

## Incorporating role-play as an innovative approach to fostering English Foreign Language students' creativity and critical thinking

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### Abstract

Communicative activities introduce learners to real-life situations that require speaking in the target language. As a didactic strategy, role-play is assumed to be an effective method of learning and developing social skills, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication using simulated scenarios. In the present investigation, role-playing is used in an educational setting specifically in English foreign language classes. This research paper sheds light on the importance of including innovative approaches when teaching; moreover, it investigates the impact of role-plays in developing speaking qualifications, social knowledge, and personal skills. The sample comprised 35 EFL students at the University of Ain Temouchent, Algeria. To guarantee research validity and reliability, a mixed methods approach was applied to collect and analyze data. The findings demonstrate that students could increase their speaking qualifications and overcome speaking difficulties and using role-plays can develop students' creativity and critical thinking by engaging them in real-life situations.

**Keywords:** Communicative skills; creativity; critical thinking; role-plays; speaking qualifications.

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## 1. Introduction

Undoubtedly, learning a foreign language is a holistic process that includes complex approaches (Khanshan & Yousefi, 2020). Students are supposed to develop specific skills such as writing, reading, listening, and speaking. The last skill is the most challenging due to the educational restrictions where speaking is mainly done in the classroom, i.e., lack of real exposure outside the classroom. Indeed, this reduces students' chances to develop their communicative competence. In some cases, the classroom is the only environment where they practice speaking and tackle various topics in different domains. Teachers tend to provide students with lectures containing a set of activities that help them develop speaking first, then make a basis and build their communication competence (Suzuki & Hanzawa, 2022; Oliván-Blázquez et al., 2022). When teaching oral expression, teachers are assumed to have a significant objective of encouraging students to use language meaningfully.

Despite teachers' efforts, students' performance could not always reach the required objectives (Chan, Maneewan & Koul, 2022; Bahrami & Hosseini, 2023). Students may find some difficulties expressing themselves even after years of practice due to learning an academic language without being involved in contexts where they transmit their thoughts, messages, and ideas significantly. Therefore, drama activities in speaking sessions could be very beneficial as they help students improve their verbal proficiency and speaking abilities (Benabadji, 2006). Hence, infiltrating drama activities allows teachers to provide students with a vivid learning atmosphere; besides, these teaching techniques in EFL classes contribute to bridging the gap between motivation and learning.

One of the practical techniques that teachers use to increase students' motivation and promote their speaking skills is role-playing. This didactic strategy goes beyond developing speaking and fluency. It allows students to take various roles, more precisely, to perform different identities when solving problems, allowing them to get out of the box and think creatively (Adams & Mabusela, 2014; Bakhshayesh, Jafarpour & Hashemian, 2023). Various research was conducted to emphasize the importance of role-playing; it helps learners to reflect on specific problems and pushes them to find solutions creatively. Role plays change students' perspectives and their way of approaching problems. Besides, performing new roles makes students generate new ideas (Keezhatta, 2020). Therefore, such a didactic technique is very supportive as it improves speaking performance, promotes creativity, empathy, and group work, and increases social interaction.

### 1.1. Literature Review

Many research studies have been conducted to test the effectiveness of drama activities in EFL classes, namely role-play as one of these activities that contribute to developing students' speaking skills, interaction, fluency, communicative competence, pragmatic competence, etc. Role-playing is assumed to be a chance for students to imagine different situations, use a new language for various contexts, think differently, and provide solutions for real-life issues through performing new roles.

To illustrate, Hosseini (2016) first carried out a study where he wanted to see the impact of role-plays on developing pragmatic competence. Indeed, his study contained a sample of 40 undergraduate students of English at the University of Karaj Azas, Iran. It contained two groups, 'experimental and controlled,' with a significant objective of testing the effectiveness of role plays in promoting pragmatic competence. Although the two groups were handed the same pre-test, the way they performed was quite different. The researcher focused on requesting speech acts when implementing role-playing with the first group. However, he made free discussions in the second group following free techniques. The whole procedure took eight sessions that were mainly achieved in four weeks. After the experiment, the researcher confirmed that role-plays have a crucial impact on developing students' pragmatic competence. When applying such a teaching tool, students are introduced to communication considering different social contexts and get new insights about real-life situations.

