

Enhancing English Speaking Skills through Communicative Tasks among Vernacular Higher Secondary Students in Odisha

Mousumi Das Pattanaik^{1*} & Dr. Rakesh Kumar Tripathi²

¹PhD Scholar of English, Faculty of Arts, Communication and Indic Studies, SRI SRI University, Cuttack, Odisha.

²Associate Professor of English, Faculty of Arts, Communication and Indic Studies, SRI SRI University, Cuttack, Odisha.

*Corresponding Author Email: mousumi.pp1976@gmail.com

Abstract

English has been taught as a compulsory subject in Odisha's vernacular higher secondary schools for decades, yet a significant gap remains between theoretical knowledge and spoken fluency. This study examines how Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) tasks, specifically group discussions and role-plays, can bridge this gap among higher secondary science-stream students. A quasi-experimental, mixed-methods approach was conducted with 100 students from five colleges in Bhubaneswar, using pre- and post-intervention speaking tests assessing fluency, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, along with structured classroom observation checklists to monitor interactional competence, participation, and paralinguistic cues. Findings showed significant improvements in speaking performance, especially in fluency and vocabulary, while qualitative data indicated reduced anxiety, increased risk-taking, and better collaboration during communicative tasks. The study highlights that CLT-based activities offer a cost-effective, flexible strategy to enhance oral proficiency within examination-oriented science curricula and provides empirical insights with implications for both pedagogy and educational policy.

Keywords: *Communicative Language Teaching, Group Discussion, Role-Play, Speaking Fluency, Vernacular Students, Higher Secondary, Odisha.*

1. INTRODUCTION

English has emerged as a global language because of its vast use in international communication, particularly in global trade, research, science, technology, and higher education. Globally, over 1.5 billion people speak English either as a first or second language, making it the most widely used medium for communication (Statista, 2025). It is the dominant language of the internet, accounting for nearly 50% of all online content, and over 95% of articles indexed in international scientific databases are published in English (Web of Science, 2022). In today's interconnected world, English proficiency is necessary for personal, academic, and professional success.

It opens doors to many opportunities and allows individuals to connect globally. In India, English holds a unique position as both an official and link language in a multilingual nation with 22 scheduled languages and over 19,500 dialects (Census of India, 2011). It is the primary medium of instruction in higher education, especially in science, medicine, engineering, and technology, and serves as the language of administration, law, and the judiciary. The National Education Policy (2020) emphasizes English as vital for accessing global knowledge. Research shows that Indian professionals proficient in English earn higher salaries (Azam, Chin, & Prakash, 2013). Key sectors like IT and Business Process Outsourcing rely on English for international business. Thus, English connects linguistic communities in India and empowers students and professionals to engage in the global economy and academia.

1.1 Background of the Study

Mastering English is challenging due to its complex vocabulary, irregular grammar, diverse dialects, and context-specific usage. Speaking, among the four language skills, is crucial for effective communication. However, many vernacular students in India, including Odisha, struggle with oral proficiency. Classrooms are often teacher-centred, examination-oriented, and dominated by the mother tongue, leaving minimal opportunities for speaking practice. Traditional grammar-translation methods focus on written English, neglecting real-world communication. Mother tongue interference affects pronunciation, sentence structure, and intonation, while limited exposure to English outside class and fear of mistakes further hinder fluency. Additionally, teachers often lack training in spoken English instruction. This gap between theoretical knowledge and actual communication skills underscores the need for communicative approaches that enhance fluency, confidence, and accuracy among vernacular higher secondary students.

The Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE), Odisha, prescribes a textbook series known as "Invitation" (Invitation 1 to 4) for 11th and 12th students. "Invitation to English-1" and "Invitation to English-2" books are based on prose, poems, and stories. "Invitation to English-3" and "Invitation to English-4" books are based on writing paragraphs, notices, report writing, e-mail writing, and grammar. While these books are officially prescribed, they are completely writing-focused and exam-oriented. These books prioritize grammar drills, reading comprehension, translation, essay writing, letter writing skills, prose, poem, and story that align with the examination pattern but fail to promote oral competency. It has been observed that speaking and listening exercises are completely neglected in the language class. This textbook-oriented and examination-driven syllabus creates an academic culture that neglects the role of speaking English.

