

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ROLE PLAY TECHNIQUE TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL

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Abstract

Speaking remains an important but difficult skill for EFL learners due to the fear of being assessed and not having the opportunity for hands-on practice. In this study, 24 peer-reviewed articles from 2022–2025 were examined. The study employed a qualitative descriptive library research approach. Based on the findings, role-playing significantly enhanced students' confidence, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency by offering a secure and engaging setting. Furthermore, it reduces language anxiety and promotes imaginative and cooperative activities. It is primarily implemented through the use of structured group activities, reflective follow-up, and realistic scenarios. According to this study, role-playing enhances students' social and psychological growth as well as their language proficiency. Consequently, it is strongly advised that role play be used frequently in EFL classes.

Keywords: *EFL Speaking, Fluency, Language Anxiety, Learner Confidence, Role Play*

I. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is considered a core skill in ELF learning as it allows learners to express themselves accurately and build confidence in real-life communication. Idham, Subramaniam, and Khan (2022) argue that role-playing exercises assist students in overcoming their fear and improving their fluency in self-expression. Additionally, Kadafie (2022) highlights that when students practice speaking through role-playing, they become more driven and less fearful of making mistakes. Role play improves engagement and makes speaking practice more interesting and realistic, according to research by Alghamdy (2022). Role-playing exercises help pupils simultaneously improve their vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency, according to Khamouja and Mohamed (2023). As a result, using role-playing strategies helps EFL students become more confident and competent speakers.

Despite its significance, a number of psychological issues make it difficult for many EFL students to talk clearly and confidently. Speaking anxiety continues to be one of the main barriers preventing kids from performing well in the classroom, according to Theriana (2023). Additionally, Yousefabadi, Ghasemnezhad, and Akbarie (2022) pointed out that low motivation and high anxiety can make students less confident while speaking up. According to Abrar, Fajaryani, and Habizar (2022), students' reluctance to talk spontaneously is further increased when they have less opportunities to practice speaking. In a similar vein, Omar (2023) noted that students are frequently deterred from active involvement by their fear of receiving unfavorable feedback from teachers and peers. In order to create speaking exercises that are encouraging and anxiety-free, educators must be aware of these obstacles.

In EFL classes, role-playing is a creative way to get around speaking challenges. According to Rosmayanti, Ramli, and Rafiq (2023), role play offers secure environments where students can rehearse talks from everyday life. According to Robert and Meenakshi (2022), role-playing helps students become more self-assured and communicate their thoughts more fluidly. According to Kafipour, Dakhil, and Khojasteh (2023), role play provides repeated exposure to new language in context, which enhances speaking fluency and vocabulary retention. According to Irkinovich (2022), role-playing games increase students' motivation and engagement in their communication education. Consequently, using role-playing exercises is a good method to increase the speaking proficiency and self-assurance of EFL students.

The beneficial effects of role play on EFL students' speaking skill development have been supported by numerous recent research. According to Ilham and Lukman (2024), role-playing greatly improves students' accuracy and fluency in class interactions. According to Samaranayake and Kositchaivat (2024), role play enables students to practice a variety of conversations, boosting spontaneity and reducing fear. According to Ly (2024), students who participated in role-playing scored better than their peers in terms of vocabulary and pronunciation. According to Zulfa, Suryanti, and Tazali (2024), group role-playing also fosters self-confidence and collaboration, which

enable pupils to talk more naturally. Overall, the results demonstrate that role play helps EFL students in both language and psychology.

Therefore, this study synthesizes recent research and proposes practical recommendation for integrating role play effectively into ELF speaking instruction. Using a qualitative library research methodology, it examines peer-reviewed journal papers published between 2022 and 2025. This paper reviews current research and offers useful advice for English teachers on how to create speaking classes that work. The paper also discusses difficulties and suggestions for using role play in various EFL contexts. According to Ridayani and Purwanto (2024), role-playing exercises encourage genuine communication and genuine language use in the classroom. Additionally, role-playing increases student engagement and lowers speaking anxiety, according to Lahbib and Farhane (2023). According to Maulana and Lolita (2023), this method encourages students to talk in front of their classmates with greater assurance and accuracy. Last but not least, role play boosts students' confidence and motivates them to practice public speaking, according to Kumar, Qasim, and Mansur (2022). Thus, this study examines current research and offers recommendations for educators looking to successfully implement role-playing techniques.

In summary, speaking is still an essential ability for EFL students, but many still struggle because of fear, insecurity, and a lack of practice. By offering a stimulating and encouraging learning environment, role play has become a viable and successful way to deal with these issues. This method helps students become more confident, speak more eloquently, and utilize language more naturally. In order to optimize student participation and performance, this study summarizes theoretical and practical observations and recommends that teachers use role play in speaking courses. Additionally, it is anticipated that future research would examine innovative role-playing applications in other EFL learning environments.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In EFL training, role-playing has emerged as one of the most talked-about teaching methods, especially when it comes to speaking abilities. Role play has been defined and analyzed from a variety of perspectives by scholars. According to Aziz and Ishak (2022), role play is a communicative classroom technique that facilitates meaningful language practice by giving students roles that mimic real-world discussions. Similar to this, Roengrit and Wathawatthana (2023) stress the value of role play in creating enjoyable and safe language learning environments, particularly for elementary school pupils who gain from interaction-based learning. Both studies concur that role play actively engages students and improves communication in the classroom, however the latter concentrates on real-world classroom implementation while the former emphasizes theoretical foundations.