Moreover, Umam (2011) conducted classroom action research in Islamic private schools in East Java, Indonesia. The research included 24 students in the eleventh grade, and he followed several steps including preliminary study/ reconnaissance, planning the action, implementation, observation, and reflection. Based on the elementary study, he found that the students in this school have low speaking ability. This motivated the researcher to overcome this problem by implementing the role-playing technique. The findings demonstrate that students' speaking skills improved significantly from one cycle to the next. Besides, his study met the criteria of success that were implemented, and most students could develop their self-confidence. Another study, realized by Ayuninagtias, Wulandari, and Yana (2019), demonstrates the importance of role-playing in the classroom and improving students' speaking skills. The study relied on classroom action research; the sample included 30 students at SMKN3, Karawang. After implementing role-play activities, results illustrate that students' speaking scores gradually developed from one cycle to another. Thus, their speaking skills were improved after using this technique.

Benabadji's (2006) research deals with 25 intermediate adult learners from the Sibawih private school of foreign languages in Oran, Algeria. Her investigation fosters the use of communicative drama activities, namely role-play, that helps enhance learners' speaking skills. According to her, role-play is a technique that provides learners with a context of real-life situations they are likely to face in the real world. This study's results indicated a considerable impact on students' fluency during role-play-based speaking activities. The data showed that students had positive attitudes and intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to learn English.

Graves (2008) contributed to the field and conducted a study to check the effectiveness of the role-playing strategy and determine its strengths and weaknesses. His study was conducted at Pawpaw High School in South-eastern Ohio; it included 78 participants divided according to their academic levels into accelerated, honors, and traditional students. The data of this study were collected using a questionnaire, role-playing assignments, and a survey. The findings of this study demonstrate that the accelerated and honors students were more likely to enjoy role-plays than the traditional ones. Most traditional students displayed neutral attitudes towards role plays and did not perform better while implementing the speaking activities. Moreover, the recommendations of this study implied that teachers should verify the strategies used in classes, namely role-play (cited in Alzboun, Smadi, & Baniabdelrahman, 2017).

In another research, Al-Senaidi (2009) wanted to investigate the effectiveness of using role plays to improve the speaking fluency of fourth-grade students in Oman by using four activities adapted from Hadfield and Hadfield (1999, in Al-Senaidi 2009). These four months' study included pre-test and post-test that were used to collect data from two groups, experimental and controlled. The first group was taught through role-play strategy, while the second was taught conventionally. Results revealed that learners' fluency improved throughout the course, and they became more motivated to learn and speak English.

## **1.2. Purpose of study**

In this study, the researcher investigates the implementation of role-plays in classrooms and their effectiveness. However, it must be mentioned that the focus goes beyond developing speaking skills or fluency due to the poor attention directed to the importance of role-plays in developing critical thinking, students' creativity, problem-solving, and speaking issues. The studies mentioned above mainly tackled this didactic strategy concerning speaking skills and fluency. It must be mentioned that no Algerian research tackled the implementation of role plays about critical/ creative thinking and speaking issues. This area of research is new in the Algerian context and gained less attention, mainly when investigating role-plays in EFL classes and their impact.

Moreover, English in Algeria is a second foreign language taught in middle schools, which limits its use even in real-life settings; students can only use English in classrooms. In addition, many factors may lead them not to use it or hesitate when talking in class. The teacher should figure out

how to overcome students' difficulties when speaking, motivate them, and implement various didactic strategies that foster thinking in English and develop various skills.

Based on those mentioned above, the present research attempts to give the concept of role-playing another vision and tackles it from a different perspective. Indeed, it draws much attention to the contribution of this teaching strategy in developing speaking skills, creative thinking, problem-solving, and many other social skills. By conducting this investigation, the researcher explores the effectiveness of role-plays, and their importance in promoting speaking skills, overcoming speaking issues, and developing EFL students' thinking. This leads to forming the following research questions:

- 1) To what extent do role-plays help students overcome speaking difficulties?
- 2) What are the advantages of using role plays in EFL classes?

The mentioned research questions led to the formulation of the following hypotheses:

- 1) Role-playing is an effective teaching strategy that may help learners to be motivated, develop various speaking skills, and overcome speaking difficulties.
- 2) The advantages of role-plays may go beyond speaking level; by involving students in a real-life situation, they can think creatively and critically, bring solutions to various social issues, and express their opinions in the target language.

Thus, the core of this study includes a significant contribution for teachers, learners, and curriculum designers. Firstly, teachers will introduce new effective dynamic teaching techniques to motivate students and push them to speak the target language. They will be aware of the importance of role-plays that help learners to think critically and creatively. Learners will be introduced to real-life situations, being involved in problems that need some consideration; indeed, such activities help them think in the target language and use it in a natural context. Besides, they may eliminate fear or stress when speaking as they will perform different roles far from their personalities and are not afraid of being judged. It may also help curriculum designers understand the importance of including engaging activities.

