Bridging Classroom and Communication: The Impact of Role-Playing on EFL Speaking Proficiency in Southern Israel

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of role-playing activities on the development of English-speaking proficiency among tenth-grade students in the southern district of Israel. Utilizing a quasi-experimental research design, the study involved 40 students who were evenly divided into an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group engaged in a series of structured role-play sessions integrated into their regular English curriculum, while the control group continued with standard, teacher-centered instructional methods. Both groups were assessed through pre- and post-tests designed to measure key aspects of speaking proficiency, including fluency, vocabulary usage, grammatical accuracy, and overall communicative competence. Statistical analysis using paired-samples and independent-samples t-tests indicated a statistically significant improvement in the performance of the experimental group in the post-test (M = 24.75, p < 0.001), compared to the control group (M = 19.1, p = 0.169), which showed no significant progress. These findings support the effectiveness of role-play as a dynamic and interactive instructional strategy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. The study contributes to the growing body of research on communicative language teaching, particularly in underrepresented and multilingual educational environments. It also offers practical implications for EFL educators seeking to enhance oral language instruction and learner engagement through performative pedagogy.

Keywords: role-play, speaking skills, English as a foreign language, communicative competence, quasi-experimental, EFL instruction, classroom interaction

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Rationale

Developing oral proficiency remains one of the most complex challenges for learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), particularly in regions where authentic communicative opportunities are limited. In the context of secondary education in southern Israel, students frequently demonstrate a disconnect between grammatical knowledge and the practical use of spoken English. This disparity is often attributed to limited exposure to real-life language use, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence, all of which hinder spontaneous communication.

Role-playing has emerged as a prominent pedagogical tool for addressing these challenges by simulating authentic communicative contexts within the classroom. As a student-centered, interactive approach, role-play aligns with constructivist learning theory and communicative language teaching (CLT) by emphasizing meaningful language use, collaborative dialogue, and contextualized practice. Prior studies (e.g., Pinatih, 2021; Khasbani & Seli, 2021; Ahmada & Munawaroh, 2022) have demonstrated that role-play enhances learners' fluency, confidence, and willingness to communicate by reducing the psychological barriers typically associated with performance anxiety.

This study contributes to a growing body of research advocating for performance-based methods in language instruction, particularly in under-resourced or culturally diverse classrooms. Building on

previous findings, the current research examines the effectiveness of structured role-playing activities in improving speaking proficiency among tenth-grade EFL students in southern Israel.

1.2 Research Question

What is the effect of role-playing on the development of English-speaking skills among tenth-grade students in southern Israel?

1.3 Problem Statement

Despite widespread acknowledgment of the importance of communicative competence in English language education, a significant gap persists between students' theoretical knowledge and their practical speaking abilities in many EFL classrooms across southern Israel. Instruction in these settings often emphasizes grammatical accuracy, reading, and writing, with insufficient focus on authentic speaking activities. As a result, students commonly exhibit low confidence, poor fluency, and reluctance to engage in spoken English.

Previous research has indicated that role-playing offers a promising strategy for enhancing spoken interaction by engaging learners in simulated real-life situations (Khasbani & Seli, 2021; Alabsi, 2016). Nevertheless, its adoption in Israeli secondary schools remains limited. This gap highlights a pressing need to empirically investigate the pedagogical value of role-playing in improving EFL learners' oral proficiency within this specific socio-educational context.

1.4 Research Hypotheses

To address the research question, the study tests the following hypotheses:

- H1: There is no statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test speaking scores within the control group receiving traditional instruction.

- H2: There is a statistically significant improvement in the speaking performance of the experimental group following the implementation of role-play activities.

- H3: There is no statistically significant difference between the control and experimental groups at the pre-test stage.

- H4: There is a statistically significant difference between the control and experimental groups in post-test speaking performance, favoring the experimental group.

1.5 Study Objectives

This study seeks to evaluate the pedagogical effectiveness of role-playing in enhancing EFL speaking skills among tenth-grade students in southern Israel. Specifically, it aims to:

1.   Examine whether the use of structured role-play activities leads to significant improvement in students' speaking performance compared to traditional instruction.