Mother tongue interference, particularly from Odia, complicates students' English speaking development. Phonological patterns, grammar structures, and vocabulary from Odia often distort stress, syllable emphasis, sentence construction, and word order in English. These issues stem from years of grammar-translation-based instruction, limited oral practice, and textbooks ("Invitations 1–4") that prioritize writing and examination skills over speaking and listening. Research in India has mainly focused on English-medium students, leaving vernacular-medium learners underrepresented, despite facing unique challenges such as minimal exposure to spoken English and mother tongue interference.

This study focuses on five higher secondary vernacular schools in Bhubaneswar, chosen to represent diverse yet typical institutions in Odisha. Implementing communicative language teaching strategies, particularly group discussions and role-plays, provides meaningful opportunities for collaborative speaking. These activities aim to reduce hesitation, improve fluency, enhance problem-solving skills, and build confidence, offering insights into improving oral proficiency in vernacular higher secondary contexts.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study emphasised English-speaking issues among science students from vernacular backgrounds at five higher secondary schools in Bhubaneswar. These students face challenges in English-speaking contexts due to academic, social, and linguistic constraints. They experience anxiety during seminars, presentations, or science exhibitions as they lack confidence to express themselves in English, and often avoid speaking roles in formal school ceremonies for fear of embarrassment.

The burden of the science curriculum reduces opportunities for oral practice. At the same time, students also fail to explain scientific processes or experiments in English despite being able to write them in exams. Students face several challenges, including pronunciation difficulties, translation from Odia sentence patterns, lack of fluency, limited vocabulary, and fear of making mistakes. They also lack exposure to fluent English and struggle with the poor integration of English into science classes. As a result, students are unable to participate effectively in group discussions or debates, even on familiar topics.

More specific problems include a lack of confidence, inadequate exposure to spoken English, a lack of self-motivation, and difficulty in expressing complex scientific concepts through English. Factors such as low interest in English, fear of ridicule, inattentiveness in class, reliance on Odia during English lessons, overcrowded classrooms, exam-oriented syllabus, lack of teaching equipment, teacher-centred methods, and excessive emphasis on science subjects contribute to the situation. Despite English being a compulsory subject, students are unable to speak effectively in English. Traditional teaching methods, which focus heavily on reading, writing, and examinations, and grammar. These types of teaching styles have little scope for communicative competence, resulting in poor speaking ability and low self-confidence.

The present study can bridge the gap between theoretical and practical application of English in real-life situations by implementing task-based activities like group discussions and role-play activities in the language class. It aims to demonstrate that task-based activities can enhance students' speaking skills, while also improving their confidence and motivation in using English in both academic and social contexts.

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1.3. Research Questions

1. What factors limit spoken English proficiency among vernacular-medium higher secondary science students in Odisha?
2. How effective are Group Discussion and Role-Play in improving their speaking skills?
3. What changes occur in fluency, confidence, vocabulary, and pronunciation after these interventions?

1.4. Speaking Issues among Higher Secondary Vernacular Science Students

Speaking English remains a major challenge for vernacular higher secondary students in Odisha due to limited exposure, fear of mistakes, low motivation, and mother-tongue interference affecting pronunciation, grammar, and sentence structure. Traditional grammar-translation methods, teacher-centred classrooms, and examination-focused curricula further restrict opportunities for oral practice, resulting in low fluency, confidence, and listening skills. Despite these barriers, speaking skills are crucial for academic success, career readiness, and personal growth, enhancing classroom participation, presentations, networking, and intercultural competence. Observations revealed that science-stream students often prioritize exams over language learning, showing hesitation and inactivity in English classes. Research highlights that speaking and listening form the foundation of language proficiency, and modern approaches like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), task-based learning, and proficiency-based instruction foster real-life communication and practical application. Recognizing these challenges, this study employs action research and descriptive qualitative methods to enhance students' speaking skills through communicative activities such as group discussions and role-plays, providing a supportive environment that encourages practice, confidence, engagement, and motivation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research has found that vernacular students often encounter difficulties in speaking English due to the influence of their mother tongue, examination-focused teaching, and limited opportunities for oral practice (Pattanaik, 2016; Behera, 2022). To overcome these English speaking issues, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) promotes meaningful communication, fluency, and learners' participation (Richards, 2006; Nunan, 2004). Similarly, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) uses real-life tasks to promote communication (Ellis, 2009; Willis, 1996). Communicative strategies such as group discussions and role-play activities have been found effective in improving fluency, reducing anxiety, and creating authentic communication opportunities (Thornbury, 2005; Harmer, 2007; Ladousse, 1995). However, very little research has been conducted on applying Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) or Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in higher secondary English classrooms. These issues related to the English speaking skills of higher secondary school leave a gap for further study.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is quasi-experimental, based on a one-group pre-test/post-test model. No control group is used, and all participants receive the intervention. A mixed-methods approach was employed to address both objective performance outcomes and subjective classroom experiences.

