

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES**

**INTEGRATING TASK-BASED ROLE-PLAYS INTO
UPSTREAM UPPER INTERMEDIATE TO SUPPORT
SPEAKING SKILLS IN A GYMNASIUM CONTEXT**

MA thesis

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to design and implement task-based role-plays as supplementary materials to the Upstream Upper Intermediate textbook to support the development of students' speaking skills in a Gymnasium context. The study follows a three-cycle Action Research methodology, evaluating the effectiveness of role-plays in improving fluency, confidence, and real-life communication skills. The first section reviews theoretical foundations of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and role-plays as a pedagogical tool. The second section presents the design and implementation of role-plays, data collection methods, and an analysis of findings. The thesis concludes with pedagogical recommendations for integrating task-based role-plays into the curriculum.

Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching, role-play, speaking skills, Action Research, English language teaching.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEFR - Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

L1 - First Language

L2 - Second Language

TBLT - Task-Based Language Teaching

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays English has become the global language of communication, essential for achieving professional and academic goals. For foreign or second language learners developing speaking skills - fluency, accuracy, and confidence - is crucial for real-world communication. Creating conditions that promote effective speaking is, therefore, an essential aspect of language teaching. Teachers are thus expected to select or design methods that support spontaneous, fluent language use in real-life contexts.

Guebba (2021: 10) defines speaking as the ability to transform abstract ideas into meaningful spoken language through the use of sounds and utterances. This ability includes fluency, the ability to speak smoothly without hesitation; accuracy, the correct use of grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary; and engagement, active participation in meaningful communication. According to Canale and Swain (1980: 7), effective speaking requires grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies. They also argue that communication involves not only linguistic accuracy but also the ability to use language appropriately in different social contexts. This thesis focuses on enhancing speaking skills through task-based role-plays, aiming to promote accurate, fluent, and contextually appropriate language use.

The Estonian National Curriculum for Gymnasium (2023) emphasizes collaborative learning and sets B2 level proficiency in English as the expected outcome by the end of Gymnasium, with C1 level as a goal for language-intensive programs. The curriculum places strong emphasis on the development of oral communication skills, expecting students to deliver extended monologues, provide clear and detailed descriptions, and present well-reasoned arguments to support their viewpoints. This focus aligns with the views of Folse (2006: 11), who asserts that success of a conversational class depends on five factors, including the learner,

the curriculum, the topic, the languages, and the task. He observes that between the 1950s and mid-1980s, foreign language instruction focused heavily on grammar, assuming that it would lead to speaking proficiency. However, he argues that while grammar supports the development of speaking abilities, it should not be the sole focus; instead, a balanced approach that includes vocabulary, fluency, and grammatical accuracy is essential. The Estonian National Curriculum reflects this comprehensive approach by highlighting the importance of various aspects of language learning.

According to Statistikaamet (2025), the majority of population in Ida-Virumaa consists of Russian speakers who usually start learning English later than their Estonian peers. This delay is reflected in state examination results. A recent article by Sommer-Kalda (2025) reports that the English language proficiency of students in Ida-Virumaa remains significantly below the national average, affecting the ranking of schools in this region. Kohtla-Järve Gymnasium, where the author of this thesis works, faces similar challenges. To address this shortcoming, the author developed task-based role-plays to supplement the *Upstream Upper Intermediate* textbook, with the aim of encouraging spontaneous, fluent English use, and responding to challenges observed in state examination results and classroom practice.

Task-based role-plays were chosen as a key method to support students in enhancing their speaking skills. Task-Based Language Teaching (hereinafter TBLT) emphasises authentic language use and meaningful tasks, reflecting real-world situations. Ellis (2003: 9-10) states that tasks should focus on meaning and have clear outcomes, making learning relevant and engaging. This aligns with the Estonian National Curriculum, which highlights the importance of effective and confident communication in English. Willis and Willis (2006) further stress the importance of designing tasks that promote interaction and learner engagement.

Role-plays bridge classroom practice with real-world communication, providing a flexible and interactive way for practicing speaking skills. Recognised as a valuable pedagogical tool, role-play creates realistic communicative contexts. Ladousse (1987: 5) defines role-play as an activity enabling learners to use language authentically in a controlled setting. Alkin and Christie (2002) note that role-plays provide a safe environment for self-expression, free from real-world consequences. This adaptability was a key reason for choosing role-plays as supplementary material in this study. In designing task-based speaking activities, this thesis also examines the differences between role-plays and simulations. The decision to prioritise role-plays over simulations in this thesis was driven by their flexibility and proven effectiveness in improving students' speaking skills in a Gymnasium context.

Based on the considerations above, this thesis aims to design and implement task-based role-plays as supplementary materials to the *Upstream Upper Intermediate* textbook, with the goal of supporting the development of students' speaking skills. The study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How do task-based role-plays impact the speaking skills of students?
2. What specific contributions do role-plays make to enhance students' speaking skills?
3. What challenges do students and the teacher face when integrating role-play activities into the classroom settings?

To address these questions the thesis adopts an action research methodology, involving three iterative cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. In each cycle, a set of specially designed role-plays was integrated into classroom practice. Their impact on students' speaking skills was examined through classroom observations, structured feedback discussions, and self-assessment questionnaires to evaluate the effectiveness of the role-plays in promoting speaking skills, to identify their specific contribution, and to reveal any challenges encountered during implementation. Pre- and post-tests were not conducted, as the brief implementation period was unlikely to yield measurable proficiency changes. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data ensures that the findings are both measurable and reflective of students' real experiences. Ultimately, the thesis aims to offer practical recommendations for more effective integration of task-based role-plays into the existing curriculum.

The thesis consists of two main sections. The first section reviews the theoretical background underpinning the study. It discusses the nature of speaking skills and the challenges learners face in achieving fluency and accuracy. The section also explores the principle of Task-Based Language Teaching, the role of interactive speaking tasks in language acquisition, and provides an in-depth analysis of the benefits of role-plays as a pedagogical tool. The second section presents the methodology, focusing on the design and implementation of task-based role-plays. It explains the objectives of the study, the selection of participants, and the alignment of role-plays with the National Curriculum and CEFR standards. The section also describes the three iterative cycles of action research and outlines the data collection methods.

It also presents a detailed analysis of the data collected through the action research cycles. Finally, the section concludes with a reflection on the overall findings of the action research and provides pedagogical recommendations for integrating task-based role-plays into the curriculum. The conclusion addresses the research questions guiding the study.

1 TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING AND ROLE-PLAY IN SPEAKING DEVELOPMENT

1.1 Understanding Speaking Skills in Second Language Acquisition

1.1.1 The Nature of Speaking Skills

Among the four main language skills, speaking is often viewed as the most critical. Bygate (1987) emphasises that the ability to speak the target language is commonly regarded as a key indicator of overall language proficiency. Speaking enables learners to express their thoughts and actively participate in conversation. Nation and Newton (2009: 2) describe speaking as a complex skill integrating pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and fluency. Brown and Lee (2015: 345-350) add that speaking involves interactional abilities such as turn-taking, clarifying misunderstandings, and repairing communication breakdowns - skills essential for meaningful communication.

The nature of speaking varies, according to context and purpose. Thornbury (2005) distinguishes between interactional speaking, which builds relationships, and transactional speaking, which involves exchanging information. From a cognitive perspective speaking is demanding: learners must organise ideas, select appropriate vocabulary, and construct grammatically correct sentences in real time. They must also adjust tone, manner, and language use to suit the situation, whether academic or informal, reflecting the dynamic and context-sensitive nature of speaking. As Lazaraton (200: 103-113) notes, effective speaking requires cultural and pragmatic awareness, including an understanding of politeness and conversational norms in the target language.

1.1.2 Obstacles to Fluency and Accuracy in Speaking

Although speaking is a fundamental language skill, learners often face numerous linguistic and non-linguistic challenges that hinder its development. Understanding these obstacles is essential for designing support strategies.

Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis provides a valuable framework for examining these challenges. While input through reading and listening is crucial, Swain argues that comprehensible output through speaking or writing is equally important for language development. Learners develop fluency and accuracy most effectively when they are pushed to produce language themselves, which helps them notice gaps in their knowledge, such as missing vocabulary or limited grammatical control, that may go unnoticed during input-based activities. Speaking encourages students to identify these gaps, reflect on their language use and adjust it based on the feedback of the interlocutor. However, language production can be difficult, especially due to emotional factors. Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis highlights how anxiety can raise the affective filter, impeding language production. Basic (2011: 4-6) describes speaking anxiety as manifesting through both physical and psychological symptoms, such as sweating, increased heart rate, and self-doubt. This anxiety often discourages learners from participating in speaking tasks and limits their opportunities for improvement. Basic also notes that formal classroom settings tend to intensify speaking anxiety compared to informal conversations.

One of the most immediate obstacles to speaking arises from pronunciation difficulties, such as unfamiliar sounds, stress, and intonation patterns. Harmer (2007: 248-251) notes that differences between a learner's first language (L1) and English often lead to persistent pronunciation errors, which can undermine learners' confidence. Pennington (2021) adds that mastering new sounds requires more than intellectual understanding; it involves retraining the physical coordination of speech muscles, much like learning to play an instrument or a sport.

This analogy explains why pronunciation is difficult to master later in the learning process: it requires repetition, muscle memory, and physical practice, not just cognitive awareness. However, pronunciation often receives limited attention during the early stages of language learning, leading to fossilized errors that are hard to correct over time.

Vocabulary retrieval is another significant hurdle. Ur (1996: 121) states that learners frequently withdraw from speaking tasks when confronted with vocabulary or grammar beyond their ability, leading to a cycle of avoidance and stagnation. Nation and Newton (2009) stress that producing correct sentences in real time requires advanced linguistic integration, making spontaneous speech particularly challenging. Grammar further complicates speaking, as learners must apply rules accurately and spontaneously.

Speaking is also a social act shaped by cultural and pragmatic knowledge. Effective communication requires understanding of conversational norms, politeness, and culturally appropriate behavior in the target language (Lazaraton, 2001). Ur (1996: 120-135) observes that in multilingual classrooms, learners often revert to their mother tongue during discussions, limiting their opportunities to practice the target language.

These obstacles underscore the need for supportive, structured speaking opportunities. TBLT, with its focus on realistic, goal-oriented interaction, offers an effective way to address the aforementioned challenges.

1.2 Introduction to Task-Based Language Teaching

1.2.1 Principles of Task-Based language Teaching

Hausenberg (2006) argues that effective language learning depends on multiple factors, including the use of high-quality learning materials, which teachers must select and use

strategically to address learners' needs. One such approach is TBLT, which prioritises structured, meaningful tasks that promote engagement and skill development.

Unlike traditional methods that focus heavily on rote memorisation, grammar drills and decontextualized language exercises, TBLT prioritizes communication, real-world relevance, and learner interaction. Ellis (2003: 9) differentiates tasks from routine classroom activities by identifying features such as scope, perspective, authenticity, linguistic skills, cognitive processes, and outcomes, arguing that tasks aim for deeper, more meaningful language engagement than simple practice. Expanding on this, Ellis (2009) asserts that tasks should focus on meaning, promote communicative goals, and encourage learners to use their existing language resources. Nunan (2004: 4) similarly defines tasks as activities requiring learners to comprehend or produce language to convey meaning in authentic exchanges. Tasks with clear goals, real-world relevance, and problem-solving, bridge classroom instruction and authentic language use.

While TBLT focuses on communication and interaction, scholars have proposed various models to enhance task design. Ellis et al. (2020) advocate for a learner-centered approach, natural language use and pre-task focus on form to improve accuracy. Skehan (2020), by contrast, favours tasks without explicit focus on form, arguing they promote deeper engagement and creativity. Long (2014) adds that TBLT supports authentic communication, learner focus, and form-focused feedback, while Bygate (2016) highlights learners' autonomy and tasks that promote meaningful, independent interaction. These perspectives reflect the complexity and importance of task design in TBLT.

While TBLT offers numerous pedagogical benefits, several scholars have noted its limitations. Seedhouse (1999: 153) points out that the structured nature of classroom tasks may not reflect the unpredictability and complexity of real-life communication, potentially limiting learners' ability to transfer classroom language use to authentic contexts. Bruton (2005: 60)

warns that TBLT's emphasis on fluency and meaning might sideline grammatical accuracy, particularly disadvantaging less proficient learners who require more structured input. Littlewood (2004) adds that practical challenges, such as rigid curricula and standardised assessment, can hinder the adoption of task-based approaches in traditional educational settings. These critiques underscore the importance of adapting TBLT to specific educational contexts, ensuring balance between communicative practice and attention to linguistic form.

1.2.2 Approaches to designing TBLT activities

Designing effective TBLT activities requires aligning with pedagogical principles, the National Curriculum, and learners' needs. Tasks must be challenging enough to engage students and support their language development. As Willis and Willis (2007) point out, tasks encourage learners to use the target language in a meaningful way to achieve specific goals, with a focus on authentic, real-world communication. Ideally, such activities reflect situations students may encounter outside the classroom. Van den Branden (2006) notes that while teachers may avoid more complex tasks, in favour of controlled activities, overly simple tasks can demotivate learners, and overly difficult tasks may cause frustration. Thus, both cognitive and emotional aspects influence task difficulty. A well-designed task aligns with language acquisition goals, fosters meaningful interaction, and encourages learner autonomy.

Willis and Willis (2007) identify three main phases in the task implementation process: the pre-task, task, and post-task phases. In the pre-task phase, the teacher introduces the topic, explains its relevance, and provides clear instructions. Useful language may be presented to build confidence. For instance, before a restaurant role-play, the teacher might show a menu and discuss favourite dishes to activate prior knowledge. The task-phase is the core of the framework, where students engage in the main activity, usually in pairs or small groups. As Nunan (2004) notes, this phase focuses on conveying meaning and achieving a specific

outcome through practical language use. The teacher monitors and supports students as needed. The post-task phase is for reflection and reinforcement. Students review the language used (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, or expressions) and may complete follow-up tasks to consolidate learning. Willis and Willis (2007) suggest these extensions deepen understanding and improve retention.

This structured sequence supports learners throughout the task cycle, promoting interactive, meaningful language use. Instead of memorizing the rules, learners engage in real communication, gradually improving fluency and accuracy. Teachers can use this approach to create engaging, effective lessons tailored to learners' needs.

1.3 Interactive speaking tasks for communication

Interactive speaking tasks offer learners opportunities for meaningful communication within realistic contexts, building fluency, confidence, and skills such as turn-taking, clarification, and collaboration. According to the CEFR (2020), interactive speaking tasks focus on spontaneous exchanges of information, opinions, and ideas. At the B1 level, learners should be able to “take part in routine conversations on familiar topics”, progressing to “interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity” at the B2 level.

Empirical studies underscore the efficacy of interactive speaking tasks in improving learners' communication abilities. Van Batenburg et al. (2016) found that such tasks improve L2 learners' ability to negotiate meaning, clarify misunderstandings, and manage conversational flow, improving learners' accuracy and their ability to navigate conversations strategically. Similarly, Liubashenko and Kornieva (2019) showed that collaborative, profession-focused dialogic activities significantly improved learners' communication skills. Their findings suggest that interactive tasks foster creativity, problem-solving, and more

complex, purposeful language use, as learners are encouraged to express nuanced ideas, justify opinions, and respond appropriately in varied contexts.