## **2. Methods**

In the present study, the researcher followed classroom action research. Role-play, as an educational strategy, was implemented first to overcome speaking difficulties, if any, to motivate students and to make them think creatively and critically. Therefore, she adopted this research approach based on Kemmis and McTaggart's model. Indeed, this type of inquiry usually implies using both qualitative and interpretive modes of research and data collection by teachers (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014). The selected model is based on four main research actions: planning, implementing, observation, and reflection. In doing so, the researcher also had the role of a teacher. She asked for help from another academic partner to make observations and judgments about improving her practices while conducting the research.

### **2.1. Participants**

The present research study was conducted at Ain Temouchent University, Algeria. The sample contained 35 undergraduates Algerian EFL students in the first semester of the 2022/2023 academic year. They were beginners and dealt with an oral expression course for the first time. The course's main objective was to develop students' speaking and listening skills. The course was taught two hours a week, and each session should allow students to listen and speak.

### **2.2. Procedures**

In accomplishing the present research, the teacher-researcher has followed different steps. First, a preliminary study sets the ground for the action research, planning the action, implementation, observation, and reflection.

#### **2.2.1. Preliminary study**

The first stage included a preliminary study where observation was the primary pilot of the study. It was conducted from September 26<sup>th</sup> to October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The principal purpose of this step was to discover the actual condition of classroom problems in the teaching-learning process so that the teacher could structure an adequate action plan to solve students' problems. At this early stage, the researcher had long conversations with students (both formal and informal), including a description of something around them, introducing themselves to others, and tackling some topics that required their opinions. Besides, the three sessions' observation was done to obtain an overview of their level of English performance and collect data about any learning issues.

#### *2.2.2. Action planning*

Planning the action was the following step in the second stage, where the researcher conceptualized the action. Therefore, the planning embraced designing role-playing, preparing lesson plans, deciding on tools and techniques that help in data collection, and determining standards of success. When sketching role-play activities, some essential steps might be considered, including the choice of teaching materials, organizing students into groups, making situations/ dialogue, teaching various topics that contribute to making dialogues for role-plays, and training students to perform role-plays in class. In the present study, the teacher-researcher acts as an instructor and observer during this action research. It should be mentioned that the teaching activities and lesson plans were developed based on the course syllabus of the university, and the intention was to include role play as a didactic technique in the speaking course.

Appropriate research instruments enabled the researcher to obtain the needed data for her study. Data were collected during the teaching-learning process and covered the participants' performance in this pedagogical research. Accordingly, various tools were used to facilitate data collection, including an observation checklist, a questionnaire, recordings, and note-taking.

The researcher pre-determined the success and validity standards to check whether the implemented action research was valid. In the present investigation, the following criteria of success were used: a) most of the students (70%) get rid of stress and get motivated to speak, b) 70% of them reach good speaking qualifications and develop fluency as well, c) 70% of students think out of the box and perform the roles creatively when being involved in the educational process as well as when performing role-plays, and d) most of them think critically and engage in the problem-solving process.

#### *2.2.3. Implementation*

The third phase covered implementation; in this phase, the researcher needed to implement all role-playing procedures required to plan the educational activities. Besides, the implementation was adapted according to the English class schedule for the oral expression course.

#### *2.2.4. Observation*

Observation, illustrating the fourth stage, required a whole process covering students' performance in front of the class. Thus, observations were conducted during teaching-learning practice with the help of another academic partner. It first dealt with students' classroom practices and their speaking when performing the dialogues. Observing the validity of the obtained data could be realized when implementing action.

#### *2.2.5. Reflection*

Finally, reflection was realized at the end of each previous stage. This guaranteed the continuity of action and set the ground for the next cycle. In the present research, the researcher mainly reflected on each implementation action.

### **2.3. Data collection instrument**

In this investigation, the researcher focused on specific tools that allowed her to get the needed data. These tools were: the observation achieved in two phases: the elementary study and a

part of the action when implementing the study. The second tool was recordings and field notes, which helped the researcher check the progress of students' language development. Questionnaires were also distributed to get the required data for this study. The main objective behind the triangulation was the realization of the validity and reliability of the collected data.

The course of oral expression was holistic, including listening and speaking. In the former, students listened to the audio and sometimes watched videos realized by native speakers. The majority of students answered direct questions that were related to audio. Nevertheless, when they were asked to report their opinions about the topics, the participation was low, and only a few students did participate. Before getting the idea of incorporating role-plays, the teacher tried to understand the reasons that prevented them from speaking. Then, after that, she decided to implement something that reduces their stress, shyness, lack of self-confidence, fear of expressing a point of view, etc. It must be highlighted that role-plays were not randomly selected, but they matched with the lecture topic. One session took three hours of teaching; then the teacher divided the lecture into two parts, one to discover and learn about the studied topic. At the same time, in the second, she gave them the script and the needed time for preparation, and they started performing the attributed roles.