Component	Methodology Used
Research Design	Quasi-Experimental (Pre-test/Post-test)
Approach	Mixed Methods (Quantitative + Qualitative)
Duration	3 months
Tools	Tests, Rubrics, Observation Checklists, Feedback forms, questionnaire

3.1. Population and Sampling

The study was conducted in five higher secondary colleges in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, targeting vernacular medium students from Class XI and XII. One hundred students were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring participation from diverse academic and social backgrounds. A total of 100 students were selected for this study through purposive sampling. The decision of the researcher to limit the sample size to 100 was guided by both practical feasibility and research validity. Finally, selecting 100 participants keeps a balance between statistical reliability and practical feasibility, making the study purposeful.

Parameter	Details (100 students)
Colleges Involved	5 (20 students each)
Sampling Technique	Purposive sampling
Age Range	16–18 years
Language Background	Odia medium
Academic Level	Higher Secondary (Class XI & XII)

Group Structure

- Group Discussion: 10 groups of 10 students (2 per college)
- Role Play: 25 pairs of 2 students (5 per college)

4. RESEARCH TOOLS AND MATERIALS

Both quantitative and qualitative tools were used to measure the impact of group discussion and role-play on students' speaking skills, adapted to their linguistic level, educational background, and socio-cultural context.

4.1. Pre-test and Post-test Speaking Assessments

Structured oral proficiency tests were conducted before and after the intervention. The design drew on CEFR-based descriptors and frameworks by Nunan (2004) and Richards (2008). Nunan stresses that aligning language learning with CEFR enhances relevance, while Richards highlights that assessments should reflect real-life language use and communicative competence.

4.1.1. Speaking Test Design

4.1.1.1. Test Format: Each student responded orally for 2–3 minutes to assess fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and confidence in spontaneous communication.

4.1.1.2. Prompts: Tasks included self-introduction, daily routines, opinions on social topics, and hypothetical scenarios (e.g., “What would you do if you were the Prime Minister of India?”). These tested both linguistic competence and critical thinking in real-life and imaginative contexts.

4.1.2. Rubric for Assessment

The following speaking components were evaluated using a 5-point analytic scale:

Parameter	Description
Fluency	Ability to speak without unnecessary pauses or hesitation
Pronunciation	Clarity and intelligibility of speech
Grammar	Correct use of tenses, sentence structure, and syntax
Content	Use of an appropriate topic and varied vocabulary

Test scores were recorded individually and used for comparative analysis between pre- and post-intervention performance.

4.1.3. Observation Checklists

In each group discussion and role-play, the researcher used structured observation checklists from Thornbury (2005) and Willis (1996) to monitor linguistic behaviours and affective responses. The checklist assessed English vs. mother tongue usage, willingness to participate, ability to sustain conversation, and use of body language, intonation, and facial expressions. It also captured peer collaboration and turn-taking skills. These observations offered valuable qualitative insights into learners' engagement and speaking competence during the intervention.

4.1. 4. Questionnaire

A post-intervention student feedback form was used to gather subjective reflections through Likert-scale items, rating scales, and open-ended questions. It focused on areas such as confidence in speaking English, support from group discussions and role-play, interest and motivation in communicative learning, perceived gains in fluency and vocabulary, and suggestions for further language support. This feedback complemented the test results by highlighting learner perceptions and motivational factors.

4.2. Task Materials

The Group Discussion and Role-Play activities were carefully designed following Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) principles as outlined by Ellis (2003) and Willis & Willis (2007).

4.2.1. Group Discussion Tasks

These Tasks are designed to encourage collaborative communication, negotiation of meaning, and extended speech.

Topics

- a. The Influence of Social Media on Youth
- b. The Role of Education on Economic Growth
- c. Climate Change and Its Impact on Agriculture
- d. Women Empowerment
- e. The Unemployment Problem in India
- f. The Importance of Mental Health Awareness
- g. The Impact of Global Warming.
- h. Corruption is a barrier to Development.
- i. The Importance of Skill-Based Education.
- j. The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Education.
- k. Plastic Ban: Challenges and Solutions.
- l. Should Students Have a Uniform Dress Code in Schools?
- m. How Can Food Waste be reduced in India?
- n. Should Students Be Allowed to Use Mobile Phones in Schools?