1.4 Role-Play as a Pedagogical Tool

1.4.1 Distinction between Role-Play and Simulation

Role-play is a widely used and effective method in language teaching, offering learners the chance to practice language in realistic scenarios. Livingstone (1983: 6) describes role-play as a speaking activity in which learners imagine themselves in different roles or situations, using language purposefully in simulated social contexts. Brown (2001:267-269) sees role-play as assigning roles and goals within a group to achieve a shared objective. Stern (1983) highlights the value of experiential activities, such as role-plays, for promoting learner adaptability, building confidence, and meaningful language practice in different situations.

Simulation, while similar, is more structured and immersive. Jones (1982: 4-6) defines simulations as activities that create a functional reality within a structured environment. They involve three key elements: reality of function, where participants fully adopt their roles and behave as if in a real scenario; a simulated environment, where the classroom is arranged to resemble a real-life setting using props or arrangements; and structure, as simulations follow defined rules and provide the necessary information to maintain their purpose and flow. Bambrough (1994: 14-15) highlights the communicative aspect of simulations, noting that simulations prompt spontaneous language use beyond scripted dialogues. Table 1 provides a detailed comparison of role-play and simulation based on their complexity, duration, preparation, realism, and objectives.

Table 1. Differences between role-play and simulation (Bambrough, 1994; Brown, 2001; Jones, 1982)

Feature	Role-play	Simulation
Complexity	simple, adaptable	complex, multi-layered
Duration	completed within a single class session	requires multiple sessions
Preparation	minimal, predefined roles	extensive, detailed setup
Realism	semi-realistic	highly realistic
Objectives	specific language skills, creativity	broader competencies
Learner roles	predefined, flexible	complex, evolving
Teacher roles	facilitator, minimal intervention	designer, observer
Examples	ordering food, job interview	organizing an international conference, conducting a moot court

Role-play is flexible, accessible, and well-suited to diverse learners and practical language use. Its adaptability makes it particularly effective in mixed-level classrooms (Brown, 2001). In contrast, simulations, while valuable in advanced contexts, often demand resources and preparation that may be impractical in many educational settings.

1.4.2 Benefits and drawbacks of role-play in speaking development

Integrating role-play into L2 classrooms offers numerous pedagogical benefits. According to Ladousse (1987), role-play enhances speaking skills, builds social competence, introduces new language expressions, and prepares students for real-life. Role-play also boosts student participation, fluency, classroom interaction, and motivation. Long (2014) adds that role-play can serve as a proficiency assessment tool, as there is a high demand for task-based assessments to evaluate communicative abilities. Role-play can function as an entrance or exit test. Additionally, role-play can target specific grammar structures in contextualised scenarios. Bencic and Rosenkvist (2020) found that 45% of initially hesitant students reported feeling more confident speaking after participating in role-play. Similarly, Piir (2016) demonstrated that combining role-play with debates on environmental issues, successfully engaged students and allowed them to explore environmental topics in depth. However, it did not significantly change students' opinions about the topic itself, indicating that role-play primarily enhances

critical thinking and discussion skills rather than altering pre-existing beliefs. Piir (2016) states that both teachers and students rated the method and materials as effective and engaging.

Despite the many pedagogical benefits of role-play, several scholars highlight important limitations that teachers should consider. A common concern is the potential loss of classroom control, especially when students deviate from the task or become overly playful (Van Ments, 1999). This can create a chaotic environment and undermine the learning process. Van Ments (1999) also notes that role-play demands significant preparation and classroom management, which may burden teachers with scenario design, material development, and logistical coordination. Another key issue involves the alignment between role-play tasks and learners' actual needs. Al-Arishi (1994) warns that poorly constructed role-play may result in "surreal-play" instead of meaningful, communicative practice, especially when activities lack relevance or realism. Berdiyeva (2023) further points out that shy or anxious students may feel uncomfortable participating, limiting their engagement and potential progress. She also emphasises that while role-play promotes fluency and spontaneity, it may prioritise communication over accuracy, potentially reinforcing grammatical errors if not properly monitored.

Role-play is a valuable tool in L2 classrooms, promoting motivation, engagement, and confidence. While it requires careful planning and may not suit all learners, its benefits outweigh the challenges when well implemented.

1.5 Action Research for Material Implementation

Action research, as defined by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), is a self-reflective inquiry conducted by educators to enhance their understanding of their own teaching practices and improve the student learning outcomes. Reason and Bradbury (2001) describe action research integrating theory and practice, fostering the dynamic interplay between the two. Educators and

students co-construct knowledge, leading to more contextually relevant learning experiences. This participatory nature of action research ensures that the research is grounded in classroom realities, making the findings directly applicable to teaching practices.

Efrat and Ravid (2013) outline a six-step model for conducting Action Research, as depicted in Figure 1:

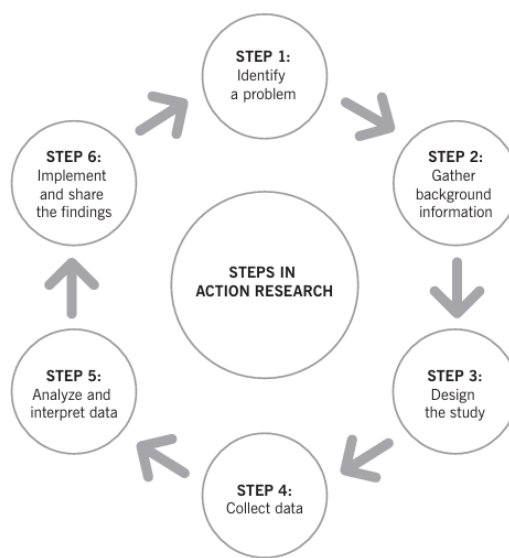


Figure 1. The six cyclical steps of action research (Efrat, E., Ravid, R. (2019).

Step 1 involves recognising a specific issue or challenge within the educational context that requires research. The problem should be relevant, observable, and meaningful for improving practice. In Step 2, the researcher explores existing literature, theories, and best practices to ensure the study builds on previous knowledge and addresses the problem effectively. Step 3 includes developing a clear research plan, selecting appropriate methods, and creating or adapting assessment tools that align with the research goals. The aim of Step 4 is to collect sufficient, relevant, and reliable information to answer research questions. In Step 5 the collected data are systematically examined to identify patterns, key findings, and possible changes. This analysis guides reflection and informs potential improvements to teaching or

learning practices. The final step involves documenting the process and results, sharing insights with colleagues, and applying changes based on the research findings.

Efrat and Ravid (2013) highlight key advantages of action research over traditional research. The first is its responsiveness to local problems, which is particularly relevant in the context of Ida-Virumaa. Given the unique linguistic and educational challenges of the region, implementing a research method that directly addresses students' specific needs ensures relevant and actionable findings. Action research also empowers teachers to take an active role in their professional development. By systematically studying their own classrooms, educators gain a deeper insight into students' needs and the effectiveness of instructional methods.

This aligns with the objectives of the present study, which seeks to integrate role-plays as supplementary materials to the *Upstream Upper Intermediate* textbook to achieve the specific goal of enhancing students' speaking skills.

This chapter provided the theoretical foundation for the study by exploring the nature of speaking skills, challenges in fluency and accuracy, and the core principles of TBLT. It established role-play as a practical tool for enhancing speaking and introduced action research as a suitable method for implementing and evaluating such tasks. These insights serve as the groundwork for the empirical part of the thesis.

2 IMPLEMENTING ROLE-PLAYS THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH

2.1 Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this project is to develop and implement supplementary task-based role-play materials aligned with the *Upstream Upper Intermediate* textbook, to enhance speaking skills in a gymnasium context. The study was conducted at Kohtla-Järve Gymnasium, where such activities had not been implemented. The role-plays immerse students in structured, realistic scenarios that promote English use across various contexts, thereby building confidence and fluency. These activities are designed to meet CEFR standards and align with the National Curriculum, focusing on real-life situations pertinent to students' future academic and professional needs. To evaluate the effectiveness of the materials, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do task-based role-play materials impact the speaking skills of students at Kohtla-Järve Gymnasium?
2. What specific contributions do role-plays make to the enhancement of students' speaking skills?
3. What challenges do students and the teacher face when integrating role-play activities into the classroom settings?

TBLT was chosen as the framework for developing role-play materials due to its emphasis on meaningful communication and authentic language use.

2.1.1 Participants

According to Kohtla-Järve Gymnasium Curriculum (2023), students are grouped by English proficiency, determined by placement tests administered at the beginning of the academic year. Grouping in this way ensures that students receive instruction according to their language skills, especially in language-related subjects.

This study involved 20 eleventh-grade students from a B1-B2 level English group, representing intermediate proficiency. The author, an English teacher at Kohtla-Järve Gymnasium, has been teaching this group for nearly two years. The participants were selected due to their need to improve speaking skills, identified by the author and confirmed by students' feedback, which expressed concerns about the lack of speaking practice during language lessons.

Since task-based role-plays are specifically designed to enhance fluency, confidence, and interaction, this group was selected to evaluate the role-plays' effectiveness as supplementary materials to accompany the *Upstream Upper Intermediate* textbook, which is used at the school.

2.2 Designing Role-Plays

Aligned with TBLT principles, CEFR descriptors, and the Estonian National Curriculum, eight role-play activities were created to supplement the *Upstream Upper Intermediate* textbook (see Appendix 1).

These were integrated at the end of each subtopic in two modules - *Making a living* and *Make Yourself at Home* - to reinforce and contextualise the language covered in the textbook. The *Making a Living* module addresses topics related to careers, workplace interactions, job-seeking, and financial matters. *Make yourself at home* focuses on housing, daily life, and social interactions, including renting an apartment, sharing household responsibilities, and

resolving conflicts with roommates. Each role-play aligns with the principles of TBLT, as all are centered around a specific, real-world and task that students must complete by the end of each role-play.

Following the TBLT framework by Willis and Willis (2007), each role-play has three phases. In the pre-task phase, students activate their prior knowledge while the teacher introduces the topic and provides clear instructions. The task phase involves students actively participating in structured communication and applying their skills in an interactive setting. They collaborate and negotiate within their assigned roles. The post-task phase supports reflection.

The role-plays were implemented through iterative action research cycles: the first and the second cycles included three role-plays each, and the final cycle comprises two role-plays. Within each cycle, all role-plays followed the same structure to ensure consistency. Student feedback, self-assessment results, and teacher observations informed revisions in subsequent cycles, ensuring continuous responsiveness to students' communicative needs.

Tables 2, 3, and 4 provide an overview of the role-plays in each cycle, including titles, roles, task descriptions, expected outcomes, and alignment with CEFR B2 descriptors and the National Curriculum.

2.3 Action Research Procedure

2.3.1 Implementation of the Role-Plays

The role-plays were implemented over eight weeks, from January to March. This period was in alignment with the curriculum, allowing both modules from the textbook to be covered systematically. Each cycle included the stages of planning, acting, and observation, with adjustments based on feedback and outcomes from earlier cycles. In each session, students worked in pairs and performed their role-play simultaneously while the teacher rotated between

the groups to observe. Afterward, selected pairs presented their role-plays to the class. Due to time constraints, not all pairs could perform publicly in each session, but different students were chosen across sessions to ensure that everyone had a chance.

Cycle 1: role-plays 1-3

Planning: The first cycle aligned with the *Making a Living* module in the *Upstream Upper Intermediate* textbook. Its objective was to help students feel more confident participating in professional interactions. The teacher prepared role cards with characters and real-world scenarios. Each role-play ended with a final written component, such as a job application or reflection form, reinforcing learning outcomes. This structure was intended to reduce anxiety and encourage participation.

Table 2. Cycle 1 Role-Plays

Role-play	Student roles	Task	Written response	CEFR/National curriculum
Applying for a summer job	job applicant and employer	discuss job responsibilities and qualifications	application form and feedback sheet	participation in interviews, justifying responses
Job shadowing experience	teenager and professional	interview and report on a job shadowing experience	school worksheet and evaluation form	following explanations, asking clarifying questions
Handling a work-related dispute	employee and manager	request and respond to feedback after a promotion denial	feedback reflection and manager report	expressing viewpoints, discussing feedback

Acting and Observation: The first cycle spanned three weeks, with one role-play per week conducted during the final 40 minutes of an 80-minute lesson. Sessions included preparation, role-play, and feedback. The students began with a lead-in discussion to activate prior knowledge, followed by role cards and instructions outlining objectives. A key challenge was the large number of printed materials required, which proved time-consuming and unsustainable. The students worked in self-selected pairs and engaged in structured dialogues.

Each session ended with a brief written response for students to summarise the interaction. Each pair switched roles and repeated the activity. The teacher monitored participation, vocabulary use, task comprehension, and student confidence. Time management proved challenging, as some students needed more time to process and respond, leading to rushed dialogues. Most students were eager to participate, although some relied on basic vocabulary and often hesitated when elaborating or asking follow-up questions. The role cards helped reduce anxiety by providing structure, but a few students found the cards limited their creativity. Occasional confusion about instructions suggesting a need for simplification. Despite these challenges, the students participated enthusiastically, and many commented that they had never done such practical role-plays related to workplace interactions even in other subjects. Although vocabulary use was somewhat repetitive, a few students successfully applied new terms introduced in the textbook module.

Cycle 2: role-plays 4-6.

Planning: This cycle began with a revised role-play on working conditions, informed by feedback from Cycle 1. Once adjustments were tested in a familiar context, the focus shifted to housing, aligned with the *Make yourself at Home* textbook module. Key adjustments included removing pre-made role cards and encouraging students to create their own characters to increase engagement and authenticity. Written outcomes required more detailed reflections, and role-plays 4 and 5 were extended to fill an entire 80-minute lesson. Instructions for the role-plays were simplified and broken into clearer steps to reduce student confusion. Role-play 6 introduced negotiation and problem-solving, responding to student feedback requesting more realistic and complex interactions. Role-plays 4 and 5 were integrated as post-reading activities, aimed to reinforce the vocabulary and context, ensuring a smoother transition between textbook activities and the role-play tasks.

Table 3. Cycle 2 Role-Plays

Role-play	Student roles	Task	Written response	CEFR/National curriculum
Interviewing a person with a unique profession	journalist and professional	conduct interview and write a profile	blog post and personal profile	fluency, providing detailed responses
Tour of a futuristic home	tour guide and visitor	describe and ask about home features	feedback form and leaflet	describing places, fluency
Renting a house/flat-negotiating terms	landlord and tenant	negotiate terms and finalize agreement	rental agreement form	negotiating and justifying choices

Acting and Observation: Role-plays 4 and 5 took longer due to the expanded written outcomes. Despite this, students participated actively and enjoyed creating their own role cards. With support from textbook texts, the students were able to use a wider range of vocabulary. The teacher assigned pairs randomly, encouraging the students to work beyond their comfort zones. Most pairs were eager to present their role-plays to the whole class to receive feedback from both the teacher and their classmates, demonstrating strong engagement and a positive attitude towards the activities. One challenge was the demand to produce two written outcomes within a single lesson. Some students found this demanding, which affected the quality of their written output and indicated that the nature of a tangible outcome might need revision. As a result, the final role-play's written outcome was restructured into a collaborative format.

Cycle 3: role-plays 7 and 8.