2.   Assess pre- and post-test differences within both control and experimental groups to determine the internal impact of each instructional approach.

3.   Compare the speaking proficiency levels between the two groups before and after the intervention to isolate the effect of role-play.

4.   Contribute empirical evidence to the growing body of research on communicative teaching methodologies in multilingual educational settings.

2.1 Overview

Role-play has gained considerable attention in second language acquisition (SLA) research due to its ability to simulate authentic communicative contexts and foster active learner engagement. Within communicative language teaching (CLT), role-play is positioned as a performance-based approach that

encourages spontaneous language production, peer interaction, and contextualized vocabulary use (Alabsi, 2016; Khasbani & Seli, 2021).

The pedagogical shift toward learner-centered models—supported by sociocultural theories of Vygotsky (1978) and constructivist perspectives—emphasizes the importance of interaction in constructing meaning. In this framework, role-play serves as both a cognitive and social scaffold, allowing learners to co-construct discourse in imagined real-life scenarios.

Recent empirical studies have linked role-playing to improved speaking fluency, reduced language anxiety, and enhanced communicative competence (Ahmada & Munawaroh, 2022; Pinatih, 2021). This review will examine the literature thematically, highlighting its contributions to classroom practice, its cognitive and affective benefits, and its applicability to multilingual and EFL contexts such as the Israeli educational system.

2.2 The Role of Role-Playing in Language Education

Role-playing is widely recognized as a versatile instructional method that promotes communicative competence by shifting classroom dynamics from passive reception to active, learner-driven interaction. In contrast to traditional approaches that emphasize memorization and grammatical accuracy, role-playing fosters improvisational dialogue, contextualized vocabulary use, and real-time problem solving—skills essential to spoken fluency (Adams & Mabusela, 2014; Rashid & Qaisar, 2017).

According to Alabsi (2016), role-play creates an immersive linguistic environment where learners are encouraged to engage with authentic communicative tasks. These simulations reflect real-life interactions and challenge students to move beyond rote responses, fostering adaptability and spontaneity. Furthermore, role-play aligns closely with Krashen's input hypothesis (1985) by providing comprehensible input in meaningful contexts, and with Swain's output hypothesis (1995), which stresses the value of producing language to consolidate learning.

Affective benefits are also notable. As Kilgour et al. (2015) argue, role-play reduces performance anxiety by offering a psychologically safe environment in which learners can experiment with language use without fear of negative evaluation. This is particularly crucial in EFL contexts where students may lack confidence or feel inhibited by peer judgment.

Empirical studies reinforce these theoretical claims. Khasbani and Seli (2021) found that students engaged in structured role-play activities demonstrated significant gains in fluency, lexical range, and willingness to speak. Ahmada and Munawaroh (2022) similarly reported improved pronunciation and expressive ability, while Wulandari et al. (2021) observed heightened student motivation and classroom participation.

In sum, the literature supports role-playing as an effective pedagogical tool that simultaneously cultivates linguistic proficiency and emotional resilience. Its alignment with communicative teaching principles and its capacity to simulate social interaction make it particularly valuable in EFL settings where authentic language use is often limited.

2.3 Empirical Research on Role-Playing in Language Education

A growing body of empirical research underscores the pedagogical value of role-playing in enhancing EFL learners' speaking abilities. These studies have demonstrated improvements in fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary retention, and communicative confidence across a variety of instructional settings and learner profiles.

Pinatih (2021) reported that integrating role-play into the language classroom significantly increased students' fluency and spontaneous speaking, largely due to the shift from teacher-centered drills to student-led interactions. Similarly, Khasbani and Seli (2021) found that learners exposed to regular role-play tasks outperformed their peers in structured oral assessments, suggesting that the technique fosters confidence and pragmatic language use.

Beyond linguistic outcomes, several studies highlight the emotional and psychological benefits of role-play. Henisah et al. (2023) observed that the technique boosted classroom participation, particularly among shy or reluctant speakers. Ahmada and Munawaroh (2022) emphasized that role-play improves pronunciation and intonation by providing repeated exposure to conversational patterns in emotionally engaging contexts. These findings resonate with those of Wulandari et al. (2021), who noted that students perceived role-playing as both enjoyable and empowering, contributing to increased self-efficacy in oral communication.