- o. The Benefits of Extracurricular Activities in School Life.
- p. Is Homework Necessary for Students' Learning?
- q. Should Schools Organize More Field Trips for Students?
- r. Is it better to Live in a Village or a City?
- s. Technology Makes Life Easier or More Complicated.

Instructions: Students were given 10 minutes to prepare individually and 20 minutes to discuss in a group of 10.

4.2.2. Role-Play Scenarios for Speaking Skills Enhancement

Role-play activities reflected real-life contexts relevant to students' social, educational, and professional lives. Conducted in pairs, they followed Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) principles, with pre-task preparation focusing on vocabulary, model dialogues, and pronunciation, and post-task activities reinforcing learning and improving speaking skills.

Topics

- a. Doctor and Patient – A patient explains symptoms, and the doctor provides advice and prescriptions.
- b. Job Interview – One student plays an interviewer; the other responds with personal and academic details.
- c. College Admission Enquiry – Asking about available courses, fees, and hostel facilities.
- d. Train Station Dialogue – Asking timings of train, platform numbers, and ticket availability.
- e. Hotel Room Booking – Inquiring about room types, costs, and amenities.
- f. Bank Account Opening – Ask about the required documents and fill in an application form.
- g. Mobile Recharge Complaint – A student complains about the wrong recharge or network issues.
- h. Shopping in a Market – Bargaining and discussing price, quality, and quantity.
- i. Lost and Found – Reporting a lost mobile or ID card to a police officer or railway staff.
- j. Classroom Interaction with a New Teacher – Introducing oneself and asking questions about the syllabus or timetable.
- k. Ordering Food in a Restaurant – Requesting a menu, placing an order, and asking for the bill.
- l. Phone Conversation with a Friend – Making a plan to attend a local festival or movie.
- m. Visiting a Doctor's Clinic for Vaccination – Asking about symptoms, COVID precautions, or health tips.
- n. Applying for a Scholarship – The student inquires about eligibility, documents, and deadlines.
- o. Library Conversation – Requesting or returning a book, asking about due dates, and fines.
- p. Asking directions on the road – How can you reach the nearest hospital, bus stop, or ATM?
- q. Post Office Visit – Enquiring about sending a parcel or money order.

- r. Electricity Complaint at Customer Service – Reporting a power cut or faulty meter reading.
- s. Interview with a Local Leader or Headmaster – Asking about social issues or school development plans.
- t. Class Monitor and Student Discussion – Addressing classroom discipline, cleanliness, or cooperation.

Each role-play topic aimed to promote functional English, prioritize fluency over grammar, encourage collaboration and turn-taking, and allow practice of real-world language. Performed in pairs, these activities helped students simulate everyday communication, build confidence, and stay relevant to their socio-cultural context and future goals.

5. DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

The study used a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative tools. Data came from pre- and post-tests, questionnaires, group discussions, role-play activities, and classroom observations.

5.1. Observation of the Teaching and Learning Process

The researcher observed English classroom teaching and student interactions to identify challenges in motivation, fluency, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Discussions with students revealed anxiety in speaking English, mainly due to reliance on their native language (Odia). Teaching was largely syllabus- and exam-focused, with little emphasis on speaking practice. Many students could not read English newspapers fluently, mispronounced words, and had limited vocabulary. To address these issues, the researcher introduced interactive activities such as self-introductions, sharing strengths and weaknesses, habits, and dreams. These activities simulated real-life situations and encouraged English use, helping students build confidence, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. This led to the implementation of group discussions and role-play to enhance speaking skills.

5.2. Procedure for Distributing the Student Questionnaire

Before the study, the purpose of the research was explained to the students, highlighting the role of communicative approaches such as group discussions and role-play in improving English speaking skills. A structured questionnaire of 30 statements, designed in English and student-friendly, was administered to 100 participants after the post-test. The questionnaire aimed to capture students' confidence, fluency, grammar, vocabulary, attitudes toward communicative activities, and challenges in speaking English. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. During administration, students were assured of anonymity, informed that there were no right or wrong answers, and encouraged to provide honest feedback. The paper-based questionnaires were distributed during a regular English period, with 25–30 minutes allotted for completion. The researcher and English teacher assisted in clarifying doubts. Completed forms were collected immediately, coded with unique student IDs (without names), and prepared for systematic data analysis.

5.2.1. Ethical Consideration

Participation in the questionnaire was voluntary, with verbal consent obtained beforehand. Students who chose not to participate were not compelled.