Planning: Informed by earlier feedback and observations, the final cycle aimed to simplify activities while maintaining relevance and engagement. It consisted of two role-plays, focused on the module *Make Yourself at Home*. The structure returned to a one-lesson (40-minute) format for each role-play to improve time management and reduce cognitive overload. Written outcomes were kept collaborative to ease pressure, promote teamwork, and negotiation skills. To support character creation, the students filled out detailed role cards *for* their classmates,

adding an element of surprise. Clear and straightforward instructions with a focus on pre-task activities, helped students activate relevant vocabulary and be more prepared for the tasks.

Table 4. Cycle 3 Role-Plays

Role-play	Student roles	Task	Written response	CEFR/National curriculum
creating a shopping list; buying household items	two roommates	negotiate purchases for shared living space	collaborative shopping list	spontaneous discussion, justifying decisions
resolving a conflict with a roommate	two roommates	resolve a roommate conflict	agreement form	resolving disputes, expressing viewpoints

Acting and Observation:

The final two-week cycle was more time efficient. The collaborative written outcomes proved effective. The students were especially engaged in designing roles for each other, adding spontaneity and excitement. The realistic topics encouraged personal investment, especially for those considering studies abroad. The clearer task structure and increased improvisation, led to more fluent and confident student conversations. However, some pairs struggled with balanced participation; in certain cases, one student dominated. While the majority of the students were active, a few needed extra support to contribute equally. The students' written outcomes were better organised and more detailed than in previous cycles, suggesting that the simplified, collaborative structure helped the students focus on meaningful communication without being overwhelmed by written individual tasks.

To summarise the progression across the three cycles, the main challenges, revisions, and resulting insights are presented in Table 5. This table illustrates how each cycle informed the next, with continuous refinement based on classroom realities.

Table 5. Challenges, revisions, and key insights across cycles

	Challenges	Revisions	Key insights
Cycle 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - excessive printed material - confusion about instructions - time management issues - students relied on basic vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reduced printed material - simplified instructions - randomly selected pairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - high engagement despite challenges
Cycle 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - extended written responses took longer - producing two written responses in one lesson was challenging - dominance in pairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - re-structured written responses into a collaborative format - removed pre-made role cards - students create their own characters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increased student engagement through character creation - shift to collaborative tasks improved written responses
Cycle 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - difficulties with balancing participation in pairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - focus on role card creation - step-by-step instructions - lead-in discussion (vocabulary practice) - cognitive overload reduced by time-efficient structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the clearer task structure, pre-phase, and collaboration improved fluency and confidence - simplified tasks eased cognitive load and enhanced participation

As shown in Table 5, the cycles reflect an ongoing process of responsive teaching. Each challenge identified during implementation led to practical revisions, such as adjusting task structure, simplifying instructions, and promoting collaboration. These changes resulted in higher student engagement, more fluent speech, and more confident task performance. The next subsection explains how data were collected to assess these developments systematically.

2.3.2 Data Collection Instruments

To address the research questions and assess the effectiveness of the role-play implementation, a combination of data collection methods was used: classroom observation, feedback discussion, and self-assessment questionnaires. This mix of quantitative and

qualitative tools allowed for a comprehensive understanding of students' participation, performance, and perceptions.

The primary method was systematic classroom observation, conducted by the author. During each role-play session, the author observed students' participation, language use, fluency, confidence, and interaction. Although no formal matrix or observation grid was used, the author worked with a set of five guiding questions and took focused notes to minimise disruption and maintain natural student behaviour. These questions included:

1. Are all the students actively participating in the role-play, or do some remain hesitant to speak?
2. Do students effectively use target vocabulary from the textbook?
3. How confident did the students appear when expressing their opinion or responding to questions during the role-play?
4. Are students able to negotiate, make suggestions, reach compromises effectively during the role-play?
5. Do students reflect thoughtfully during the feedback discussion?

These questions supported structured, real-time observations of both linguistic performance and interaction behaviour. Over time, patterns such as increased participation and improved turn-taking became visible, even before formal analysis.

At the end of each role-play session, a feedback discussion was conducted using a post-it note method to encourage honest and reflective input from the students. Five reflective questions were written on the board, focusing on skills practiced, perceived difficulty, vocabulary used, and overall experience with the role-play. The students responded on coloured post-it notes and placed them under the relevant question headings (Appendix 2). The author then grouped similar responses to identify emerging themes, providing immediate insights into students' experiences and helping adjust upcoming role-plays.

At the end of each cycle students completed a self-assessment questionnaire with nine questions (Appendix 3). Six close-ended multiple-choice questions measured perceptions of progress, confidence, vocabulary use, and the relevance of role-plays to real-life situations. The remaining three open-ended questions allowed students to share suggestions for improvement, reflect on their experience, and express whether they found role-plays valuable as supplementary material to the textbook. These responses offered rich qualitative insights and informed decisions about adapting role-play content and structure in subsequent cycles.

The combination of these three methods ensured data triangulation, enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings. Observation provided a direct view of classroom interaction, feedback discussions captured immediate reflections, and self-assessment questionnaires helped identify evolving student attitudes and needs.

2.3.3 Analysis of Findings

Classroom observation

The first method of data collection was classroom observation, conducted during each role-play session to gather real-time information about participation, language use, fluency, confidence, and the overall interaction of the students. All eight role-plays were observed, with 18 to 20 students participating in each session.

Classroom observation helped understand students' reactions to the role-plays and revealed patterns that either supported or blocked speaking development. Early sessions showed hesitation and reliance on basic vocabulary. Several students were confused by lengthy instructions and an overload of printed material. It became clear that task design had a strong effect on students' confidence and participation. Over time, the students became more comfortable with the format. They needed fewer reminders and began using new vocabulary more naturally. This suggests that regular practice and a clear structure helped them feel more

in control. As Willis and Willis (2007) explain, well-prepared tasks with clear steps allow learners to focus on communication, not just language rules.

Some pairs struggled with turn-taking. Often, one student dominated while the other stayed quiet. Brown and Lee (2015) note that learning to take turns and respond properly is an important part of speaking development. This challenge was common at first, but more balanced interaction appeared later, especially when students worked with new partners and had clear goals. This shows that interaction skills also need support and that careful task planning can help all students take part evenly.

Another issue was time pressure. Some students felt stressed when they had to finish both the role-play and the written task. After the structure was adjusted and the instructions were simplified, student engagement improved. This shows how important it is to keep the workload realistic so students could concentrate on speaking.

Feedback Discussion.

The second method of data collection involved feedback discussions, conducted at the end of each role-play session. These aimed to capture students' immediate reactions, perceptions, and reflection on their performance. Using a post-it note method, the author collected a total of 125 responses by the end of the final cycle. The notes were grouped by theme, and the findings are summarised in Table 6, which provides a comparative overview of students' feedback on the role-play sessions across the three cycles. This enables an analysis of how students' perception and experiences evolved over time.

Table 6. Comparative feedback on role-play sessions across the cycles.

Question	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
1. What skill do you think you practised the most today?	Analysing answers, making decisions, speaking, asking questions, being polite, formal style	Asking, answering, imagination, thinking on the spot, improvising	Using polite phrases, explaining ideas, negotiating, expressing emotions
2. What was the most challenging part of the role-play?	Polite asking, not enough vocabulary, hard instructions, pronunciation	Writing texts, making up facts, using imagination, pronunciation	Speaking without L1, improvising, using arguments, creating character card
3. What was the easiest part of the role-play?	Making up stories, role playing, greeting, asking, having role cards	Improvising, asking questions, introducing as a character	Creating character, negotiating, conversation flowed naturally
4. Did you use any new vocabulary during speaking?	Yes: 10, No: 9	Yes: 10, No: 6	Yes: 12, No: 7
5. How did you feel about speaking today?	Confident but not enough words, unsure, relaxed, happy, difficult to speak	Confident, comfortable, unsure at first but gained confidence	Very comfortable, confident, relaxed, engaged, clearer instructions

The summarised feedback reveals a clear developmental growth in students' skills, confidence, and attitudes towards speaking. As the cycles advanced, student responses moved from focusing on basic speaking actions to recognising more complex communication skills such as negotiation, improvisation, and emotional expression. This indicates growing communicative maturity and reflects TBLT's goal of helping learners move from controlled to authentic language use.

The challenges students reported also evolved. In Cycle 1, task complexity and limited vocabulary were the main issues. However, by Cycle 3, the students mentioned more internal, cognitive challenges such as building arguments or staying in character - a sign of deeper engagement and increased communicative risk-taking.

What students identified as easiest further confirmed speaking development. At first, they found safety in structure, later the students found ease in creating characters, negotiating naturally, and letting conversation flow. This change shows a growing ability to manage real-life communication.

While the number of students who reported using new vocabulary increased only slightly, this steady gain suggests that exposure and repetition allowed students to apply new language. Although the numbers may seem small, they represent meaningful steps toward lexical fluency.

The emotional feedback is the clearest marker of progress. Early uncertainty and hesitation changed into increased comfort, confidence, and engagement. The students described themselves as more relaxed and even enthusiastic about speaking. This growth in affective factors is crucial, particularly in a context like Ida-Virumaa, where many students struggle with low confidence and high anxiety when speaking English. The fact that more students described speaking as *comfortable* by the final cycle points to a significant lowering of the affective filter, which is another central aim of TBLT.

Self-Assessment Questionnaire

The third data collection method was the Self-Assessment Questionnaire administered after each cycle to gather students' reflection on their progress, challenges, and the effectiveness of the role-plays. The questionnaire was completed by 18 students after Cycle 1, 19 after Cycle 2, and 16 after Cycle 3.

The first question assessed students' confidence in speaking, a key affective factor influencing participation and fluency. As shown in Figure 2, students' confidence increased significantly across three cycles.

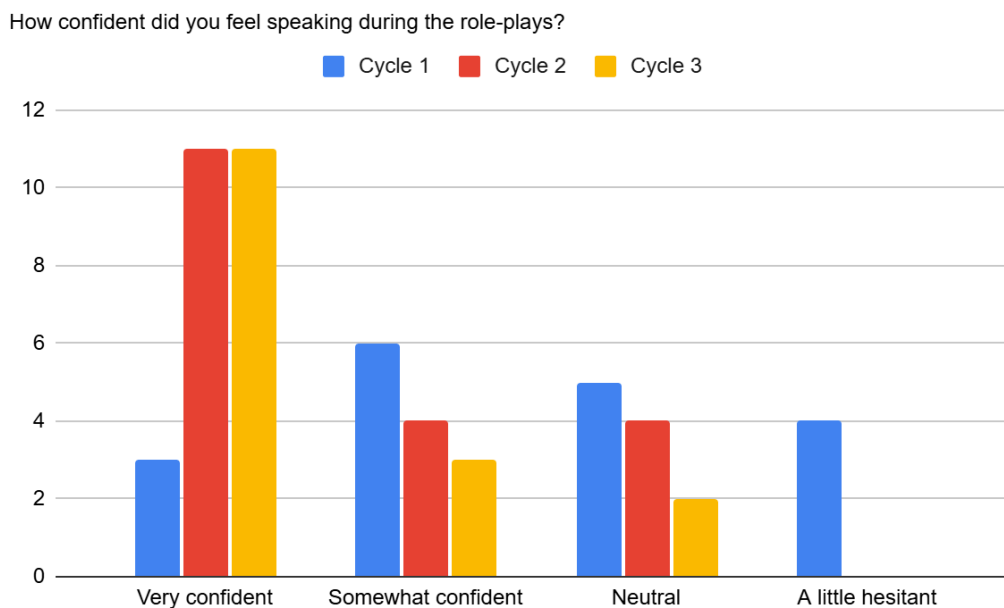


Figure 2. Students' confidence in speaking across the three cycles

In Cycle 1, several students expressed hesitation, but by Cycle 2, this hesitation had disappeared as most participants described themselves as confident or very confident. This trend continued in Cycle 3, suggesting that the task design and adjustments contributed to lowering anxiety and boosting confidence, which is an outcome aligned with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis.

The second question asked which aspects of speaking students perceived had improved through the role-plays (see Table 7). In early cycles, basic skills such as asking questions and turn-taking were most commonly selected. By Cycle 3, students increasingly pointed to skills such as negotiating and persuading, reflecting students' growing communicative competence. Reported use of new vocabulary was modest at first but rose somewhat in the final cycle, possibly due to more structured pre-task support.

Table 7. Students' perception of improved speaking skills across cycles

Speaking skill	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Asking questions	8	6	3
Giving explanations	4	3	4
Using new vocabulary	3	0	4
Turn-taking	6	8	1
Building fluency	2	2	3
Negotiating and persuading	0	0	4

Questions 3–5 used a 5-point Likert scale to assess students' perceptions of asking for clarification, turn-taking, and vocabulary use (Table 8, Appendix 4).

Perceptions of clarification declined slightly across the cycles. In Cycle 1, clarification took a predictable form – asking simple follow-up questions or repeating phrases, which seemed manageable for students in the familiar classroom setting. By Cycle 2, the number of neutral answers increased, possibly reflecting the growing complexity of role-plays or greater metacognitive awareness of communicative challenges. A few students rated their ability as less effective, which could suggest moments of breakdown or hesitation during spontaneous speaking.

Turn-taking improved by Cycle 2 but dipped in Cycle 3, likely due to the increased improvisational demands.

Vocabulary use showed steady improvement, with students in Cycle 3 reporting greater success in applying new language – likely a result of refined scaffolding and task design.

Students' views on the usefulness of role-plays for real-life preparation remained consistently positive (Figure 3). By Cycle 3, no students rated the role-plays as *not very useful* or *not useful at all*, confirming that the tasks successfully supported speaking skills development.

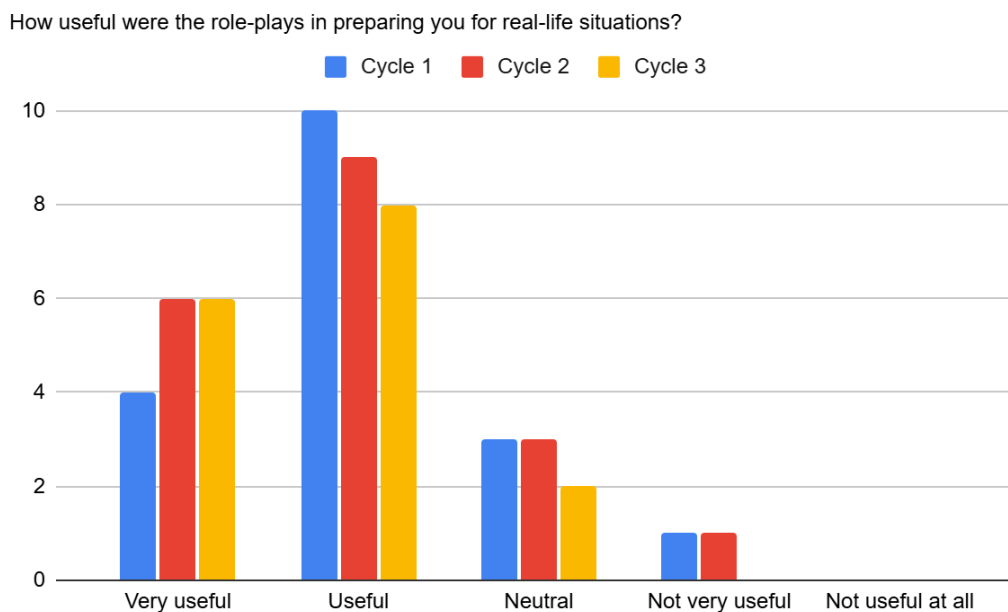


Figure 3. Usefulness of role-plays in preparing for real-life situations

Open-ended questions (Questions 7-9) asked about the main challenges the students encountered, whether they would recommend using role-plays as supplementary materials, and what improvements they would suggest (Appendices 5-7).