Importantly, the existing literature also addresses the impact of role-play on learners' willingness to communicate (WTC)—a key predictor of L2 use. Studies indicate that when students perceive the learning environment as supportive and the speaking tasks as meaningful, they are more inclined to take linguistic risks (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Rashid & Qaisar, 2017). Role-play provides a scaffolded framework within which such risk-taking becomes not only possible but productive.

Collectively, these empirical investigations affirm the role of performance-based pedagogy in supporting both cognitive and affective dimensions of second language development. They also validate role-playing as a flexible, low-cost, and culturally adaptable method suitable for EFL classrooms with diverse student populations and limited real-life exposure to English.

2.4 Challenges in Implementing Role-Playing in Language Education

While role-playing has been widely recognized for its pedagogical advantages, several practical and contextual challenges hinder its effective implementation in EFL classrooms—particularly in under-resourced or exam-driven educational systems. One of the most frequently cited obstacles is learner anxiety and self-consciousness. Many students feel uncomfortable performing in front of peers, especially when asked to adopt unfamiliar roles or speak in a second language (Zaidi, Rani, & Rahman, 2017). Such discomfort can reduce engagement and limit the potential for spontaneous language production. Teachers must therefore invest in building a psychologically safe learning environment where mistakes are normalized and risk-taking is encouraged.

Another significant concern is time management. Role-play activities require substantial classroom time for setup, preparation, performance, and feedback (Ishak & Aziz, 2022). In tightly scheduled curricula—where standardized testing dominates instructional priorities—teachers often struggle to allocate adequate time for such interactive tasks, leading to superficial or rushed implementation.

Teacher preparedness also plays a pivotal role in the success or failure of role-play. Not all educators possess the training or confidence to facilitate open-ended performance tasks effectively. Poorly scaffolded or inadequately monitored role-plays can result in off-topic discussions, confusion, or disengagement among students (Adams & Mabusela, 2014). This highlights the need for professional development that equips teachers with strategies for designing, managing, and assessing role-play activities aligned with curricular goals. Furthermore, logistical and infrastructural limitations—such as overcrowded classrooms, fixed seating, lack of audiovisual resources, or inadequate space—can constrain the enactment of meaningful role-play scenarios (Kilgour et al., 2015). In many public schools, physical environments are not optimized for collaborative or movement-based pedagogy.

Assessment also remains a challenging domain. Unlike traditional written tests, role-play requires more subjective, performance-based evaluation, often involving rubrics for fluency, creativity, interaction, and pronunciation. Ensuring consistency, fairness, and reliability across different student performances can be complex without clear guidelines or training (Zaidi et al., 2017).

These limitations, however, do not diminish the pedagogical value of role-playing. Rather, they point to the need for thoughtful integration, institutional support, and teacher training to maximize the strategy's impact within real classroom conditions.

2.5 Role-Playing and Learner Motivation in Language Learning

Learner motivation is widely recognized as a key determinant of success in second language acquisition (Dörnyei, 2009; Ushioda, 2011). Role-playing has been consistently shown to increase both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by providing meaningful, student-centered opportunities for language use. Unlike conventional speaking tasks that may feel artificial or repetitive, role-play situates learners in authentic, goal-driven scenarios that simulate real-world communication.

From the perspective of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), role-play supports the three fundamental psychological needs that foster intrinsic motivation: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. First, students are given the freedom to express themselves creatively within flexible roles. Second, through repeated engagement, they experience measurable gains in communicative ability, reinforcing a sense of competence. Third, the inherently social nature of role-playing cultivates peer connection, cooperation, and empathy—key components of relatedness.

Empirical studies reinforce these theoretical claims. Gusmuliana, Apriani, and Syafryadin (2021) found that students participating in role-play were significantly more motivated to engage in speaking activities compared to those in lecture-based classes. Likewise, Susanti, Putra, and Aisyah (2022) demonstrated that incorporating role-play with multimedia tools such as YouTube heightened learners' enthusiasm, especially among students with lower initial confidence levels.

The affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1982) also provides a useful explanatory lens: students are more likely to acquire language when emotional barriers such as fear or boredom are reduced. Role-playing contributes to lowering this filter by creating a safe, imaginative, and emotionally engaging space for communication. Learners are not only encouraged to speak but also invited to take ownership of their learning through character-based exploration, improvisation, and dialogue.

Moreover, the interactive and performative nature of role-play promotes sustained engagement. Students are not passive recipients of knowledge; rather, they become co-constructors of meaning, navigating linguistic choices in real time. This shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered instruction has been shown to enhance both task engagement and long-term language retention (Lestari & Sridatun, 2020; Rashid & Qaisar, 2017).

Taken together, these findings position role-play as a pedagogically sound method that fosters deeper motivation through agency, emotional involvement, and social interaction. When designed and facilitated effectively, role-playing becomes more than an instructional strategy—it becomes a vehicle for transformative language learning.

2.6 Digital Role-Play and Technological Integration

The integration of digital tools into role-playing activities has significantly expanded the pedagogical possibilities of communicative language instruction, particularly in the context of blended and online learning environments. As technology continues to reshape educational paradigms, digital role-play offers a multimodal platform for promoting speaking proficiency, learner agency, and cross-cultural competence (Yen, Hou, & Chang, 2015).

One key advantage of digital role-play is its capacity to extend language practice beyond the physical classroom, allowing for asynchronous participation, multimedia expression, and peer feedback. Platforms such as Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp, and learning management systems (LMS) support real-time or recorded interactions that simulate authentic communicative scenarios. For instance, learners can create video role-plays, perform through avatars in virtual environments, or participate in forum-based dialogues—all of which promote fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and pronunciation accuracy (Susanti, Putra, & Aisyah, 2022).

These digital environments also foster learner autonomy and reflective practice. Unlike live classroom performances, recorded role-plays enable students to review, revise, and self-assess their speaking output. This iterative process aligns with metacognitive approaches to language learning and supports the

development of oral fluency and accuracy over time (Yen et al., 2015). For students with high speaking anxiety or lower confidence, such environments can also reduce affective barriers, offering safer spaces for experimentation and linguistic risk-taking.

Moreover, digital role-play enhances accessibility and inclusivity. In geographically remote or under-resourced settings—such as some areas in southern Israel—online platforms allow learners to engage in interactive speaking tasks without the constraints of physical classroom infrastructure. This is particularly valuable in contexts where real-life exposure to English-speaking environments is limited.

However, successful implementation of digital role-play requires thoughtful pedagogical design. Educators must select appropriate tools, ensure digital equity, and scaffold tasks with clear objectives, roles, and evaluation criteria. As Kruk (2022) notes, the pedagogical value of technology is not inherent but emerges from the way it is integrated into meaningful, learner-centered activities.

In sum, digital role-playing represents an evolving frontier in communicative EFL pedagogy. By combining the strengths of performance-based learning with the flexibility of digital platforms, it offers a powerful model for fostering engagement, interaction, and speaking competence in diverse educational settings.

2.7 Cultural and Social Relevance in Role-Play

Incorporating culturally relevant and socially grounded scenarios into role-play tasks is essential for making language instruction meaningful and context-sensitive. Research in intercultural communicative competence (ICC) highlights the importance of integrating learners' cultural identities into pedagogical design to foster deeper engagement, comprehension, and ethical awareness (Byram, 1997; Fantini, 2009).

When learners interact with scenarios that reflect their own social realities, they are more likely to internalize linguistic forms and communicative strategies. For instance, role-plays involving local customs, school life, family dynamics, or interactions at markets or clinics enable students to anchor language in familiar frames of reference. Al-Abadi and Nasr (2005) found that culturally grounded role-play significantly increased speaking performance among Arab students by connecting language learning to their lived experiences.

Such localization of content also supports "glocal" pedagogies—those that merge global communicative goals with local cultural relevance. In multilingual and multicultural societies like Israel, where English serves both as a foreign language and a tool for international communication, role-play that respects learners' identities and environments becomes even more critical.

Moreover, socially relevant role-play scenarios can foster intercultural awareness by allowing students to simulate communication with speakers from different cultural backgrounds. This builds not only language proficiency but also empathy, perspective-taking, and adaptive communication strategies—key components of 21st-century citizenship (Deardorff, 2006).