5.2.2. Purpose and Use of the Questionnaire Data

The questionnaire data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Student feedback helped the researcher assess the impact of the intervention on learner confidence, identify persistent challenges in speaking English, evaluate satisfaction with group discussions and role-play, and validate the improvements observed in pre- and post-test scores.

5.3. Implementation of Group Discussion and Role-Play Activities

The implementation phase of the research was designed as a structured intervention to enhance English-speaking skills among 100 students across five higher secondary vernacular schools in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. The core activities involved group discussions and role-play tasks emphasising real-life communication, critical thinking, and confidence-building. This section elaborates on these activities' classroom application, structure, and pedagogical significance.

5.3.1. Group Discussion

5.3.1.1. Structure and Implementation of Group Discussion Sessions

Group discussion is a collaborative learning strategy that promotes interactive communication, critical thinking, and language development by improving fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, confidence, and listening skills. In this study, 100 students from five colleges (20 from each) participated, divided into groups of 10 based on varying English proficiency levels.

5.3.1.2. Grouping

Two groups were formed:

Group 1: students with low to moderate proficiency

Group 2: students with moderate proficiency

Moderate groups enabled richer exchanges, peer support, and modeling of effective communication.

5.3.1.3. Selection of Topics

Topics were age-appropriate, relevant, and engaging, such as:

- Influence of Social Media on Youth
- Role of Education in Economic Growth
- Climate Change and Agriculture
- Women Empowerment
- Unemployment Problem in India

5.3.1.4. Research Setting

Discussions were conducted in English classes, each lasting 20–30 minutes over eight weeks, with pre- and post-tests. The researcher moderated and facilitated to keep sessions structured and productive. Table 1 represents the timeline for group discussion activities of 8 weeks.

Table 1: Timeline for Group Discussion Activities (8 Weeks)

Week	Activities	Remarks
Week 1	Orientation + Pre-test (2 GD groups of 10 students per college)	Baseline assessment using rubric: Fluency, Grammar, Pronunciation, Content
Week 2	GD Session 1: Topic-based discussion (1st group in each college)	Preparation, discussion, teacher observation
Week 3	GD Session 2: Topic-based discussion (2nd group in each college)	Peer feedback and teacher's comments
Week 4	GD Session 3: Mixed groups or new topic with same group	Encourage improvement, use of feedback
Week 5	GD Session 4: Same or rotated groups with different topic	Build confidence and vocabulary usage
Week 6	GD Session 5: Practice session to simulate test environment	Trial for post-test
Week 7	Rest, reflection, peer-review session	Students prepare and review past performances
Week 8	Post-Test GD (same groups as pre-test)	Final evaluation using same rubric, recorded if possible

5.3.1.5. Classroom Procedure for Conducting Group Discussions

The group discussion methodology comprised four phases: Preparation, Implementation, Observation, and Feedback. During the preparation phase, the researcher selected a mix of general and academic topics, prepared guidelines, explained objectives, and allowed students time to prepare. In the implementation phase, students were divided into two groups of 10, assigned topics (Global Warming for Group 1, Unemployment in India for Group 2), and instructed to respect speaking turns and stay on topic. The researcher acted as a moderator, motivated students to express opinions in English, ensured constructive discussions, and engaged some students as audience members to inspire participation. Each student spoke for 2–3 minutes and was evaluated using a 20-mark speaking rubric.

5.3.1.6. The Rubric of Group Discussions Assessment (Total 20 Marks)

Date:

Name:

Topic:

Class:

Criteria	Excellent(05)	Good (04)	Satisfactory(03)	Needs Improvement (2 or below)
Fluency Grammar	Smooth and confident with no pauses Error-free, complex sentences used well	Minor pauses, fairly fluent A few minor errors Understandable	Occasional long pauses, break the flow Errors occasionally hinder meaning	Frequent hesitations disrupt the flow Frequent errors disrupt communication
Pronunciation	Accurate and clear throughout	Mostly accurate, some minor slips	Understandable with effort	Inconsistent, hinders understanding
Content	Highly relevant, well-developed points	Logical and mostly relevant points	Basic ideas, some relevance	Off-topic or lacks structure

5.3.1.7. Implementation phase-2

The second phase of group discussions took place the next day with the same groups, covering Women's Empowerment (Group 1) and Impact of Social Media on Society (Group 2). Each group had ten minutes to prepare and 20–30 minutes to discuss. The researcher assessed performance using the Rubric of Speaking, providing individual feedback on fluency, grammar, pronunciation, and content, along with suggestions to enhance participation. This procedure was repeated in four other higher secondary schools in Bhubaneswar, with topics including Mental Health Awareness, Climate Change, Artificial Intelligence, and Technology in Education.