Reported challenges evolved from linguistic and structural concerns – such as difficulty understanding instructions, recalling vocabulary, and adapting to assigned roles – in Cycle 1 to more nuanced issues in Cycle 3, including managing interaction and sustaining fluency (Appendix 5). These initial challenges reflect students' early need for clarity, structure, and language support, while later issues suggest a maturing of their speaking skills.

Question 8 explored students' willingness to recommend role-plays as supplementary materials to the textbook. The responses were consistently positive across all three cycles (Appendix 6). Many early comments highlighted the practical benefit of role-plays for real-life situations, especially those involving formal communication, such as job interviews or university admissions. Later, students emphasised creative, interactive, and motivational aspects of the tasks.

By Cycle 3, students described role-plays as meaningful learning experiences, highlighting their value in practicing problem-solving and realistic conversations. Some also contrasted the role-plays with other textbook exercises, describing the role-plays as more dynamic and refreshing.

Question 9 collected suggestions for improving role-plays after each cycle (Appendix 7). In Cycle 1, students requested more preparation time, clearer instructions, and vocabulary support, and expressed interest in creating their own characters and doing more frequent role-plays, suggesting early engagement and curiosity. In Cycle 2, feedback became more targeted, with learners requesting clearer task objectives, pre-task discussions, and fewer written responses to reduce cognitive load. In Cycle 3, students recommended fine-tuning rather than major changes.

These trends reflect students' growing engagement and critical reflection on the learning process. Many of students' ideas were implemented between cycles, demonstrating how action research framework enabled responsive, learner-centered instruction.

2.3.4 Discussion

The process of implementing role-plays provided a structured framework for evaluating their effectiveness in supporting students' speaking development. The findings show that while the students initially faced difficulties – particularly with instructions, vocabulary, or written components – their speaking skills improved over time.

Bygate (1987: 5-6) identifies two aspects of speaking: motor-perceptive skills, such as pronunciation and grammar, and interactional skills, which are essential for maintaining communication. Both were evident in the students' performance. Initially, hesitations related to pronunciation and complex structures were common, as reflected by a student's comment in Cycle 2:

I was trying to pronounce the words correctly, but it was hard. I asked the teacher for help. (Appendix 5: Student 6, question 7)

However, by Cycle 3, students increasingly managed longer and more meaningful interactions. The challenges were addressed through active participation in the pre-task phase, where students had opportunities to rehearse the vocabulary and clarify expectations. In Cycle 3 the same student reported:

It was difficult sometimes to communicate with my partner. But a long discussion with explaining ideas helped us. (Appendix 5: Student 6, question 7)

This development illustrates how the structured role-plays supported students in progressing from mechanical aspects of speaking toward more nuanced interpersonal communication. Students' ability to self-regulate demonstrates deeper engagement and the active problem-solving nature fostered by role-plays.

Thornbury (2005: 8) supports the view of Bygate and emphasises that speaking is a natural, everyday activity, most commonly occurring through dialogues that require real-life interaction. This was particularly evident in Cycle 3, where many students described the conversations as *natural*, and reported feeling *relaxed* and *confident* while speaking. Widdowson (1983: 59) similarly defines speaking as both a linguistic act and a way of realizing communication. This duality was echoed in students' feedback during Cycle 3, where several participants noted that role-plays *helped them prepare for real life and improve speaking in situations we may face later* (Appendix 7, question 9). These reflections validate the design of role-plays as effective tools for authentic language practice.

In line with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, a significant reduction in students' speaking anxiety was observed across cycles. Early feedback reflected hesitation and uncertainty, often linked to complex instructions:

I did not like the instructions. They are too hard for me. (Appendix 5: Student 11, question 7)

These emotional barriers initially hindered fluency and engagement. However, iterative adjustments led to a more supportive environment. By the final cycle, students frequently reported feeling *very comfortable, confident, relaxed* (Table 6, question 5), highlighting how lowered anxiety encourages spontaneous language use and participation. Therefore, role-play functions not only as a linguistic practice but also as a tool that creates conditions for confident language use.

Swain's Output Hypothesis (1985) is also reflected in the findings, particularly in Cycle 2 and Cycle 3, where the students were frequently "pushed" beyond passive language use, engaging in extended exchanges that required them to retrieve vocabulary, apply grammatical structures, and adjust their speech in response to their partners. These demands revealed areas where students need to grow. For example, one student wrote in Cycle 2, commenting the challenges and highlighting the effort to apply unfamiliar language:

To use new vocabulary. I tried. (Appendix 5: Student 13, question 7)

Another student, when reflecting on Cycle 3, noted:

Making sentences on the go...I solved it by thinking very fast. (Appendix 5: Student 2, question 7)

Thus, role-plays served not just as speaking activities but as opportunities for learners to notice linguistic gaps, refine their output, and develop greater fluency and accuracy.

The role-plays were grounded in TBLT principles (Ellis 2003, 2009; Nunan 2004), emphasising authentic, meaning-focused, goal-oriented communication. Each role-play had a realistic objective, whether completing a job interview or negotiating a rental agreement. The task structure, following pre-task, task, and post-task phases, suggested by Willis and Willis (2007), guided learners through preparation, performance, and reflection. For instance, the

lead-in discussions in Cycle 3 helped activate prior knowledge and relevant vocabulary, enabling students to participate more confidently and fluently. One student in Cycle 3 noted:

Speaking fluently with my partner seemed very challenging to me, but by concentrating I felt that I overcame this challenge (Appendix 5: Student 8, question 7)

Such examples illustrate that careful task sequencing contributed to steady language development, supporting Ellis's (2009) view on the role of task design.

The findings from the Self-Assessment Questionnaire also aligned with previous research. Van Batenburg et al. (2016) found that scripted yet open-ended interactive tasks help learners develop turn-taking, clarification, and negotiation strategies – the skills were strengthened throughout the present study. Similarly, Liubashenko and Kornieva (2019) observed that collaborative tasks improve creativity, critical thinking, and more flexible language use, evident especially by Cycle 3, where the students described role-plays as a breath of fresh.

In the context of Ida-Virumaa, the structured use of interactive tasks like role-plays appears especially valuable. These tasks align with the Estonian National Curriculum's emphasis on real-life communication readiness. Students' reflections and growing confidence confirmed that CEFR B2 descriptors, such as negotiating meaning and expressing view points, were increasingly met. Thus, task-based role-plays show strong potential for addressing persisting gaps in English proficiency in the region, offering students more equitable and motivating access to effective language learning.

Based on the outcomes of the study, the following recommendations can support English language teachers in integrating role-play into classroom practice.

Nunan (1988: 24) advises that the curriculum should serve as a flexible guideline rather than a rigid framework. In line with this, role-plays should reflect the themes and language functions addressed in the main textbook or curriculum, ensuring relevance and reinforcing

vocabulary and grammar in a contextualized way. Nunan (2004) further emphasises the importance of task authenticity and integration with learners' academic environment, which could significantly improve learners' motivation and engagement. This was confirmed in the current study, as the students were more motivated and involved when the role-plays were based on real situations or linked to the textbook topics.

Following the TBLT framework proposed by Willis and Willis (2007), role-plays should incorporate a clear three-phase structure: a pre-task phase to activate vocabulary and background knowledge, a task-phase for role-play performance, and a post-task phase for reflection or written outcomes. Pre-task activities are important for introducing useful phrases, practicing conversational strategies, and supporting pronunciation, thus reducing the affective filter. This scaffolding approach helps learners gradually move toward independent language production. At the same time tasks should remain dynamic and learner-centered. Post-task activities could involve collaborative outcomes, such as lists, agreements, or feedback forms, promoting authentic interaction. This aligns with Van Den Branden (2006), who highlights that meaningful interaction during tasks fosters negotiation and reduces anxiety through shared responsibilities. Balancing support and creativity is also essential. Beginners may benefit from prepared role cards to reduce anxiety, while more advanced learners can be encouraged to design their own characters and situations.

The iterative nature of action research proved valuable in this study and could be adopted more broadly. Teachers are encouraged to collect and respond to student feedback during the process, adjusting task complexity, timing, or support materials as needed. This adaptability ensures that materials remain effective and tailored to the needs of learners.

Although the results of the present thesis were encouraging, its broader application should be approached with careful consideration. The positive findings suggest that similar role-plays could be implemented in other schools or incorporated into teacher training

programs to support speaking skill development. However, the study's limitations should be recognised. The small, context-specific sample makes it difficult to apply the findings broadly. In addition, a short duration of the implementation meant that no formal pre- and post-testing was conducted, limiting the ability to measure long-term improvement in speaking proficiency. The author's dual role as teacher and observer may also have influenced student behaviour or introduced bias in interpreting results.

Future research could build on this work by applying the same approach in a wider range of classroom settings or by examining how well students retain their speaking improvements over time. It would also be valuable to research more closely the development of specific areas such as grammatical accuracy or pronunciation, potentially through tools such as audio recordings or peer feedback.

CONCLUSION

Role-plays have long held a place in language teaching due to their potential to provide effective spoken language practice, essential for all language learning. They offer an alternative to textbook exercises, allowing students to assume different roles and rehearse real-life communication scenarios. Ladousse (1987) and Van Ments (1999) highlight the value of role-plays for practicing varied language structures, vocabulary, and various types of interpersonal behaviour. Stern (1983: 411) emphasizes that role-playing helps individuals become more flexible and develop a sense of mastery in various situations, facilitating language learning.

The present thesis focused on addressing a specific challenge in a specific context – supporting the speaking skill development of students in Ida-Virumaa in a context of Kohtla-Järve Gymnasium. Task-based role-plays were designed as supplementary materials and implemented using action research methodology. Three research questions were formulated:

1. How do task-based role-plays impact the speaking skills of students?
2. What specific contributions do role-plays make to enhance students' speaking skills?
3. What challenges do students and the teacher face when integrating role-play activities into the classroom settings?

For the results to be obtained, a triangulated data collection method was used, combining classroom observation, feedback discussion, and self-assessment questionnaire. The findings suggest that task-based role-plays had a clear impact on students' speaking development. Over three cycles, students demonstrated increased fluency, improved turn-taking and negotiation strategies, and greater confidence in spontaneous speaking.

However, vocabulary development yielded mixed results. Several students admitted that they did not actively incorporate new vocabulary during the role-plays, suggesting that while spontaneous communication improved, vocabulary transfer was less consistent.

The specific contributions of the role-plays became evident in students' growing ability to express opinions, manage spontaneous dialogues, and interact using more complex language. In the final cycle, students reflected that role-plays resembled real-life experiences and helped them feel more prepared for practical situations. Several challenges emerged throughout the implementation process, including initial confusion over instructions, difficulties with vocabulary recall, uneven turn-taking, and time constraints related to written outcomes. For the teacher-researcher, the main challenges involved preparing materials, managing classroom logistics (such as pairing and time allocation), and balancing structure with creativity. The iterative nature of action research required continual reflection and adaptation, which proved both demanding and rewarding. These experiences highlight the importance of flexibility, student feedback, and thoughtful task sequencing with integrating role-plays into real classroom settings.

The significance of this thesis lies in its practical demonstration on how task-based role-plays can be integrated into an existing curriculum, supporting both students' language development and teaching practice. By offering varied and enriched materials, role-plays can improve the classroom environment. A significant part of the responsibility for whether a role-play works in class depends on the teacher. This study reinforces that insight by showing that planning, responsiveness to student feedback, and ongoing task refinement are crucial to successful implementation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. The set of Role-Plays

Action Research 1st Cycle

MAKING A LIVING

Role-Play 1

Applying for a Summer Job

Time: 40 minutes

Preparation - 10 minutes

Role-Play (both rounds) - 20 minutes

Feedback - 10 minutes

Scenario: Student A (Job Applicant) is applying for a summer job at an animal shelter and must attend a job interview to discuss their qualifications, skills, and availability. During the interview, the student (Job Applicant) asks questions to learn more about the responsibilities, working hours, and salary. Student B (Employer) evaluates the applicant's responses, skills, and enthusiasm to decide if they are a good fit for the role. At the end of the role-play, the Job Applicant completes a Job Application Form based on the information discussed, and the Employer fills out an Employer Feedback Sheet to assess the applicant's suitability for the position.

Objectives of the Role-Play:

By the end of the role-play students will:

- Engage in structured spoken interaction by participating in a simulated job interview, asking and answering questions about responsibilities, working hours, and qualifications.
- Practice turn-taking and managing conversation flow during the interview by recognizing when to take turns, interrupt politely, or ask follow-up questions.
- **Express opinions and justify qualifications** by explaining why they are a good fit for the job and providing evidence of their skills and experience.
- Apply job-related vocabulary such as *responsibilities*, *flexible hours*, *well-paid*, *rewarding* in context.
- Practice grammatical structures, including polite requests, modal verbs (*can*, *could*, *should*), and conditionals for hypothetical situations.
- Enhance fluency and accuracy while maintaining coherence during spontaneous conversations.
- For Job Applicants: Complete a **Job Application Form** with accurate and relevant information gathered during the interview.

- For Employers: Fill out an **Employer Feedback Sheet**, assessing the applicant's strengths, areas for improvement, and overall suitability for the role.

Target Language:

Grammar:

- modal verbs for polite requests and obligations (can, may, must.)
- asking and answering the questions in the present and in the past (I have experience working in a café. Have you worked in a similar job before?)

Functions:

- making polite enquiries (Could you tell me about the job responsibilities?)
- explaining qualifications and experience (I have two years of experience in customer service.)
- providing and receiving feedback (You seem well-prepared for this role.)

Vocabulary:

- job-related terms (application form, responsibilities, availability, qualifications, references.)
- employment terms (full-time, part-time, working hours, salary, start date.)
- descriptive terms for jobs (rewarding, dead-end, flexible hours, creative, well-paid, perks and bonuses.)

Preparation:

Print out the role cards for Student A and for Student B. Print out Job Application Form for Student A and Employer Feedback Sheet for Student B.

Lead-in discussion:

Put the following questions on the board for discussion in pairs:

- *"Have you ever thought about applying for a summer job?"*
- *"What type of summer jobs are popular among teenagers?"*
- *"What skills do you think are most important for working in an animal shelter?"*

Ask students to brainstorm qualities like *responsibility, teamwork, experience, enthusiasm*.

Add vocabulary like *reliable, punctual, creative, organized* if not mentioned.

Role-play instructions (script for the teacher):

Introduction:

Today, we'll be doing a role-play activity where you'll practice applying for and interviewing for a summer job at an animal shelter. This activity will help you improve your speaking skills, learn how to ask and answer job-related questions, and use polite expressions in real-life situations.

Assigning roles:

- I'm dividing the class into pairs. One of you will be the **Job Applicant**, and the other will be the **Employer**.
- I'll give each of you a role card with details about your character. For example, as the **Applicant**, you'll have information about your age, experience, hobbies, and

personality. As the **Employer**, you'll have information about what the shelter is looking for in an employee.

Understanding the task:

For Applicants:

- Your goal is to ask questions about the job, such as responsibilities, working hours, and salary. You'll also need to describe your experience, skills, and why you think you're a good fit for the position.
- At the end of the role-play, you'll fill out a **Job Application Form** based on the information you learned during the interview.