Role-playing has a well-established effect on pupils' speaking fluency. Students that participate in role-playing activities exhibit higher verbal output and greater confidence when starting conversations, according to Murillo and Vaca-Cárdenas (2023). They contend that more linguistic automatization results from interaction-rich activities like role-playing. Tsai (2025), however, presents a nuanced viewpoint by differentiating between scripted and unstructured role play, arguing that the latter produces more sustained cognitive benefits, such as improved improvisation and spontaneous speaking. Although the fluency benefits of role play are confirmed by both studies, Tsai's research emphasizes the need for activity design that strikes a balance between creativity and organization.

Researchers have looked into the psychological benefits of role play in addition to its linguistic effects. According to Nurwahida and Ardin (2024), role play helps students who are nervous about speaking by letting them act out characters they have envisioned rather than as themselves. Students who feel detached are more willing to take chances and prioritize communication over accuracy. In the meantime, Camprubí (2023) emphasizes motivation as a key component, describing how role play's joyful quality encourages emotional involvement and learning delight. These results highlight

how role play fosters the emotive domain and enhances technical speaking skills, increasing learners' self-assurance and communication willingness.

Considerate classroom implementation is necessary for effective role play. In order to facilitate student interactions and guarantee inclusivity, Abad Amón and García Peralta (2022) suggest utilizing role cards, structured scripts, and visual signals. Their results highlight how important it is for teachers to scaffold language during the activity. On the other hand, Zulfa (2025) notes that smaller groups during role-playing sessions enable more fair participation and expand opportunities for peer criticism, which improves student self-awareness and introspection. In order to make sure that role-playing exercises actually promote learning objectives, it is important to carefully design, facilitate, and evaluate the activity after it has been completed.

The literature, in conclusion, supports the educational benefits of role-playing for improving speaking abilities in EFL settings. Although research focuses vary, with some emphasizing structure and fluency and others emphasizing affective advantages and real-world applications, all studies concur that the technique has the ability to establish meaningful, student-centered learning settings. This diversity of viewpoints offers a strong basis for future research into role play as an engaging and flexible teaching method.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive library research design and focuses on 24 peer-reviewed publications that explore the use of role play to enhance the speaking abilities of EFL students published between 2022 and 2025. The literature was chosen for its academic integrity, recency, and topical relevance. Aziz and Ishak (2022) suggest that library-based research allows academics to develop arguments by critically analyzing previously published scholarly works without having to make actual field observations. Similarly, Tsai (2025) emphasizes that descriptive qualitative synthesis can be used to find emergent insights, theoretical underpinnings, and pedagogical patterns in a variety of educational studies. This approach allows for a comprehensive

understanding of how role play has been applied and evaluated across recent ELF contexts.

IV. FINDINGS

This study looked at 24 peer-reviewed journal articles from 2022 to 2025 to see how roles play help EFL students become more proficient speakers. Three key conclusions emerged from a qualitative synthesis of the study: pedagogical implementation strategies, psychological and affective gains, and language improvement. Every subject illustrates a crucial element that contributes to role-playing's efficacy in EFL classes.

Linguistic Enhancement

Fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary development are among the fundamental speaking skills that role-play consistently improves. Several studies have found that children who participate in structured role-play activities produce spoken output that is longer, more complex, and more accurate (Ly, 2024; Nasution, Purba, & Damanik, 2024). Furthermore, the pupils were more capable of starting and maintaining discussions, which promoted increased oral engagement in the classroom. Students can acquire situational and relevant language that is comparable to what occurs in the real world through interactive and repetitive role-playing. Conversely, it fosters increased independence and spontaneity and aids in internalizing verbal patterns. Through constant contextual exposure, the realistic, task-based setting of role play was very successful in promoting accurate pronunciation and vocabulary use.