5.3.1.8. Observation Phase

The researcher carefully observed group discussion sessions to assess students' speaking skills, focusing on fluency (speaking without unnecessary pauses), pronunciation (accurate and understandable), vocabulary (appropriate and varied word use), confidence (expressing opinions confidently), engagement (active peer interaction), and listening skills (attentive comprehension).

5.3.1.9. Feedback Phase

After each group discussion, the researcher provided constructive feedback, highlighting students' strengths and areas for improvement, discussed everyday challenges observed during the sessions, and encouraged students to reflect on their performance while suggesting ways to enhance their speaking skills.

5.3.1.10. Ethical Considerations

The researcher adhered to ethical guidelines by ensuring confidentiality of students' performance and responses, creating a comfortable environment for free expression without fear of judgment, and emphasizing that participation was entirely voluntary.

5.3.2. Structure and Implementation of Role-Play Activities

This study implemented structured role-play activities for higher secondary students in five schools in Bhubaneswar, using authentic scenarios such as ordering food, attending job interviews, and participating in group discussions. The activities aimed to enhance speaking skills, confidence, and vocabulary through pre- and post-test assessments and student feedback. Role-play also addressed challenges like speaking anxiety and limited vocabulary, helping students communicate more confidently. These findings highlight the effectiveness of role-play as a pedagogical tool and offer insights for teachers implementing similar methods.

5.3.2.1. Participants

The study involved students from five higher secondary schools, with 20 students per session participating in role-play activities. Students were paired into 10 groups of two per college, ensuring active participation and personalized feedback for each student.

5.3.2.2. Grouping Strategy

Students were divided into ten pairs, with each pair assigned a specific role-play topic reflecting real-life situations. Topics varied to include both formal and informal communication scenarios.

5.3.2. 3. Research Setting

Role-play sessions were conducted in English language classes across five higher secondary colleges in Bhubaneswar. Each session lasted 10–15 minutes, depending on topic complexity and student engagement.

5.3.2.4. Role-Play Activities: Timeline (8 Weeks)

Week	Activities	Details
1	Orientation & Pre-Test	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction to role-play methodology and objectives 2. Explanation of the assessment rubric (fluency, grammar, pronunciation, content – 5 marks each) 3. Each of the 10 student pairs per college receives a role-play scenario (10 minutes for preparation) 4. Each pair performs in front of class (10–20 minutes) 5. The researcher evaluates each student individually using the rubric
2	Practice Session 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scenario “At a Railway Station” / “Visiting a Doctor” 2. Two–Three pairs of group to perform in each class 3. Emphasis on spontaneity and interaction 4. Peer observation is encouraged 5. Brief teacher feedback to follow each performance
3	Practice Session 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Topic: Ordering food at a restaurant and “Booking a bus ticket” 2. Two–three different pairs perform 3. Vocabulary and grammatical correction
4	Language Drill	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Language drills based on common role-play errors like grammar, pronunciation. 2. Mini role-play segments for weak performers
5	Practice Session 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Topic: “Parent–Child Career Talk” / “Bank Customer and Manager” 2. Two–Three new groups perform
6	Practice Session 4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emphasis on confidence-building and using role-specific vocabulary 2. Encouraging peer-to-peer feedback sessions
7	Encouraging peer-to-peer feedback sessions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All pairs participate in brief mock assessments 2. Feedback from facilitator on performance growth since Week 1 3. Review of commonly misused expressions and pronunciation patterns
8	Post-Test Evaluation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Final role-play assessment using new but structurally similar scenarios (e.g., “At the Police Station”, “Student with the Principal”) 2. Same evaluation rubric used as in the pre-test 3. Comparison with pre-test results to assess improvement

5.3.2.5. Procedure for Conducting Role-Play

Step 1: Introduction to Role-Play

The researcher explained the purpose of role-play, highlighting vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, body language, active listening, and communication.

Step 2: Assigning Topics

Pairs of students were assigned topics fairly, based on their interests and comfort levels.

Step 3: Preparing for Role-Play

Students were given 10 minutes to discuss roles, plan language, and practice dialogues briefly.