For Employers:

- Your goal is to evaluate the applicant. Ask questions to learn about their experience, availability, and skills. Use the **Employer Feedback Sheet** to take notes during the interview and decide if you'd hire them.
- At the end of the interview, you'll give the applicant feedback about their performance.

Timing and Switching Roles:

- Each round will last 10 minutes. During this time, you'll play your assigned roles and complete your tasks.
- After the first round, we'll switch roles. If you were the Applicant, you'll become the Employer, and vice versa.

Tangible Outcomes:

- By the end of this activity, the Applicant will submit a **Job Application Form**, and the Employer will complete an **Employer Feedback Sheet**.
- These forms are your tangible outcomes and will show how well you performed during the role-play.

Observing and Feedback:

- While you're role-playing, I'll walk around to listen and observe how you're using the vocabulary and expressions we practiced earlier.
- At the end, we'll spend 10 minutes discussing what went well and what you can improve.

Final notes: Remember to stay in character! If you're the Applicant, imagine you're really applying for the job. If you're the Employer, think about what kind of person you'd want to hire. Use the vocabulary and polite expressions we reviewed earlier. Don't worry about making mistakes—this is your chance to practice!

Instructions for students

Student A (Job Applicant)

ROLE	TASK	TIPS
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<p>You are a Job Applicant applying for a summer job at an animal shelter. Use your role card to guide your character's details, such as name, age, experience, and hobbies.</p>	<p>1. Ask Questions: - Find out details about the job, such as responsibilities, working hours, and salary. - Use polite expressions.</p> <p>2. Talk About Yourself: - Highlight your skills and experience. - Mention qualities that make you a good fit.</p> <p>3. Complete the Job Application Form.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use vocabulary like <i>responsibilities</i>, <i>rewarding</i>, <i>flexible hours</i>. - Stay polite and professional. - Take notes during the interview to fill out your form. - Stay in character!
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Job Application Form (for Student A)

Job Application Form
Name of Applicant:
Contact Information (Email/Phone):
Position Applied for:
Responsibilities:
Working Hours:
Salary:
Required Skills and Experience:
Reason for Interest in the Job:
Applicant's Qualifications (Skills, Experience):
Additional Questions or Notes:
Signature of Applicant:
Date:

Role cards for Student A: (cut up where needed)

Applicant	Role Card Details
1	Name: Anna Peterson Age: 17 Experience: Volunteered at a local pet shop for 6 months. Hobbies: Playing the guitar, walking dogs. Character: Enthusiastic, friendly, but a little shy.
2	Name: Mark Taylor Age: 18 Experience: No formal work experience, owned pets all his life. Hobbies: Playing basketball, reading about animal behavior. Character: Confident, outgoing, loves working with others.
3	Name: Sophia Williams Age: 16 Experience: Worked part-time at a farm caring for animals. Hobbies: Horseback riding, photography. Character: Calm, observant, detail-oriented.
4	Name: Ben Carter Age: 19 Experience: Previous summer job at a dog grooming salon. Hobbies: Painting, hiking, caring for his rescue dog. Character: Creative, responsible, but a bit introverted.
5	Name: Emma Johnson Age: 17 Experience: Helped neighbors care for pets during vacations. Hobbies: Baking, volunteering at events. Character: Warm, kind-hearted, but sometimes forgetful.

Student B (Employer)

ROLE	TASK	TIPS
You are an Employer at an animal shelter looking to hire a summer employee. Use your role card to provide information about yourself and the job.	1. Provide Job Information: - Respond to the applicant's questions politely. - Use job details from your role card. 2. Ask Questions:	- Use your role card to guide responses. - Take detailed notes on the Employer Feedback Sheet. - Be professional but fair in evaluating the applicant.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluate the applicant by asking questions like: - <i>“Do you have any experience with animals?”</i> - <i>“Why do you want this job?”</i> - Take detailed notes on the Employer Feedback Sheet. 3. Give Feedback: - Decide if you would hire the applicant and provide reasons: - <i>“You seem enthusiastic, but we need more experience.”</i> - <i>“Your skills are exactly what we’re looking for.”</i> 	
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Employer Feedback Sheet

Instructions:

Use this sheet to evaluate the applicant during the role-play activity. Take notes on their strengths, areas for improvement, and provide feedback on their performance.

Name of Applicant: _____

Position Applied For: _____

Applicant’s Strengths:

- Polite and professional communication
- Relevant skills/experience
- Good availability for working hours
- Asked thoughtful questions

Areas for Improvement:

- Limited prior experience working with animals
- Needs to improve understanding of job responsibilities
- Lacks confidence in presenting qualifications
- Could provide more detailed examples of relevant skills

Would you recommend this applicant for the position?

- Yes
- No

Reason for your decision:.....

Additional Comments/Feedback:.....

Role Cards for Student B (Employer): (cut where needed)

Employer	Role Card Details
1	<p>Name: David Brown Age: 35 Character: Professional but approachable, loves animals and prioritizes responsible applicants. Shelter Details: - Working Hours: 8 AM - 4 PM - Salary: €12/hour - Animals: Cats, dogs, rabbits - Responsibilities: Feeding and grooming animals, cleaning cages, assisting with adoptions. - Requirements: Friendly, reliable, team player.</p>
2	<p>Name: Sarah Green Age: 40 Character: Warm and supportive, values enthusiasm and a genuine love for animals. Shelter Details: - Working Hours: 9 AM - 3 PM - Salary: €10/hour - Animals: Dogs, birds, guinea pigs - Responsibilities: Walking dogs, managing adoption paperwork, cleaning animal enclosures. - Requirements: Punctual, good communication skills, caring attitude.</p>
3	<p>Name: James White Age: 50 Character: Strict and detail-focused, expects applicants to demonstrate responsibility and punctuality. Shelter Details: - Working Hours: 10 AM - 6 PM - Salary: €11/hour - Animals: Cats, dogs, hamsters - Responsibilities: Supervising volunteers, ensuring safety protocols, organizing adoption events. - Requirements: Organized, attention to detail, proactive.</p>
4	<p>Name: Lisa Carter Age: 28 Character: Creative and easy-going, values teamwork and new ideas for improving shelter operations. Shelter Details: - Working Hours: 7 AM - 3 PM</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Salary: €13/hour - Animals: Dogs, reptiles, rabbits - Responsibilities: Preparing animal food, monitoring health, creating enrichment activities. - Requirements: Innovative, team-oriented, hardworking.
5	<p>Name: Michael Lee Age: 30 Character: Organized and fair, prefers applicants with hands-on experience but appreciates a willingness to learn. Shelter Details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working Hours: 8 AM - 2 PM - Salary: €14/hour - Animals: Cats, dogs, parrots - Responsibilities: Training volunteers, handling adoptions, coordinating with vets. - Requirements: Experienced, adaptable, good leadership skills.

Role-Play 2

Job Shadowing Experience

Time: 40 minutes

Preparation - 10 minutes

Role-Play (both rounds) - 20 minutes

Feedback - 10 minutes

Scenario: Student A (Teenager) participating in a job-shadowing program visits a workplace to learn about the tasks, responsibilities, and skills required for the job. The teenager asks detailed questions to complete a **School Worksheet**, focusing on understanding the daily routine, challenges, and advice for succeeding in the profession. Student B (The Professional) answers the teenager's questions, provides clear explanations, and offers practical advice about the job. They may also provide examples or demonstrate tasks to clarify their responses. At the end of the session, the professional completes a **Job Shadowing Evaluation Form** to assess the teenager's engagement, curiosity, and communication skills.

Objectives of the Role-Play

By the end of the role-play students will:

- Practice asking for detailed explanations and giving clear responses about workplace tasks and responsibilities.

- Apply vocabulary related to job shadowing, workplace roles, and qualities (e.g., *responsibilities, teamwork, observe, step-by-step*).
- Use turn-taking strategies effectively to manage the conversation flow, including polite interruptions, follow-up questions, and responses.
- Use grammatical structures, including modal verbs (*should, must, can*) and cause-effect language (*If you follow this process, you'll save time*).
- Practice giving and receiving advice in a professional context.
- For Teenagers (Student A): Complete a School Worksheet with detailed notes on the job-shadowing experience.
- For Professionals (Student B): Complete a Job Shadowing Evaluation Form, assessing the teenager's engagement, communication, and curiosity.

Target language

Grammar:

- modal verbs: (You must be reliable to succeed in this job.)
- cause and effect: (If you practice this skill, you'll improve teamwork.)
- Present Simple: (What tasks do you usually do during a workday?)
- Past Simple: (How did you prepare for this job?)

Functions

- Asking for explanations: (Could you give me an example of a typical task?)
- Providing explanations and advice: (This skill is important because it helps us meet deadlines.)
- Clarifying and agreeing.

Vocabulary

- Workplace Terms: responsibilities, tasks, deadlines, teamwork, observe.
- Personal Qualities: organized, creative, reliable.
- Reflection Terms: engagement, effort, curiosity, advice.

Preparation

Today, we'll be doing a role-play activity where you'll practice participating in a job-shadowing session. In this activity, you'll improve your speaking skills by asking for and giving explanations, learning how to ask thoughtful questions, and using polite expressions in a real-world context.

Assigning Roles:

I'm dividing the class into pairs. One of you will play the role of the **Teenager** participating in the job-shadowing program, and the other will be the **Professional** hosting them at the workplace.

I'll give each of you a role card with details about your character. For example, as the Teenager, you'll have information about your interests, goals, and what you're hoping to learn from the experience. As the Professional, you'll have information about your job, tasks, and responsibilities.

Understanding the Task:

For Teenagers (Student A):

Your goal is to ask detailed questions about the professional's job to fill out your **School Worksheet**. Ask about:

1. Daily tasks and responsibilities.
2. Skills and qualities needed for the job.
3. Challenges the professional faces at work.

You'll also ask for advice on what to focus on if you're interested in this career. At the end of the role-play, you'll complete the **School Worksheet** based on the information you learned.

For Professionals (Student B):

Your goal is to answer the teenager's questions about your job and provide clear, detailed explanations.

- Share examples of your daily tasks and responsibilities.
- Offer advice about skills and qualities needed to succeed.

At the end of the session, you'll complete a **Job Shadowing Evaluation Form** to assess the teenager's curiosity, engagement, and communication skills.

Timing and Switching Roles:

Each round will last 10 minutes. During this time, you'll play your assigned roles and complete your tasks.

After the first round, we'll switch roles. If you were a Teenager, you become a Professional, and vice versa.

Tangible Outcomes:

By the end of this activity, the Teenager will submit a completed **School Worksheet**, and the Professional will submit a completed **Job Shadowing Evaluation Form**. These forms are your outcomes and will show how well you performed during the role-play.

Observing and Feedback:

While you're role-playing, I'll walk around to listen and observe how you're using the vocabulary and expressions we practiced earlier.

At the end, we'll spend 10 minutes discussing what went well and what you can improve.

Final Notes:

Remember to stay in character! If you're a Teenager, imagine you're really participating in a job-shadowing session. If you're a Professional, think about how to best explain your job to someone who's interested in your career. Use the vocabulary and polite expressions we reviewed earlier. Don't worry about making mistakes!

Instructions for Students

Student A (Teenager)

ROLE	TASK	TIPS
You are a Teenager participating in a job-shadowing session. Use your role card to guide your character's details, such as name, age, interests, and career goals.	1. Ask Questions: - Find out details about the professional's daily tasks, responsibilities, and challenges. - Ask for advice on skills or qualities needed for success in the job. - Ask for clarifications if you don't understand something.	- Use polite expressions like <i>"Could you explain?"</i> or <i>"May I ask about...?"</i> . - Take notes while speaking to complete the School Worksheet. - Stay in character and show interest!
	2. Complete the School Worksheet: - Fill in details about tasks, responsibilities, and challenges based on the professional's answers.	- Use vocabulary like <i>tasks</i> , <i>teamwork</i> , <i>problem-solving</i> , <i>responsibilities</i> . - Focus on getting accurate and relevant information.

School Worksheet for Student A

Section	Details
Job Title	
Main Task	
Examples or Steps given	
Skills Needed	
Advice Received	
Challenges Explained	

Role Cards for Student A

Role Card Details	Information

1	Name: Anna Wilson Age: 15 Interests: Drawing and design Career Goal: Learn how to create a logo Focus: Ask for step-by-step explanations and examples.
2	Name: Ben Johnson Age: 16 Interests: Science experiments Career Goal: Understand how to use lab equipment Focus: Ask for safety explanations and advice.
3	Name: Mia Taylor Age: 15 Interests: Social media content Career Goal: Learn how to edit videos Focus: Ask for tips and tricks on editing.
4	Name: David Carter Age: 17 Interests: Event organizing Career Goal: Learn how to plan a small event Focus: Ask about teamwork and scheduling.
5	Name: Emma Harris Age: 16 Interests: Writing stories Career Goal: Learn how to interview people Focus: Ask about preparation and note-taking.

Student B (Professional)

ROLE	TASK	TIPS
You are a Professional hosting a Teenager for a job-shadowing session. Use your role card to guide your job description, tasks, and advice.	1. Answer Questions: - Respond to the teenager's questions about your job. - Provide clear explanations and examples when describing tasks and responsibilities. - Share challenges you face at work and how you handle them.	- Use clear and professional language. - Give practical examples to explain your tasks (e.g., " <i>I design posters by brainstorming ideas first.</i> ").
	2. Provide Advice:	- Use phrases like " <i>You</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommend skills or qualities that are important for your job (e.g., teamwork, reliability). - Help the teenager understand how to succeed in this career. 	<i>should focus on..." or "This skill is important because..."</i>
	<p>3. Complete the Job Shadowing Evaluation Form:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess the teenager's engagement, communication, and curiosity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take notes during the session to give accurate feedback. - Be constructive and fair in your evaluation.

Job Shadowing Evaluation Form (Student B)

Section	Details
Name of Teenager	
Interest Level	
Engagement	<input type="checkbox"/> Asked many questions <input type="checkbox"/> Asked some questions <input type="checkbox"/> Asked few questions
Strengths Observed	
Areas for Improvement	
Final Recommendation	<input type="checkbox"/> Would recommend further job shadowing <input type="checkbox"/> Needs improvement

Role Cards for Student B

Role Card Details	Information
1	Name: Sarah Brown Job: Graphic Designer Tasks: Designing posters, editing logos, meeting clients Focus: Provide examples of creative tasks like brainstorming designs.
2	Name: Mike Johnson Job: Lab Technician

	Tasks: Setting up experiments, maintaining equipment Focus: Explain how to handle tools safely and efficiently.
3	Name: Lisa Carter Job: Video Editor Tasks: Editing videos, managing timelines Focus: Share software tips and tricks for quick editing.
4	Name: James White Job: Event Planner Tasks: Organizing events, booking vendors, managing budgets Focus: Explain how to manage schedules and work in a team.
5	Name: Anna Wilson Job: Journalist Tasks: Writing articles, conducting interviews Focus: Demonstrate how to prepare interview questions.

Role-Play 3

Handling a Work-Related Dispute: Demanding Explanations

Time: 40 minutes

Preparation: 10 minutes

Role-Play (both rounds): 20 minutes

Feedback: 10 minutes

Scenario

An employee has been overlooked for a promotion and demands an explanation from their manager. The employee (Student A) wants to understand the reasons behind the decision and requests feedback on how they can improve. The manager (Student B) explains the reasons behind the decision, provides constructive feedback, and offers advice on what the employee can do to succeed in the future. At the end of the role-play, the employee completes a **Feedback Reflection Form** summarizing the conversation and identifying areas for improvement. The manager fills out a **Manager's Feedback Report** to evaluate the employee's attitude, communication skills, and readiness to act on the advice.