From a pedagogical standpoint, contextualizing role-play also addresses motivational and cognitive factors. Learners are more engaged when tasks are relatable and purposeful (Nation & Macalister, 2010). At the same time, the ethical complexity of role-plays—such as dealing with misunderstandings, social hierarchies, or disagreement—helps students develop pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence.

In sum, embedding cultural and social relevance into role-playing tasks reinforces the pedagogical power of the strategy. It strengthens linguistic outcomes and aligns language education with broader goals of identity development, intercultural competence, and contextualized communication.

2.8 Role-Play as an Assessment Tool

Beyond its instructional benefits, role-play serves as a powerful mode of authentic assessment in language education. Unlike traditional grammar or vocabulary tests, which often measure isolated competencies, role-play offers a dynamic context in which learners demonstrate integrated communicative performance—including fluency, pragmatics, coherence, and interactive strategies (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019).

As a form of performance-based assessment, role-play allows educators to evaluate how well students can apply linguistic knowledge in simulated real-world scenarios. This aligns with current principles of construct validity in language testing, which stress the importance of assessing what learners can *do* with language, rather than what they *know about* it (Bachman & Palmer, 2010).

Adams and Mabusela (2014) argue that role-play enables assessment of not only language production but also critical soft skills such as problem-solving, empathy, and interpersonal communication. These dimensions are increasingly emphasized in 21st-century competency frameworks and are difficult to capture through conventional pen-and-paper examinations.

To maintain reliability and fairness, role-play assessments require well-defined rubrics that account for linguistic accuracy, interactional fluency, strategic competence, and expressiveness. Tools such as analytic scoring rubrics and structured peer evaluations can help standardize feedback and reduce subjectivity. Zaidi, Rani, and Rahman (2017) highlight the importance of teacher training in using such rubrics effectively to ensure consistent and transparent evaluation.

Furthermore, role-play facilitates formative assessment, providing opportunities for feedback and self-reflection. When used diagnostically, role-play performances can inform instruction by revealing patterns of misunderstanding or gaps in communicative competence. This is particularly valuable in EFL contexts where learners may perform well on discrete grammar tests but struggle with real-time language use.

Digital extensions of role-play—such as recorded video submissions or online synchronous scenarios—can also support longitudinal assessment. Students can revisit earlier performances, compare them with later ones, and track their progress over time. This approach supports learner autonomy and encourages a deeper engagement with the learning process.

Overall, role-play is not only an effective instructional strategy but also a pedagogically sound and theoretically grounded method of assessment. Its ability to capture real-time language use, interpersonal dynamics, and sociolinguistic appropriateness makes it an essential component of communicative language teaching and an invaluable tool for comprehensive language evaluation.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental design to evaluate the effectiveness of role-playing as an instructional strategy for developing English-speaking proficiency among tenth-grade students. A non-randomized pre-test–post-test control group design was adopted, in which both an experimental group and a control group were assessed before and after a four-week instructional intervention. This design was chosen to allow for comparative measurement of the intervention's effects under real classroom conditions while maintaining internal control through group equivalence and consistent instruction.

3.2 Context and Participants

The study was conducted during the 2023–2024 academic year at a public secondary school in the southern district of Israel. The school serves a multilingual, socioeconomically diverse student population, with Arabic as the students' first language and English taught as a foreign language from primary grades onward. English instruction in this region tends to emphasize grammar and written exercises, with limited time devoted to oral practice.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

A total of 40 tenth-grade students, aged 15–16, were selected through purposive sampling in consultation with school administrators and English language teachers. The participants were assigned to two groups of equal size: the experimental group (n = 20), which received instruction incorporating structured role-play, and the control group (n = 20), which followed conventional instruction methods. Group assignments were made to ensure similar levels of prior English proficiency, based on cumulative English grades, teacher evaluations, and previous standardized assessments.

