when performing the script, expressions and emotions still feel alive and not made up, as if the words appeared spontaneously, not just the result of memorization.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The research entitled "*Application of Role Playing Learning Methods to Improve Students' Theater Skills*" uses the Classroom Action Research (PTK) model from Kemmis & McTaggart with the aim of improving students' ability in role-playing. The research is carried out in two cycles, and each cycle consists of four stages, namely planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. At the planning stage, the researcher prepares a Learning Implementation Plan (RPP), teaching materials, learning media, as well as observation and documentation instruments. The implementation stage includes learning activities using the role playing method, where students are actively involved in role playing. Observations are carried out by researchers and teachers to observe the learning process and student involvement. Meanwhile, reflection is carried out to evaluate learning outcomes and design improvements in the next cycle. In the first cycle, learning activities include an introduction to the basics of theater, a review of previous material, a demonstration of acting techniques, and a joint script reading. In the second and third acts, students practice basic theater techniques and interpret the script while practicing using the Role Playing method by taking turns playing roles. Although the results were not satisfactory and the students' scores were still below the KKM, the researcher continued to Cycle II. In the second cycle, students start with basic theater technique exercises, then continue with blocking or space processing using the script that has been learned. After the implementation of Cycle II, students at SMA Negeri 10 Malang showed a significant increase in their ability to play roles according to the character of the characters. Reflections from the pre-cycle, cycle I, and cycle II show that role-playing learning develops well and receives a positive response, which is reflected in the achievement of learning indicators, namely the ability of students to play roles according to the character of the character.

The application of the Role Playing learning method has proven to be effective in improving students' theater skills. With this approach, they not only learn acting techniques, but also develop

social and emotional skills such as interpersonal communication, self-confidence, and overcoming shyness. Students practice in groups and play a variety of roles, so their understanding of the characters, situations, and emotions is richer. After the learning cycle, especially after the third act, there is significant improvement in emotional control, character understanding, and the ability to improvise on stage. The Role Playing method not only hone theater skills, but also has a positive impact on students' ability to interact personally. Therefore, this method is highly recommended for learning theater arts in schools to support the development of creativity and social skills as a whole.

### ***Data Availability***

The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

### ***Conflicts of Interest***

All authors in this publication declare no conflict of interest regarding the title, data, location, and results of the research.

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### ***Supplementary Materials***

This study does not include any supplementary materials.

### ***Declaration on AI Use***

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript. AI were used only to improve readability and language under strict human oversight; no content, ideas, analyses, or conclusions were generated by AI.

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