Objectives of the Role-Play

By the end of the role-play, students will:

- Practice demanding explanations and asking for clarification in a professional context.
- Develop skills in giving clear, constructive feedback and advice.

- Enhance fluency and accuracy by participating in a structured conversation involving negotiation and explanation.
- Practice workplace vocabulary and polite expressions, such as *"Could you clarify why I wasn't selected?"* and *"I'd like to improve my performance for the future."*
- Use grammatical structures like modal verbs (*could, should, might*) and conditionals (*If you want to improve, you should focus on teamwork*).
- Complete tangible outcomes: For the Employee: A Feedback Reflection Form identifying key takeaways from the conversation. For the Manager: A Manager's Feedback Report evaluating the employee's performance and attitude during the discussion.

Target Language

Grammar:

- Modal verbs for politeness and obligation: (Could you explain why I wasn't selected? You should focus on teamwork.)
- Conditionals for advice and suggestions: (If you improve your punctuality, you'll have a better chance next time.)

Functions:

- Demanding explanations (Can you explain the reasons behind your decision?).
- Giving constructive feedback (You're a strong candidate, but your teamwork needs improvement.).
- Making suggestions and offering advice (You might want to attend the next training session to improve your skills.).

Vocabulary:

- Workplace terms: *promotion, performance, teamwork, leadership, punctuality.*
- Feedback terms: *constructive, evaluation, improvement, professional growth.*
- Polite expressions: *"I'd appreciate your feedback on this decision." "Could you give me advice on how to improve?"*

Preparation

Print out Role Cards for Employee and Manager. Print out Feedback reflection Form and Manager's Feedback report.

Lead-In Discussion:

Write these questions on the board for discussion:

- *"Why is feedback important in a workplace?"*
- *"How would you ask for an explanation in a professional way?"*

Introduce polite expressions for **demanding explanations** and **giving feedback** (e.g., *"Could you explain...?"*).

Role-Play Instructions (Script for the Teacher)

Introduction:

Today, we'll do a role-play where one of you will act as an employee asking for an explanation about a missed promotion, and the other will act as their manager providing feedback and advice. This activity will help you practice demanding explanations, giving constructive feedback, and using workplace-related vocabulary.

Assigning Roles:

I'm dividing the class into pairs. One of you will be the **Employee**, and the other will be the **Manager**.

- The Employee will demand an explanation for not getting promoted.
- The Manager will provide reasons, constructive feedback, and advice.

Understanding the Task:

For Employees (Student A):

- Ask for an explanation about why you weren't promoted.
- Clarify what areas you need to improve to get promoted in the future.
- Stay professional and polite while expressing your concerns.
- Complete the **Feedback Reflection Form** with key takeaways from the discussion.

For Managers (Student B):

- Explain the reasons behind the promotion decision.
- Provide constructive feedback on the employee's strengths and areas for improvement.
- Offer advice on what the employee can do to achieve a promotion in the future.
- Complete the **Manager's Feedback Report** evaluating the employee's communication skills and attitude.

Timing and Switching Roles:

Each round will last 10 minutes. During this time, you'll play your assigned roles and complete your tasks.

After the first round, we'll switch roles. If you were the Employee, you become the Manager, and vice versa.

Tangible Outcomes:

By the end of this activity:

- Employees will submit a **Feedback Reflection Form** summarizing the conversation.
- Managers will complete a **Manager's Feedback Report** evaluating the employee's performance during the discussion.

Observing and Feedback:

While you're role-playing, I'll walk around to listen and observe how you're using polite expressions and workplace vocabulary.

At the end, we'll discuss what went well and how you can improve.

Final Notes:

Stay in character! If you're the Employee, imagine you're really asking for feedback. If you're the Manager, think about how to provide clear and constructive advice. Don't worry about making mistakes—this is your chance to practice!

Instructions for Students**Student A (Employee)**

ROLE	TASK	TIPS
You are an Employee who has been overlooked for a promotion. Use your role card to guide your character's details, such as your strengths, weaknesses, and reason for frustration.	1. Ask for Explanations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Politely demand an explanation for the missed promotion. - Clarify the reasons behind the manager's decision. - Ask what you can do to improve for the future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use polite phrases like <i>"Could you explain why I wasn't selected for the promotion?"</i>. - Stay professional and respectful, even if frustrated. - Take notes to complete the Feedback Reflection Form.
	2. Respond and Reflect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen to the manager's feedback carefully. - Summarize what you've learned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use phrases like <i>"I understand your point about teamwork; I'll work on that."</i> - Focus on how to improve rather than argue.
	3. Complete the Feedback Reflection Form: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summarize the reasons provided by the manager and what steps you'll take to improve. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be honest about what you learned and areas for growth. - Use the vocabulary and polite expressions practiced earlier.

Feedback Reflection Form (Student A)

Section	Details
Manager's Name	
Main Reasons for Decision	
Strengths Identified	
Areas for Improvement	

Advice from Manager	
Steps I Will Take to Improve	

Role Cards for Student A (Employee)

Role Card Details	Information
1	Name: Alex Carter Reason for frustration: Overlooked for a team leader promotion. Strengths: Reliable, organized, excellent at meeting deadlines. Weaknesses: Often works independently, avoids group projects.
2	Name: Taylor Smith Reason for frustration: Missed a promotion to senior sales assistant. Strengths: Enthusiastic, creative ideas for sales campaigns. Weaknesses: Frequently late to team meetings.
3	Name: Jamie Brown Reason for frustration: Denied a leadership role in event planning. Strengths: Organized, detail-oriented, creative with event ideas. Weaknesses: Struggles to delegate tasks.
4	Name: Chris Johnson Reason for frustration: Overlooked for a graphic design lead role. Strengths: Excellent at design concepts and meeting deadlines. Weaknesses: Rarely collaborates with other designers.
5	Name: Jordan Lee Reason for frustration: Denied a customer service manager role. Strengths: Friendly, resolves customer complaints well. Weaknesses: Needs better time management during busy hours.

Student B (Manager)

ROLE	TASK	TIPS
You are a Manager who must explain why an employee was not promoted. Use your role card to guide your feedback on their strengths, weaknesses, and potential for growth.	1. Provide Explanations: - Explain why the employee wasn't selected for the promotion. - Highlight specific areas for improvement. - Emphasize the employee's strengths as well.	- Be constructive and professional in your feedback. - Use examples to explain your points (e.g., " <i>Your independent work is excellent, but collaboration needs improvement.</i> ").
	2. Offer Advice: - Suggest what the employee	- Use phrases like " <i>You should focus on...</i> " or

	<p>can do to improve their chances for future promotions.</p> <p>3. Complete the Manager's Feedback Report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluate the employee's communication skills, attitude, and readiness to improve. 	<p><i>"Attending teamwork training might help you."</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take notes during the conversation to provide clear and detailed feedback. - Stay fair and constructive.
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Manager's Feedback Report (Student B)

Section	Details
Employee's Name	
Strengths Observed	
Areas for Improvement	
Communication Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement
Professional Attitude	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement
Advice Given	
Overall Recommendation	

Role Cards for Student B (Manager)

Role Card Details	Information
1	<p>Name: Sarah Taylor Position: Team Manager Feedback: Alex needs to focus on teamwork and group collaboration.</p>
2	<p>Name: Michael Davis Position: Sales Manager Feedback: Taylor has potential but needs to improve punctuality.</p>
3	<p>Name: Lisa Brown Position: Event Coordinator Feedback: Jamie must work on delegating tasks and building team relationships.</p>

4	Name: James White Position: Design Lead Feedback: Chris should participate more in team brainstorming sessions.
5	Name: Anna Wilson Position: Customer Service Manager Feedback: Jordan needs better time management and scheduling skills.

Action Research 2nd Cycle

Role-Play 4

Interviewing a person with a unique profession

Time: 40 minutes (both rounds take two lessons or one lesson 80 minutes) **Lesson 1:** Students stay in their assigned roles (Journalist or Professional). **Lesson 2:** Students switch roles and repeat the activity.

Preparation: 10 minutes

Role-Play (one round and a writing task): 20 minutes

Feedback and Discussion: 10 minutes

Scenario: A Journalist (Student A) is writing a blog post about unique professions and is interviewing a Person with a unique job (Student B). The Journalist's goal is to ask engaging questions, take notes, and write a blog post that will interest their audience. The Person with a unique job, in turn, must answer in detail, share interesting facts, and provide personal insights into their work. By the end of the role-play Student B writes a short personal profile about their job.

Objectives of the Role-Play:

By the end of the role-play students will:

- engaged in a structured, real-world interview by asking and answering relevant questions about a unique profession
- develop fluency and confidence in spontaneous spoken interaction through an extended conversation
- use job-related vocabulary, functional phrases, and descriptive language effectively
- apply turn-taking strategies, such as asking follow-up questions, seeking clarification, and expanding on responses
- demonstrate active listening skills by responding appropriately and adapting to the conversation
- produce tangible written outcomes

Target Language

Grammar:

- Present Simple, Past Simple
- Reported Speech
- Indirect Questions
- Comparatives and superlatives
- Modal verbs

Functions:

- Asking engaging interview questions
- Providing detailed explanation
- Asking for clarification
- Expressing opinions and reactions
- Giving structured answers

Vocabulary:

- Job related terms: responsibilities, duties, salary, qualifications, training, routine
- Descriptive terms: rewarding, high-risk, traditional, prestigious.

Preparation

Print out cards with instructions for Student A and Student B.

Lead-In discussion:

Ask students the following questions:

“What unusual professions can you think of?”

“What skills do you think are necessary for a chimney sweep or a town crier?”

“What questions would you ask someone with a unique profession if you were a journalist?”

Role-Play Instructions (Script for the Teacher)

Introduction

Today, we'll be doing a role-play activity where you will practice conducting and participating in an interview about a unique profession. One of you will take on the role of a journalist writing a blog post, while the other will play the role of a professional with an unusual job. This activity will help you improve your speaking skills, ask and answer interview questions naturally, and use polite expressions in a real-world context.

Assigning roles

I'm dividing the class into pairs. One of you will be a Journalist, and the other will be a Professional with a Unique Job. You will decide your own character details, so use your

imagination! After the interview, both of you will complete a writing task: the Journalist will write a blog post and the Professional will write a short personal profile about their job. Each student will stay in the same role for **Lesson 1**, and roles will be switched in **Lesson 2**.

Understanding the Task

For Journalist (Student A)

- Your goal is to conduct a structured interview, just like a real journalist.
- Think of at least five open-ended questions (e.g., *What inspired you to choose this career?*).
- Take detailed notes to help you write your blog post later.
- Use polite and engaging phrases (e.g., *Could you give me an example?*).

For Professional - a person with a unique profession (Student B)

- Your goal is to explain your job clearly and make it sound interesting.
- Choose your own unique profession (butler, jeweler, shepherd, beefeater, milkman, chimney sweep, stockbroker, etc.).
- Think of 3-4 fun facts about your job.
- Give detailed and engaging answers (not just "yes" or "no" responses).
- Share personal experiences and explain why your job is important or interesting.

Timing and switching roles

Today we will have only one round that will last 10 minutes. During this time, the Journalist will ask questions, and the Professional will answer. Then, you'll have 10 minutes to write your text.

Tangible Outcomes:

At the end of this activity, you both produce a written piece. The Journalist will write a short blog post summarizing the interview and the Professional will write a short personal profile summarizing their job. These writing tasks are your final outcomes and will show how well you performed during the role-play.

Observing and Feedback:

While you're role-playing, I will walk around, listen, and observe how you're using the vocabulary and expressions we practiced earlier. I'll be looking for how well you keep the conversation flowing, how clearly you explain ideas, and how naturally you use English. After the role-play, we'll spend 10 minutes discussing what went well and what you can improve.

Final notes:

Remember to stay in character! If you're a Journalist, imagine you're really preparing an article. If you're a Professional, think about how to explain your job in the most interesting way. Use the vocabulary and polite expressions we reviewed earlier. Don't worry about making mistakes - this is your chance to practice and improve!

Instructions for Students

Student A (Journalist)

Role	Journalist for “Story time” newspaper
Task	Conduct an engaging interview and write a blog post (5 sentences) summarizing the key details about the professional’s job.
Before the role-play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create your journalist character (name, age, reason for the interview). - Brainstorm at least five open-ended questions - Think of follow-up questions to encourage deeper responses
During the interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keep the conversation going - ask for examples, stories, and personal experiences. - Show interest - react naturally to what the professional says. - Take notes carefully to help you write your blog post.
After the interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write a short blog post about the professional’s career. - Make it engaging - describe their job, challenges, and interesting facts. - Think like a journalist: Why would people want to read about this?

Student B (Professional - a person with a unique profession)

Role	Professional - a person with a unique profession
Task	Answer the journalist’s questions, provide engaging and informative responses, and write a personal profile summarizing your profession (5 sentences).
Before the role-play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invent your profession (Choose a job: butler, jeweler, shepherd, beekeeper, milkman, chimney sweep, stockbroker, etc.). - Create your character (Name, work

	<p>location, experience, reason for choosing this career).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Think of 3 fun facts about your job (e.g., <i>What's the strangest thing you've experienced at work?</i>).
During the interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide detailed and engaging answers to the journalist's questions. - Use examples and personal stories to bring your job to life. - Clarify or elaborate when asked follow-up questions.
After the interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write a short personal profile summarizing your profession. - Highlight the most interesting aspects of your job. - Make it clear why your profession is unique or important.

Role-Play 5

Tour of a Futuristic Home

Time: 40 minutes (both rounds take two lessons or one lesson 80 minutes) **Lesson 1:** Students stay in their assigned roles (Tour Guide or Visitor). **Lesson 2:** Students switch roles and repeat the activity.

Preparation: 10 minutes

Role-Play (one round and a writing task): 20 minutes

Feedback and Discussion: 10 minutes

Scenario: A Tour Guide (Student A) is presenting a futuristic home to a Visitor (Student B). The Tour Guide's goal is to explain unique features of the home, answer the visitor's questions, and collect feedback. The Visitor, in turn, must ask relevant questions, show genuine interest, and complete a visitor's leaflet summarizing the home's key features. By the end of the role-play, Student A completes a Visitor Feedback Form based on the interaction.

Objectives of the Role-Play:

By the end of the role-play students will:

- Engage in structured, real-world interaction by asking and answering relevant questions about a futuristic home
- Develop fluency and confidence in spontaneous spoken interaction through extended conversation

- Use home-related vocabulary, functional phrases, and descriptive language effectively
- Apply turn-taking strategies, such as asking follow-up questions, seeking clarification, and expanding on responses
- Demonstrate active listening skills by responding appropriately and adapting to the conversation
- Produce tangible written outcomes

Target Language

Grammar:

- Present Simple, Future Simple
- Comparatives and superlatives
- Modal verbs for suggestions and possibilities
- Conditional sentences (e.g., If you lived here, you would...)

Functions:

- Asking and answering questions about features
- Providing detailed explanations
- Asking for clarification
- Giving suggestions and expressing opinions
- Describing places and technology

Vocabulary:

- Home-related terms: insulation, ventilation, eco-friendly, energy-efficient, smart technology, minimalist, sustainable
- Descriptive terms: innovative, comfortable, futuristic, unique

Preparation

Print out cards for Student A and Student B.