All participants had a minimum of five years of English instruction and were classified as intermediate-level learners according to national curriculum benchmarks. The two groups were taught by the same teacher, using the same core textbook, to minimize instructor and material bias.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the school principal and local educational authorities. Written informed consent was secured from all participants and their legal guardians. Students were informed of the study's purpose, voluntary nature, and confidentiality protocols. No identifying information was collected, and all data were anonymized during analysis. Participation or non-participation had no effect on students' academic evaluations.

3.5 Research Instruments

Two primary instruments were used to measure the impact of role-playing on students' speaking skills:

1. **Speaking Performance Rubric**
Adapted from McLeod (2018), this rubric assessed four dimensions of oral performance:

o   Fluency

o   Vocabulary range and appropriateness

o   Grammatical accuracy

o   Pronunciation and intonation

Each dimension was rated on a 5-point scale (1 = very poor, 5 = excellent), yielding a total possible score of 20 per student.

2. **Student Questionnaire**
A structured Likert-scale questionnaire was developed to assess students' attitudes toward English-speaking activities. It measured constructs including:

o   Self-confidence in oral expression

o   Willingness to communicate (WTC)

o   Anxiety during speaking tasks

o   Perceived value of role-playing

The questionnaire was piloted on a separate cohort (n = 10) to ensure internal reliability. Cronbach's alpha was calculated at α = 0.87, indicating high internal consistency.

3.6 Procedure for Data Collection

The study followed a four-phase implementation:

1. **Pre-testing**:
Both groups completed the speaking performance task and questionnaire prior to the intervention. Scores were recorded and used to establish baseline equivalence.

2. **Intervention** (Experimental Group):
Over the course of four weeks, the experimental group participated in 12 structured role-play sessions, each lasting 35–40 minutes. Scenarios included real-world contexts such as booking a hotel, attending a job interview, or resolving a classroom conflict. All tasks were aligned with the CEFR B1–B2 speaking descriptors.

3. **Control Condition**:
The control group continued with traditional textbook-based instruction, including vocabulary drills, grammar exercises, and scripted dialogues, without any communicative performance components.

4.   **Post-testing**:
Both groups repeated the speaking task and questionnaire following the intervention. The same rubric and protocols were applied to ensure reliability.

3.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (v.26). The following statistical procedures were applied:

- Descriptive Statistics: Mean scores, standard deviations, and ranges were calculated for each group at both pre-test and post-test stages.

- Paired Samples t-tests: Conducted within each group to determine whether there were significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores.

- Independent Samples t-tests: Used to compare the pre-test and post-test performance between the experimental and control groups to evaluate the effect of the intervention.

- Significance Level: Statistical significance was determined at $\alpha = 0.05$.

3.8 Summary of Test Results

Pre-test Results:
Both groups showed comparable speaking performance before the intervention:

- Control group mean = 19.7

- Experimental group mean = 19.8

- *$p = 0.919$* (not significant)

Post-test Results:

- Control group mean = 19.1 (no significant change, *$p = 0.169$*)

- Experimental group mean = 24.75 (significant improvement, *$p < 0.001$*)

These results suggest that structured role-play had a statistically significant and positive effect on students' speaking proficiency, while traditional methods did not lead to measurable gains.

4. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the statistical findings of the study and interprets them in light of the research hypotheses and previous literature. The central aim was to evaluate the impact of structured role-playing on students' English-speaking proficiency in an EFL context.

4.1 Group Equivalence at Baseline

An independent samples t-test comparing pre-test scores revealed no statistically significant difference between the control group (M = 19.7, SD = 6.32) and the experimental group (M = 19.8, SD = 6.53), *$p = 0.919$*. This confirms that both groups were comparable at baseline, validating the internal integrity of the subsequent comparison.

4.2 Performance of the Control Group

The control group, which received traditional instruction without communicative elements, showed no statistically significant improvement between pre- and post-test scores (*$t(19) = 1.431$*, *$p = 0.169$*). This suggests that conventional methods, while perhaps reinforcing grammatical or reading competencies, were insufficient in fostering oral proficiency, echoing findings from earlier studies that critique grammar-translation and rote methodologies for their limitations in developing speaking skills (Rashid & Qaisar, 2017; Nation & Newton, 2009).