Psychological and Emotional Benefits

The examined literature emphasizes role play's significant influence on learners' psychological preparedness to speak, in addition to its linguistic advantages. Speaking in EFL classes is sometimes hindered by anxiety and fear of being judged (Theriana, 2023; Yousefabadi et al., 2022). By enabling students to speak via fictional characters rather than as themselves, role play helps to lessen these emotive barriers. Students feel less self-conscious and are encouraged to take chances with their communication

thanks to this psychological distance. Students who were originally hesitant to talk showed a considerable rise in confidence and self-expression, according to Setyawan and Sarifudin (2025)

Pedagogical Efficiency and Execution Techniques

The literature's third subject focuses on the most effective ways to use role play to achieve desired results. It takes careful planning, explicit guidance, and organized instructor support for role play to be effective. Cifuentes (2024) asserts that more egalitarian participation and peer interaction are made possible by grouping students into small, cooperative groups. Using well-known, context-rich scenarios that mimic actual communicative activities, including interviews, shopping chats, or workplace simulations, is advised by Ridayani and Purwanto (2024). In order to ensure inclusivity and lessen cognitive overload, visual aids, role cards, and guided prompts can be used to scaffold language for lower-level learners. According to Lahbib and Farhane (2023), reflection exercises—such as self-evaluation, peer review, or teacher-led debriefings that motivate students to analyze and critique their speaking experiences—are also essential for enhancing learning. Role play becomes an inclusive and pedagogically sound approach that fits with curriculum goals and learner needs when these components are incorporated into lesson design

In summary, the studies under consideration confirm that role play has a variety of uses in teaching EFL speaking. When used carefully, it greatly enhances students' language skills, lowers psychological obstacles to communication, and promotes active classroom participation. These results imply that role play is a fundamental teaching tool that promotes language development and learner empowerment in a variety of EFL contexts, rather than just a supplemental approach.

V. DISCUSSION

Role play is a teaching framework that fosters language competence, psychological resilience, and classroom engagement in addition to being a speaking practice technique, according to a review of 24 recent studies. By relating the three

main findings—linguistic improvement, affective benefits, and pedagogical strategies—to accepted theoretical viewpoints and practical teaching consequences, this article expands on them.

Linguistic Gains from Authentic Interaction

The enhancement of students' fluency, vocabulary, and pronunciation is widely validated in the literature. Role play encourages learners to produce authentic language, which helps them internalize grammatical and lexical structures. Shirazifard and Abbasian (2022) discovered that collaborative dialogues in role play encourage students to expand their output beyond memorized portions and toward more sophisticated, spontaneous expression. These findings support the assumption that interaction-rich activities increase both the quantity and quality of learners' speaking performance. As learners negotiate meaning, they must access and restructure their linguistic resources in real time, which promotes interlanguage development.

Affective Support and Reduced Language Anxiety

Role play contributes significantly to lowering affective barriers such as anxiety, self-doubt, and fear of public speaking—common obstacles in EFL classrooms. Rabahi and Makhoul (2025) reported that students engaged in role play activities displayed reduced levels of foreign language speaking anxiety and increased willingness to communicate. These outcomes were particularly pronounced when learners took on fictional roles, which helped them separate their personal identity from the risk of negative judgment. The emotional safety provided by role play settings is instrumental in facilitating risk-taking behaviors, an essential component of language acquisition. Additionally, Fortuna (2025) emphasizes that positive learner attitudes foster a lower affective filter, which, in turn, enhances the reception and processing of language input in speaking tasks.

Strategic implementation improves effectiveness.

While the benefits of role play are obvious, the research warns that its effectiveness is greatly dependent on how it is applied. Scaffolding, scenario design, and reflective follow-up are all important, according to studies. According to Cifuentes

(2024), role play works best when learners are supported by organized group roles, goal-oriented engagement, and instructor modeling. Similarly, Lahbib and Farhane (2023) discovered that reflection and peer feedback greatly improve metacognitive awareness and speaking accuracy. These findings are consistent with current sociocultural learning theories, which suggest that contact and mediation impact learners' communicative development in meaningful environments.

Implications for EFL Instruction

The incorporation of role play into speaking training should not be viewed as optional, but rather as essential to a communicative curriculum. Given the numerous benefits, EFL teachers are urged to create role play projects that are culturally relevant, level-appropriate, and participatory. Role play is a highly strong method, especially in circumstances where learners have limited experience to actual English speech. According to studies by Cifuentes (2024) and Fortuna (2025), role play promotes both linguistic growth and student engagement, reinforcing its importance as a key approach in EFL classrooms.

Limitation and Future Directions

This study, which is based on qualitative synthesis, does not incorporate empirical classroom data. According to Tsai (2025), the distinction between scripted and unscripted role play requires further empirical inquiry to assess its implications on classroom outcomes. Future research should look at the long-term impacts of role play in various educational environments, comparing scripted versus unscripted role play activities and investigating how individual learner factors (e.g., personality, learning style) affect outcomes. Quantitative classroom-based study would also provide more detailed data about how role play affects measurable speaking performance indicators over time.

VI. CONCLUSION

Role play is an effective technique to address common speaking challenges in EFL classrooms, such as anxiety, fear of judgment, and limited fluency. By simulating

real-life situations, students can practice spontaneous communication, improve pronunciation and vocabulary, and gain speaking confidence in a supportive setting. Beyond linguistic benefits, role play also fosters soft skills like collaboration and creativity. As supported by recent literature, when well-designed and guided, role play transforms speaking activities into interactive, meaningful experiences. Therefore, it should be considered a key strategy in EFL speaking instruction.

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