Lead-In discussion:

Ask students the following questions:

“What features do you imagine in a home of the future?”

“What makes underground homes appealing or challenging?”

“What questions would you ask if you visited a futuristic home?”

Role-Play Instructions (Script for the Teacher)

Introduction

Today, we'll do a role-play where you practice giving and receiving a guided tour of a futuristic home. One of you will be the Tour Guide, explaining the home's features, while the other will be a Visitor, asking questions. This activity helps you practice speaking, asking and answering questions, and using descriptive language naturally.

Assigning roles

I'm dividing the class into pairs. One will be a Tour Guide, and the other a Visitor. You'll invent details about your futuristic home. After the tour, both of you complete a writing task: the Tour Guide fills out a Visitor Feedback Form, and the Visitor completes a visitor's leaflet. Then you will switch the roles.

Understanding the Task

For Tour Guide (Student A)

Your goal is to lead an engaging tour. Think of at least five unique features of your futuristic home. Prepare at least three feedback questions to ask the visitor (e.g., What feature do you like best?). Use descriptive and polite phrases (e.g., Let me show you... Can I answer any questions?).

For Visitor (Student B)

Your goal is to gather information and show genuine interest. Think of at least five questions about the home (e.g., What makes this home energy-efficient?). Ask for details, examples, and clarifications. Take notes carefully to fill in your leaflet.

Tangible Outcomes:

At the end of this activity, you both produce a written piece. The Tour Guide completes a Visitor Feedback Form summarizing the visitor's reactions. The Visitor completes a visitor's leaflet summarizing key features of the home. These are your final outcomes.

Observing and Feedback:

While you're role-playing, I will listen for how well you keep conversation flowing, how clearly you explain ideas, and how naturally you use English. After the role-play, we'll discuss what went well and what can be improved.

Final notes:

Remember to stay in character! If you're a Tour Guide, imagine you're really showcasing your home. If you're a Visitor, think about genuinely exploring this futuristic space. Use vocabulary and polite expressions we reviewed earlier.

Instructions for Students

Student A (Tour Guide)

Role	Tour Guide in a futuristic underground home.
Task	Give a tour and complete a Visitor Feedback Form.

Before the role-play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create your character (name, location...) - Think of at least five unique questions for your visitor. - Think of at least five unique features of a house to explain - Prepare three feedback questions for your visitor
During the Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Show features and answer visitor's questions in detail. - Ask feedback questions about the visitor's impressions.
After the Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete the Visitor Feedback Form

Visitor Feedback Form

Visitor's Name	
Most impressive feature for the visitor:	
Suggestions from the visitor:	
Would the visitor like to live here? Why/why not?	
Overall impression rating (1-5):	

Student B (Visitor)

Role	Visitor interested in futuristic homes.
Task	Ask questions and complete a visitor's leaflet.
Before the role-play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create your character (name, reason for visit). - Think of at least five questions about the home's features.
During the Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask detailed questions and take notes. - React genuinely to the guide's explanations.
After the role-play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete the visitor's leaflet summarizing key features.

Visitor's Leaflet

Home Location:	
Design Style:	
Unique Features (list 3):	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.
Personal Impressions:	
Recommendations for	

others:(would you recommend visiting/living in this home)	
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Role-Play 6

Renting a House/Flat - Negotiating Terms

Time: 40 minutes (both rounds take two lessons or one lesson 80 minutes) **Lesson 1:** Students stay in their assigned roles (Landlord or Tenant). **Lesson 2:** Students switch roles and repeat the activity.

Preparation: 10 minutes

Role-Play (one round and a writing task): 20 minutes

Feedback and Discussion: 10 minutes

Scenario:

A Landlord (Student A) and a Tenant (Student B) negotiate terms for renting a house or flat. They discuss rent, lease duration, responsibilities, rules, and additional conditions. By the end of the role-play, both students collaboratively fill out a Rental Agreement Form summarizing all negotiated terms.

Objectives of the Role-Play:

By the end of the role-play students will:

- Engage in structured negotiation by discussing terms and conditions clearly
- Develop fluency and confidence in spontaneous spoken interaction
- Use housing and negotiation-related vocabulary effectively
- Apply strategies such as making proposals, accepting/rejecting offers, and reaching compromises
- Demonstrate active listening and clear communication
- Produce a tangible written outcome (Rental Agreement Form)

Target Language

Grammar:

- Present Simple, Future Simple
- Conditionals (If...then...)
- Modal verbs (can, must, should)
- Comparatives and superlatives

Functions:

- Negotiating terms and conditions
- Making proposals and counteroffers
- Asking for and giving clarification
- Expressing agreement/disagreement
- Reaching compromise

Vocabulary:

- Rent-related terms: lease, deposit, maintenance, utilities, furnishings, landlord, tenant
- Negotiation terms: agree, compromise, conditions, terms, proposal, duration, responsibilities

Preparation

Print out Rental Agreement Forms.

Lead-In discussion:

Ask students the following questions:

“What factors are important when renting a house or flat?”

“What questions would you ask a landlord before renting?”

“What conditions might a landlord include in a lease?”

Role-Play Instructions (Script for the Teacher)

Introduction

Today, we’ll do a role-play where you negotiate the terms of renting a house or flat. One of you will be the Landlord, offering your property, and the other will be the Tenant, interested in renting. This activity helps you practice negotiation, speaking, and using vocabulary naturally.

Assigning roles

I’m dividing the class into pairs. One of you will be a Landlord, and the other a Tenant. You’ll negotiate rental terms and complete a Rental Agreement Form summarizing your agreement. Then you will switch your roles.

Understanding the Task

For Landlord (Student A) Your goal is to negotiate favorable rental terms.

- Decide on details of your property (location, size, rent amount, rules).
- Prepare at least three key points to discuss (e.g., deposit, maintenance, duration of lease).

- Use clear and polite negotiation language (e.g., I propose..., Could you agree to...?).

For Tenant (Student B) Your goal is to negotiate suitable rental terms for yourself.

- Decide on your priorities (budget, lease duration, conditions).
- Prepare at least five questions or proposals for negotiation.
- Use negotiation phrases politely and clearly (e.g., Would you consider..., What if we...?).

Tangible Outcomes:

At the end of this activity, both of you collaboratively produce a Rental Agreement Form summarizing all negotiated terms. This is your final outcome.

Observing and Feedback:

While you're role-playing, I will listen for how well you negotiate, clarify points, and communicate effectively. After the role-play, we'll discuss what went well and what can be improved.

Final notes:

Remember to stay in character! If you're a Landlord, think about making your offer appealing but clear. If you're a Tenant, focus on ensuring the terms meet your needs. Use negotiation vocabulary and polite expressions.

Instructions for Students

Student A (Landlord)

Role	Landlord renting out a property
Task	Negotiate terms and complete a Rental Agreement Form.
Before the Role-Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create your character - Create property details (location, size, rent, rules...) - Prepare three key negotiation points
During the negotiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss terms clearly and answer tenant's questions. - Make clear proposals and respond to tenant's suggestions.
After the negotiation	Collaboratively fill in the Rental Agreement Form with the tenant.

Student B (Tenant)

Role	Tenant interested in renting a property.
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Task	Negotiate terms and complete a Rental Agreement Form.
Before the Role-Play	- Decide on your priorities (budget, lease duration, conditions). - Prepare five questions/proposals.
During the negotiation	- Ask detailed questions and make proposals. - React to landlord's offers, suggest compromises.
After the negotiation	- Collaboratively fill in the Rental Agreement Form with the landlord.

Rental Agreement Form

Property Location:	
Property Description (size, rooms):	
Rent Amount (monthly):	
Lease Duration (start/end dates):	
Deposit Amount:	
Payment Method:	
Maintenance Responsibilities (Landlord/Tenant):	
Utilities Included:	
Utilities not included	
Rules (pets, smoking, noise...)	
Additional Conditions (e.g., furnished/unfurnished):	
Signatures:	Landlord: Tenant:
Date:	

Action research 3rd Cycle

Role-Play 7

Buying Household Items - Creating a Shopping List

Time: 45 minutes (both rounds)

Preparation: 10 minutes + lead in 5 minutes

Role-Play (both rounds): 20 minutes

Feedback and Discussion: 10 minutes

Scenario:

Roommates (Student A and Student B) discuss and negotiate potential household improvements and purchases for their shared living space. They make suggestions, discuss their reasons, and justify choices. By the end of the role-play, students collaboratively fill out a detailed Shopping List Form summarizing agreed items.

Objectives of the Role-Play:

By the end of the role-play students will:

- Engage in structured discussions by suggesting and justifying household purchases
- Develop fluency and confidence in spontaneous spoken interaction
- Use household-related vocabulary effectively
- Apply strategies such as making suggestions, accepting/rejecting ideas, and reaching agreements
- Demonstrate active listening and clear communication
- Produce a tangible written outcome (Shopping List Form)

Target Language

Grammar:

- Present Simple, Future Simple
- Modal verbs (should, could, might)
- Comparatives and superlatives
- Conditionals (If...then...)

Functions:

- Making suggestions and recommendations
- Justifying choices
- Asking for and giving opinions
- Expressing agreement/disagreement
- Negotiating and reaching compromises

Vocabulary:

- Household items: furniture, appliances, decor, utensils, fixtures

- Suggestion phrases: "I think we should...", "Why don't we...?", "It might be good to..."
- Agreement phrases: "I agree", "Good idea", "Exactly"

Preparation

- Print out detailed role cards with specific suggestions and examples.
- Provide vocabulary lists related to household items and negotiation phrases on role cards.
- Prepare visual aids or props (pictures of household items).

Lead-In discussion: In small groups, ask students to brainstorm: "What household items are essential when sharing a home?" "What might cause disagreements when roommates share a living space?"

Role-Play Instructions (Script for the Teacher)

Introduction Today, you'll do a role-play where you discuss and decide on household items to buy for your shared living space. You'll practice making suggestions, discussing opinions, and reaching agreements, finishing by creating a detailed shopping list.

Assigning roles

Students fill out character cards, then randomly exchange them with classmates.

Understanding the Task

For Roommate A

- Use your assigned character to discuss your needs and preferences.
- Suggest at least three household items, justify why they're important.
- Politely discuss your roommate's suggestions and reach compromises.

For Roommate B

- Use your assigned character to discuss your needs and preferences.
- Suggest at least three household items, justify why they're important.
- Politely discuss your roommate's suggestions and reach compromises.

Tangible Outcomes:

At the end of the activity, collaboratively produce a detailed Shopping List Form with agreed household items.

Observing and Feedback:

While role-playing, I will listen for effective suggestion-making, negotiation, and vocabulary use. After the role-play, we'll discuss what went well and what can be improved.

Final notes:

Use vocabulary lists and functional phrases. Remember, you're creating characters for your classmates, so be creative and detailed!

Instruction for Students

Roommate A/B

Role	Roommate discussing household purchases.
Task	Suggest items, negotiate, and complete a Shopping List Form.
Before the Role-Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fill out detailed character cards (name, personality, preferences). - Exchange character cards with a classmate randomly. - Review the vocabulary list on your role card. - Prepare at least three specific items to suggest.
During the Negotiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suggest and justify items clearly. - Politely respond to your roommate's suggestions.
After the Negotiation	Collaboratively fill in the Shopping List Form with your roommate.

Shopping List Form

Item Name	Quantity	Reason for Purchase

Role-Play 8

Resolving a Conflict with a Roommate

Time: 45 minutes (both rounds)

Preparation: 10 minutes + lead in 5 minutes

Role-Play (both rounds): 20 minutes

Feedback and Discussion: 10 minutes

Scenario:

Roommates (Student A and Student B) discuss and resolve a conflict situation, such as noise issues, cleaning duties, or sharing personal items. They express their viewpoints, consider each other's perspectives, and work collaboratively toward a resolution. By the end of the role-play, students collaboratively fill out an Agreements Form summarizing their resolutions.

Objectives of the Role-Play:

By the end of the role-play students will:

- Engage in structured discussions addressing conflict
- Develop fluency and confidence in spontaneous spoken interaction
- Use problem-solving and mediation-related vocabulary effectively
- Apply strategies such as expressing viewpoints, active listening, and finding compromises
- Demonstrate clear communication, empathy, and understanding
- Produce a tangible written outcome (Agreements Form)

Target Language

Grammar:

- Present Simple, Past Simple
- Modal verbs (should, must, could)
- Conditionals (If...then...)

Functions:

- Explaining viewpoints and expressing feelings
- Asking for and giving opinions
- Expressing understanding or disagreement politely
- Suggesting solutions and reaching compromises

Vocabulary:

- Conflict-related terms: disagreement, issue, compromise, understanding, responsibility, resolution
- Problem-solving phrases: "I understand your point, but...", "Maybe we could...", "Let's try to..."

- Agreement phrases: "I agree to...", "Let's make sure we...", "We both need to..."

Preparation

- Print out Agreements Form
- Provide vocabulary lists related to conflict resolution and useful phrases on role cards.

Lead-In discussion:

In small groups, ask students to brainstorm: "What common issues might roommates face?" "How can roommates resolve conflicts effectively?"

Role-Play Instructions (Script for the Teacher)

Introduction Today, you'll do a role-play addressing a conflict with a roommate. You'll practice explaining your viewpoint, understanding your roommate's perspective, and negotiating a solution. By the end, you'll create a detailed agreements list.

Assigning roles

- Students fill out character cards and randomly exchange them with classmates.

Understanding the Task

For Roommate A

Use your assigned character to describe the problem and your feelings clearly. Listen to your roommate and consider their perspective. Politely discuss and suggest possible solutions.

For Roommate B

Use your assigned character to describe your perspective on the issue. Listen actively to your roommate's concerns and feelings. Politely discuss and propose solutions to resolve the conflict.

Tangible Outcomes:

At the end of the activity, collaboratively produce a detailed Agreements Form summarizing your resolutions.

Observing and Feedback:

While role-playing, I will observe your problem-solving skills, use of vocabulary, and effective communication. Afterward, we'll discuss what went well and areas for improvement.

Final notes:

Use vocabulary lists and functional phrases. Remember, you're creating characters for your classmates, so be creative and detailed!

Instructions for Students

Roommate A/B

Role	Roommate resolving a conflict.
Task	Explain your viewpoint, negotiate, and complete an Agreements Form.
Before the Role-Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fill out detailed character cards (name, age, character, your preferences). - Exchange character cards with a classmate randomly.
During the Negotiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explain your perspective clearly and politely. - Listen actively and show understanding. - Suggest solutions and compromises.
After the Negotiation	Collaboratively fill in the Agreements Form with your roommate.

Agreements Form

Agreed solutions	Specific Details

Appendix 2. Example of a feedback discussion procedure

Feedback Discussion (use sticky notes):

1. What skill do you think you practised the most today (asking/answering the questions; using polite phrases; explaining ideas; negotiating)?
2. What was the most challenging part of the role-play?
3. What was the easiest part of the role-play?
4. Did you use any new vocabulary during speaking? If yes, what words did you use?
5. How did you feel about speaking today? Confident or unsure? Why?