4.3 Performance of the Experimental Group

In contrast, the experimental group demonstrated a statistically significant improvement from pre-test (M = 19.8) to post-test (M = 24.75), *t(19) = -7.468*, *p < 0.001*. This 5-point mean increase provides compelling evidence for the effectiveness of role-playing as a communicative teaching strategy. The results are consistent with previous studies by Ahmada and Munawaroh (2022) and Pinatih (2021), who reported significant gains in speaking fluency, vocabulary usage, and learner confidence following role-play interventions.

4.4 Post-Test Comparison Between Groups

The between-group comparison at post-test further confirmed the impact of the intervention. An independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference in speaking scores between the experimental (M = 24.75, SD = 7.72) and control groups (M = 19.1, SD = 7.14), *p < 0.001*. This finding supports Hypothesis 4 and affirms the pedagogical value of role-play in enhancing speaking skills within constrained classroom settings.

4.5 Interpretation and Implications

The significant improvement in the experimental group can be attributed to several key factors:

- **Increased learner engagement**: Role-play transformed passive learners into active participants, consistent with constructivist principles and supported by Wulandari et al. (2021).

- **Reduced language anxiety**: The safe, collaborative setting of role-play helped students overcome fear of speaking, in line with Krashen's affective filter hypothesis (1982).

- **Authentic language use**: By simulating real-world contexts, role-play provided meaningful opportunities for spontaneous interaction, promoting pragmatic competence (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019).

These results hold particular significance in regions where students have limited exposure to English-speaking environments. The success of the role-play intervention suggests that performance-based, student-centered pedagogies are feasible and highly effective in developing communicative competence—even in traditionally structured or under-resourced schools.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of structured role-playing activities on the development of English-speaking skills among tenth-grade students in the southern district of Israel. Using a quasi-experimental design, the research demonstrated that role-play significantly improved students' oral proficiency, with the experimental group showing statistically significant gains in post-test performance compared to the control group.

These findings offer empirical support for the integration of performance-based, learner-centered instruction in EFL classrooms. Role-playing provided learners with a platform to use language meaningfully, engage emotionally, and build communicative competence in a safe and supportive environment. The results affirm that role-play is not merely an entertaining supplement, but a pedagogically robust tool capable of bridging the gap between linguistic knowledge and authentic language use.

Furthermore, the study contributes to the literature by validating role-play's effectiveness within a non-native, multilingual, and resource-constrained context—an area that remains underrepresented in mainstream applied linguistics research.

5.2 Pedagogical Implications

Given its effectiveness, role-playing should be considered a core instructional strategy in secondary-level English education. The intervention:

- Encourages active, contextualized speaking practice

- Builds confidence in spontaneous language use

- Reduces speaking anxiety

- Promotes collaborative learning and critical thinking

Teachers, curriculum developers, and education ministries should recognize the strategic value of role-play and incorporate it meaningfully into national EFL curricula.

5.3 Recommendations for Practice

1. **Curriculum Integration**: Role-playing should be embedded into formal lesson plans as a recurring component—not as an occasional or optional activity.

2. **Teacher Training**: Professional development programs should equip teachers with the skills to design, implement, and assess role-play effectively, using clearly defined rubrics.

3. **Assessment Alignment**: Speaking assessments should include performance-based components such as role-play tasks that align with communicative teaching goals.

4. **Resource Adaptation**: Schools with limited space or technology should adapt low-cost, contextually relevant scenarios (e.g., job interviews, travel exchanges, classroom conflicts).

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

To expand on this study's findings, future research might consider the following directions:

- **Longitudinal studies** to examine the sustained impact of role-play on speaking development over a semester or academic year.

- **Mixed-methods research** integrating qualitative data (e.g., student reflections, teacher interviews) to deepen understanding of learner perceptions and classroom dynamics.

- **Comparative studies** across different educational settings, proficiency levels, or language skills (e.g., writing, listening) to explore role-play's cross-disciplinary potential.

- **Technology-enhanced role-play** using VR, simulations, or video platforms to investigate digital engagement and multimodal communication.

By demonstrating that role-play can enhance speaking proficiency even in environments with limited authentic language exposure, this study offers a compelling argument for rethinking how speaking is taught, assessed, and experienced in EFL classrooms across diverse global contexts.

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