Step 4: Conducting the Role-Play

Each pair performed in front of the class while the researcher observed fluency, pronunciation, confidence, engagement, and content.

Step 5: Post-Activity Feedback and Discussion

The researcher provided constructive and peer feedback, and discussed the real-life relevance of the role-play to make it meaningful and enjoyable.

5.3.2.6. Data Collection Methods

The researcher used a mixed-method approach to evaluate the effectiveness of the role-play activities.

5.3.2.6.1. Observation

During role-play, the researcher assessed students' presentations focusing on fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, confidence (body language, eye contact), and engagement with peers.

5.3.2.6.2. Questionnaire

After the role-play sessions, students completed a questionnaire to assess the activity. It focused on their comfort level before and after role-play, the impact on speaking skills, challenges faced (fluency, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation), and suggestions for future topics.

5.3.2.7. The Rubric for Role plays (Total -20 Marks)

The role-play activities will be evaluated using a rubric that assesses various aspects of speaking skills.

Criteria	Excellent (05)	Good (04)	Satisfactory (03)	Needs Improvement (02 or below)
Fluency	Speaks smoothly without pauses	Mostly fluent with minor pauses	Uneven delivery, some hesitation	Struggles to speak fluently.
Grammar	Grammatical structures used effectively	Few minor errors, does not hinder	Moderate errors, slight confusion	Frequent errors, disrupts message
Pronunciation	Clear and accurate pronunciation.	Few minor errors.	Noticeable errors, but understandable.	Pronunciation errors hinder understanding.
Content	Realistic, engaging, well-developed	Logical, mostly relevant	Limited ideas, not relevant	Off-topic or lacks coherence

6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

In this study, the researcher adhered to ethical values by obtaining oral consent from students and school authorities, ensuring confidentiality of feedback, and creating a supportive environment that encouraged open participation without fear of judgment. Participation was voluntary, and these measures helped maintain both the integrity of the research and the credibility of its findings.

7. DISCUSSIONS WITH STUDENTS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

After the group discussions, the researcher engaged in friendly conversations with students and English teachers to gather feedback on implementing group discussions and role-play activities. She explained the purpose of the study, encouraged students to share their experiences, and invited reflections on both positive and negative aspects, challenges, and peer interactions.

Students also discussed how these activities influenced their confidence and speaking abilities, while teachers provided their perspectives. These discussions offered valuable insights into improving the effectiveness of such activities in the English classroom.

8. DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher collected data from 100 higher secondary vernacular students in five Bhubaneswar colleges using pre-tests, post-tests, classroom observations, and student feedback. A mixed-methods approach combined quantitative scores (fluency, grammar, pronunciation, content—20 marks total) with qualitative reflections. Results showed significant improvement in speaking proficiency after group discussions and role-plays.

Classroom insights highlighted gains in confidence, reduced hesitation, and active English use. Topics such as Women Empowerment, Environmental Awareness, and Digital India, along with role-plays like doctor-patient interaction, job interviews, and bank conversations, provided real-life practice.

Overall, the findings confirm that group discussions and role-plays enhanced accuracy, fluency, confidence, motivation, and willingness to speak English in real contexts.

8.1. Group Discussion Improvement

Student	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score	Improvement
1	8	12	4
2	9	14	5
3	10	13	3
4	5	12	7
5	7	15	8
6	9	13	4
7	5	13	8
8	5	13	8
9	7	14	7
10	7	13	6
11	7	12	5
12	7	13	6
13	9	13	4
14	9	12	3
15	10	13	3
16	9	14	5
17	8	13	5
18	8	14	6
19	9	14	5
20	5	15	10
21	10	13	3
22	8	12	4
23	5	12	7
24	5	14	9
25	6	13	7
26	6	14	8
27	6	15	9
28	5	14	9
29	6	15	9
30	7	16	9
31	6	14	8
32	8	15	7

33	6	14	8
34	7	14	7
35	8	15	7
36	8	15	7
37	6	16	10
38	5	16	11
39	6	14	8
40	5	12	7
41	9	15	6
42	10	16	6
43	9	15	6
44	8	16	8
45	5	16	11
46	8	15	7
47	9	14	5
48	6	15	9
49	6	15	9
50	5	15	10
51	7	15	8
52	10	15	5
53	6	14	9
54	5	13	8
55	5	15	10
56	7	14	7
57	6	12	6
58	5	13	8
59	8	14	6
60	6	14	8
61	5	15	10
62	5	14	9
63	7	13	6
64	6	13	8
65	7	16	9
66	7	13	6
67	7	15	8
68	5	13	8
69	5	13	8
70	6	13	7
71	6	14	8
72	7	13	6
73	6	12	6
74	7	13	6
75	9	14	5
76	6	16	10
77	7	12	5
78	6	14	8
79	7	13	6
80	4	15	11
81	6	13	7
82	6	14	8
83	5	14	9
84	6	15	9
85	5	15	10
86	4	14	10
87	4	11	7