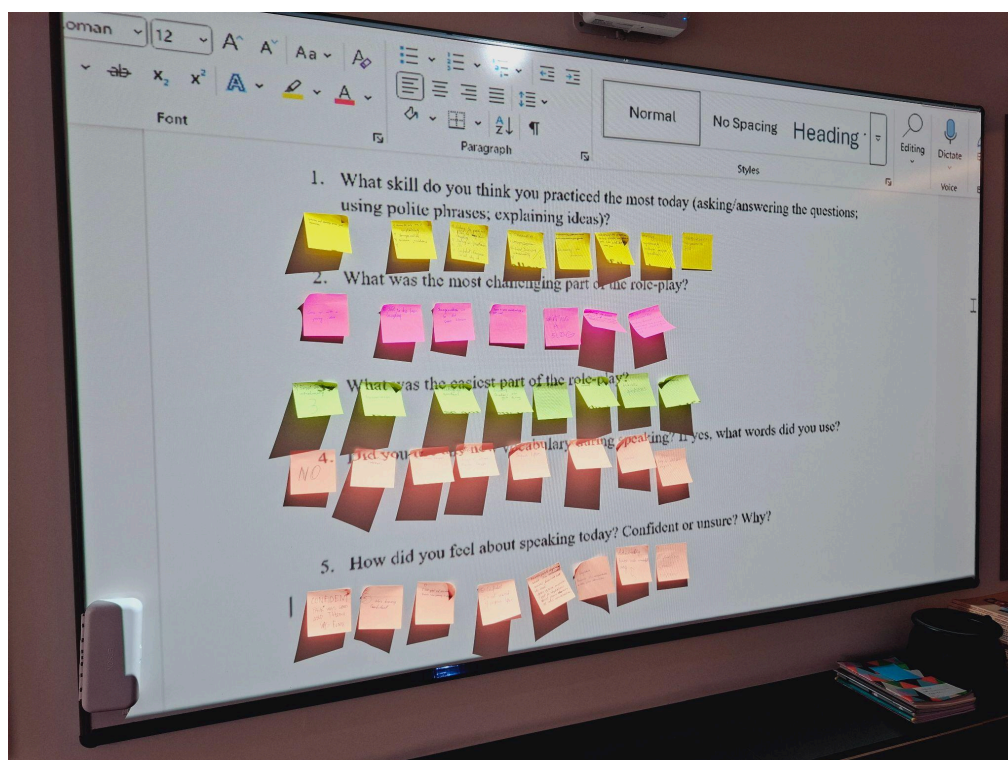


Figure 4. Example of a feedback discussion procedure (N. Trifonova, 2025)

Appendix 3. Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Student Self-Assessment Questionnaire (after each cycle)

1. How confident did you feel speaking during the role-plays?

- Very confident
- Somewhat confident
- Neutral
- A little hesitant
- Not confident at all

2. Which speaking skill do you think improved the most during the role-plays? Several options are possible.

- Asking questions
- Giving explanations
- Turn-taking in conversations
- Using new vocabulary
- Building fluency
- Negotiating and persuading

3. How effectively did you practice asking for clarification or explanations (e.g., "*Could you explain that further?*") during the role-plays?

- Very effectively
- Effectively
- Neutral
- Not very effectively
- Not at all

4. How effectively did the role-plays help you practice taking turns during a conversation?

- Very effectively
- Effectively
- Neutral
- Not very effectively
- Not at all

5. How effectively did you use new vocabulary or phrases during the role-plays?

- Very effectively
- Effectively
- Neutral
- Not very effectively
- Not at all

6. How useful were the role-plays in preparing you for real-life situations (e.g., job interviews or workplace conversations)?

- Very useful
- Useful
- Neutral
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all

7. What was the biggest challenge you faced during the role-plays?

8. Would you recommend including these role-plays as supplementary material to the textbook? Why? Why not?

9. What suggestions do you have for improving these role-plays or making them more useful for students?

Appendix 4. Responses to the questions under: clarification, turn-taking, vocabulary use.

Table 8. Responses to the questions under: clarification, turn-taking, vocabulary use

	Very effectively	Effectively	Neutral	Not very effectively	Not at all
Cycle 1 - Clarification	2	13	3	0	0
Cycle 2 - Clarification	2	9	5	3	0
Cycle 3 - Clarification	2	2	10	2	0
Cycle 1 - Turn-taking	6	8	4	0	0
Cycle 2 - Turn-taking	2	17	0	0	0
Cycle 3 - Turn-taking	2	6	8	0	0
Cycle 1 - use of new vocabulary	3	3	6	4	2
Cycle 2 - use of new vocabulary	0	5	8	0	6
Cycle 3 - use of new vocabulary	4	7	5	0	0

Appendix 5. Responses to Question 7.

What was the biggest challenge you faced during the role-plays?

Student	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
1	My partner does not have a good vocabulary, so I needed to help him.	I did not know some words. I used Russian. My partner helped me.	How to explain myself to a partner, whose level of English differs from mine.
2	Long instructions. Asked teacher.	No challenges. Boring.	Making sentences on the go. I solved it by thinking very fast.
3	To start a dialogue. Asked teacher.	To use appropriate vocabulary.	Come up with a new information about a character. Because it was created by my classmate, not me.
4	A lot of paper with information. Just read ten times.	Thinking on the spot. I needed to use textbook.	Sometimes I feel mental block when speaking, but then it disappeared and I was into a conversation. A supportive and friendly atmosphere in the classroom helped me.
5	Understand the instructions. Asked teacher.	Writing task.	To communicate with my partner and hold a good level of that. But I overcame it immediately
6	It was fun. No challenges.	I was trying to pronounce the words correctly, but it was hard. I asked the teacher for help.	It was difficult sometimes to negotiate with my partner. But a long discussion with explaining ideas helped us.
7	I struggled with writing.	Speaking spontaneously.	I guess I had to force myself at first, because I had a partner that I do not

			like much. But I understood it was necessary, so I overcame it.
8	I did not know some words. Used my phone to find a necessary word.	To use new vocabulary. I asked the teacher.	Speaking fluently with my partner seemed very challenging to me, but by concentrating I felt that I overcame this challenge.
9	To understand the purpose of a written task. Just wrote the text.	Writing after the roleplays was too boring.	Using good vocabulary.
10	Did not have any challenges.	Writing was too hard for me.	-
11	I did not like the instructions, they are too hard for me.	Creating realistic details for my character. We discussed it.	It was hard to negotiate. Teacher helped us.
12	I did not like the characters I got. Wanted to create myself.	No challenges.	-
13	My vocabulary is bad, so I asked for the words all the time.	To use new vocabulary. I tried.	My vocabulary.
14	Everything was easy and fun.	To manage time.	Teacher did not let us speak longer.
15	Did not have any challenges.	To stay in character.	No challenges.
16	Long instructions.	Instructions.	No challenges.
17	It was hard to take the role of a character, I wanted to be myself.	Writing.	-
18	Instructions are too complex.	It was hard to speak about the topic I do not face in real life.	-
19	-	To use new vocabulary.	No challenges.

Appendix 6. Responses to Question 8

Would you recommend including these role-plays as supplementary material to the textbook? Why? Why not?

Student	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
1	Yes, I would recommend including these role-plays in the textbook, because this is a good speaking practice that helps to prepare for real-life situations such as a conversation for a job interview or entering the university.	I would say yes, they are quite entertaining and efficient, but it should be thought through.	Yes, that would be very useful, very educational games.
2	Yes, but the topics should be more realistic and maybe chosen by the players.	Yes, because it is a creative exercise and good for students.	-
3	Yes, I would recommend this method. Because I personally was interested in the topics and that was not only educating and encouraging, but somewhat entertaining.	It is very interesting. Working in pairs makes discussions more interesting and useful. This helps to practice language, especially for those who are not interested in language learning.	-
4	Yes, because this material helps to study what to say in dialogues in real-life.	Yes, I recommend including these role-plays to the textbook, because this is funny and useful. It helps to prepare for conversations in real-life, also you train social skills.	Yes, because here we could try out problem-solving or finding solutions.
5	Yes, that is a good practice.	I would, because it is a very interactive and creative exercise and it gives you a chance to improve your speaking skills.	Their main task is to develop speaking skills, which is what we lack at school.
6	I think, yes. It is a fun and effective way to practice speech and language.	-	-

7	In my opinion, we have a lot of speaking in English, but we do not have a lot of role-plays. So, these role-plays could be in the textbook.	-	Such situations we have very often in our lives, so role-plays help to be prepared for them.
8	Yes, it is a good practice.	-	Yes, I would.
9	I thought the textbook already had this type of exercises. Anyways, I think it is very useful, so it should be there.	Yes, I would. They help to understand what you need to focus on and make you more confident.	-
10	Yes, you can add this type of exercise, because it can improve our communication skills.	Yes. They prepare you for real-life situations.	Yes. definitely.
11	Yes, I can recommend including these role-plays as supplementary material to the textbook. I think that it is very interesting for students and it is useful for the development of our speaking.	-	Yes, I would. Good preparation for exams.
12	Yes, because speaking practice is very important.	-	-
13	Yes, I would recommend them, especially for students who are struggling with speaking tasks. It would be beneficial.	-	I think that because very often the material in the textbook is very boring, but this type of exercise is like a fresh breath.
14	Yes, I think we can do these role-plays every lesson, it helps a lot	-	Yes, I like such activities. They are interesting.
15	I think yes, because people recently became very shy and scared, so they need to be prepared	Absolutely! Because that is funny and I personally prefer studying by playing.	-

	for a real life.		
16	Yes, it would be good to include these role-plays in the textbook because it helps a lot to improve the speaking part.	-	-
17	Yes, I like role-plays and I think my classmates also like them.	-	-
18	Definitely, yes. We have an examination next year and for me the speaking part is the most difficult. I think role-plays could help me	-	-
19	-	-	I would. It is a good practice for all the students.

Appendix 7. Responses to Question 9

What suggestions do you have for improving these role-plays or making them more useful for students?

Student	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
1	Maybe a lesson before the role-play, where students can learn new vocabulary for the next role-play.	Maybe try this game in a bigger group.	Please, can we try it out with the whole class?
2	Before the role-play, prepare characteristics: strengths or weaknesses. This helps to describe yourself in English using C1 vocabulary. Choose the job you want to apply for.	Give new vocabulary before the game.	-
3	During the role-plays we could be paired up with someone who we do not feel so confident with, like with friends or partners. This is needed to improve our speaking to other skills and to gather all the thoughts together and try to do your best and improve your skills to the maximum.	They need to be more explained and maybe to have a discussion, because in some role-plays I felt them half finished.	I think such lessons should be a necessary part not only in English.
4	Pick people who are not friends to make role-plays more effective	I would recommend students to speak more and not to be afraid of making mistakes.	Everything seemed perfect for me, but I would make role-plays shorter, so students would have more chances to speak to different partners.
5	More fun situations	More new vocabulary.	More situations.
6	Do them more often.	We could share the writing part.	I liked the last role-play. It was the most interesting. I also liked that we did the writing together.
7	Let the students create the topics themselves.	I need to prepare before speaking. A list of phrases would be nice.	I liked everything.

8	Give opportunities to use imagination to think details about the characters.	To write characters for the others and then randomly take them.	No correction needed.
9	To have a teacher listening to all of the pairs, not randomly. This will make students more knowledgeable of grammar and vocabulary they use.	I had fun and studied a lot. But it would be good to discuss more before the role-play.	More routes and more situations or varieties.
10	Give the students a “star-system” – from easiest vocabulary to hard.	Please, no more such writing tasks. I liked it when we worked together with a partner.	-
11	I cannot add anything, because I absolutely like the teacher’s ideas.	-	More vocabulary. We could add slang for example.
12	Do them more often.	-	-
13	To make them more complex. If you are in an uncomfortable situation, you realize your efforts.	To make a preparation part with some new words.	To make a plan for a role-play with exact time, topic and grammar we need to practice.
14	We can have some time to prepare and then all will present their dialogue to the teacher one by one.	-	-
15	Start small, so people could adapt to it.	Time limit would be a good idea.	-
16	Do them more often.	I have no idea.	-
17	Write the characters by yourself, not reading what has been done for you.	To listen to all of the classmates.	-
18	Randomly choose partners.	-	-
19	-	There should be a fixed time, because some people cannot stop speaking.	-

RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Natalia Trifonova

Integrating Task-Based Role-Plays into *Upstream Upper Intermediate* to support speaking skills in a Gymnasium context

Ülesandel põhinevate rollimängude lõimimine õpikuga *Upstream Upper Intermediate* kõneoskuse arendamiseks gümnaasiumi kontekstis

Magistritöö

2025

Lehekülgede arv: 94

Annotasioon:

Käesoleva magistritöö eesmärk on kavandada ja rakendada ülesandel põhinevaid rollimänge lisamaterjalidena õpikule *Upstream Upper Intermediate*, et toetada õpilaste suulise väljendusoskuse arengut. Töö sissejuhatuses püstitatakse järgmised uurimisküsimused:

1. Kuidas mõjutavad ülesandel põhinevad rollimängud õpilaste suulist väljendusoskust?
2. Millist konkreetset panust annavad rollimängud õpilaste kõneoskuse arendamisse?
3. Milliseid väljakutseid kogevad õpilased ja õpetaja rollimängude lõimimisel klassiruumi töösse?

Neile küsimustele vastamiseks kasutati tegevusuuringu meetodikat, mis koosnes kolmest tsüklist. Igas tsükli integreeriti tunnitegevustesse spetsiaalselt loodud rollimängud ning nende mõju õpilaste kõneoskusele uuriti süstemaatilise andmekogumise kaudu.

Magistritöö koosneb kahest põhiosast. Esimeses osas käsitletakse teoreetilist tausta: kõneoskuse olemust, ülesandel põhineva keeleõppe (TBLT) põhimõtteid ning rollimängude rolli keele omandamises. Teises osas kirjeldatakse uurimismetoodikat ning tegevusuuringu tsükleid koos andmekogumismeetoditega. Seejärel analüüsitakse kogutud andmeid ja tehakse kokkuvõtteid rollimängude tõhususe ning rakendamise väljakutsete kohta. Lõpetuseks esitatakse pedagoogilised soovitused ja vastused uurimisküsimustele.

Tulemused näitasid, et rollimängud toetasid suulise väljendusoskuse arengut, parandades õpilaste sujuvust, enesekindlust ja oskust spontaanselt suhelda. Samas jäi sõnavara omandamine ebaühtlaseks. Väljakutsetena ilmnisid juhiste mõistmine, ajasurve ja paars töö korraldus. Õpetaja jaoks tähendas tegevusuuring pidevat kohandamist ja süvenemist õpetamispraktikasse.

Märksõnad: ülesandel põhinev keeleõppe, rollimäng, tegevusuuring, kõneoskuse arendamine, inglise keel gümnaasiumis

Lihtlitsens lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja üldsusele kättesaadavamaks tegemiseks

Mina, Natalia Trifonova,

1. annan Tartu Ülikoolile tasuta loa (lihtlitsentsi) minu loodud teose

Implementing and Integrating Task-Based Role-Plays into Upstream Upper Intermediate to support speaking skill development in a Gymnasium context,

mille juhendaja on Liina Tammekänd,

1.1 reprodutseerimiseks säilitamise ja üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemise eesmärgil, sealhulgas digitaalarhiivi DSpace-is lisamise eesmärgil kuni autoriõiguse kehtivuse tähtaja lõppemiseni;

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Natalia Trifonova

Tartus, 11.05.2025

Autorsuse kinnitus

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Natalia Trifonova

11.05.2025