88	8	14	6
89	5	15	10
90	9	13	4
91	6	13	7
92	8	14	6
93	10	11	4
94	6	12	6
95	5	13	8
96	8	14	6
97	8	13	5
98	5	15	10
99	7	14	7
100	7	14	7

8.2. Quantitative Analysis of Group Discussion Activity

Metric	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Improvement
Total Score (All 100 Students)	657	1354	697
Mean Score (20 in each college)	6.57	13.54	6.97
Minimum Score	4	11	7
Maximum Score	10	16	6

8.3. Role-Play Activity Improvement

Student	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Improvement
1	6	10	4
2	7	11	4
3	4	11	7
4	5	12	8
5	4	10	6
6	4	11	7
7	5	12	7
8	6	12	6
9	4	11	7
10	5	12	7
11	4	13	9
12	5	14	9
13	5	12	7
14	4	12	8
15	4	12	8
16	4	12	8
17	5	12	7
18	5	11	6
19	5	13	8
20	5	11	6
21	4	11	7
22	5	12	7
23	4	13	9
24	5	14	9
25	4	12	8
26	5	10	5
27	4	11	7
28	5	11	6
29	7	13	6
30	4	13	9
31	5	13	8

32	4	12	8
33	4	12	8
34	5	12	7
35	4	12	8
36	6	13	7
37	7	12	5
38	5	12	7
39	5	13	8
40	4	12	8
41	8	12	4
42	5	14	9
43	5	14	9
44	7	13	6
45	4	13	9
46	7	12	5
47	4	12	8
48	5	12	7
49	6	12	6
50	6	12	6
51	4	13	9
52	6	13	7
53	4	13	9
54	4	14	10
55	7	11	4
56	4	12	8
57	6	12	6
58	6	13	7
59	4	13	9
60	4	12	8
61	6	11	5
62	4	12	8
63	4	13	9
64	5	11	6
65	5	13	8
66	5	11	8
67	4	12	8
68	4	12	8
69	7	12	5
70	4	11	7
71	4	12	8
72	5	12	7
73	4	12	8
74	4	13	9
75	6	11	5
76	4	12	8
77	6	13	7
78	6	14	8
79	4	12	8
80	4	13	9
81	6	10	4
82	4	12	8
83	6	12	6
84	4	13	9
85	4	12	8
86	6	12	6

87	4	14	10
88	6	12	6
89	4	13	9
90	6	12	6
91	4	11	7
92	6	11	5
93	8	12	4
94	5	13	8
95	7	12	5
96	5	12	7
97	6	12	6
98	5	12	7
99	4	12	8
100	4	12	8

8.4. Qualitative Findings

The study revealed greater voluntary participation, reduced reliance on Odia, and improved use of gestures, intonation, and expressions. Peer support and turn-taking became more natural, while many students experimented with new language forms and self-corrected without teacher intervention.

9. DISCUSSION

The study confirms that group discussions and role-play activities effectively bridge the gap between textbook knowledge and spoken fluency, improving both accuracy and fluency. Importantly, integrating these communicative tasks complemented the exam-oriented science curriculum, showing that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) can be applied in English classes without disrupting the syllabus.

10. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study shows that group discussions and role-plays significantly enhance the speaking skills, confidence, and motivation of vernacular higher secondary students in Odisha.

Pedagogical implications: Teachers can use short, focused communicative tasks even in overcrowded, exam-driven classrooms.

Policy implications: Curriculum developers should balance written and oral skills to prepare students for both exams and real-world communication.

11. SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study examined the effectiveness of group discussions and role-play among higher secondary students in five vernacular colleges in Bhubaneswar, it opens avenues for future research. Studies could expand to other regions of Odisha to compare linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic factors, examine long-term impacts of communicative approaches on fluency, pronunciation, and confidence, explore digital tools (e.g., YouTube, WhatsApp, Duolingo) for vernacular learners, and conduct comparative analysis between English-medium and vernacular-medium students to identify gaps and optimize teaching strategies.

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