#### 2.4. Analysis

To get valid and reliable results, data were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

### 3. Results

The present section discusses the main findings obtained from various research tools, including observation, interviews, note-taking, and questionnaires.

#### 3.1. Data related to the preliminary study

After the first lectures, the researcher tried to establish a tight relationship with students to understand the difficulties that prevented them from speaking. Thus, an unstructured interview was conducted, and the obtained data are summarized in the following charts.

**Figure 1**  
*Students' attitudes about the speaking course*

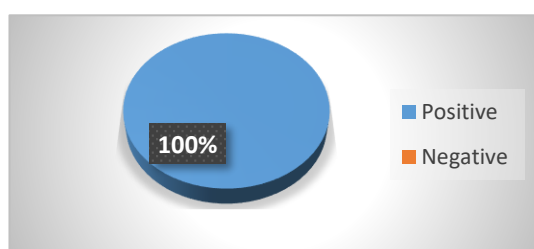
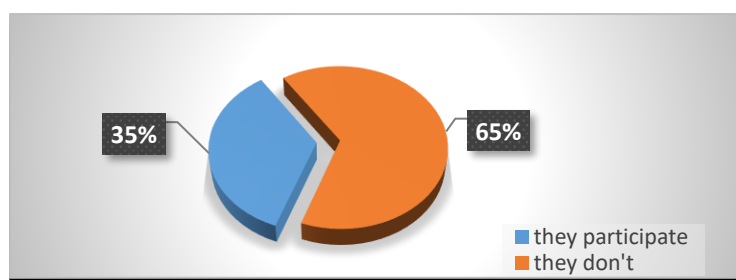


Figure 1 illustrates students' attitudes about the course of comprehension and oral expression. The results report that all students (100%) have positive attitudes towards this course.

**Figure 2**  
*Students' participation*





As shown in Figure 2, most students (65%) do not participate, while a minority only do (35%). Besides, students justify their answers by giving various reasons that prevent them from speaking. Most repeated answers are summarized in the following table.

**Table 1**  
*Reasons that obstruct participation*

Item	Statement
1	I feel my throat shaking when speaking English in front of my classmates
2	When expressing myself in English I give meaningless/ ridiculous ideas.
3	I feel embarrassed when giving my opinion in English.
4	I get confused when I am asked to repeat what I said.
5	I am afraid of making mistakes.
6	I don't like engaging in debates even though I know a lot about the topic being discussed.
7	I feel comfortable if I work with my friends.
8	I try to avoid judgments.
9	I don't like being observed.
10	I feel disappointed when others don't appreciate my knowledge.
11	Whenever I decide to speak and share my ideas, I shake and always feel anxious. Also, I am always worried about the looks of those around me.
12	I don't have enough knowledge and I have lack of vocabulary.
13	I am not fluent in English.

Table.1 summarizes different reasons that prevent students from speaking. As illustrated, most of them lack confidence and fear being judged by their classmates, especially when displaying opinions or knowledge; they avoid rejection or claim they do not have enough knowledge. Those who participate display high self-confidence and no fear in expressing their opinions, and they are convinced with what they have as knowledge and never fear being judged. After revealing various reasons that mainly prevent students from speaking in the classroom, they were asked about activities they like being engaged in. Answers are illustrated in the following figure.

**Figure 3**  
*Most desirable activities*

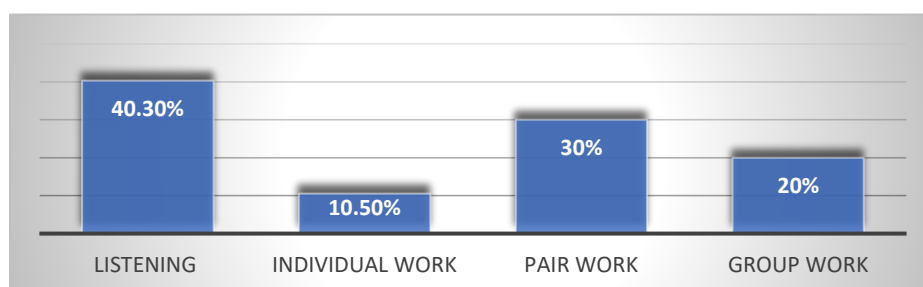


Figure 3 reports that most students preferred listening tasks, especially speaking. Then, a significant part of them engaged in pair or group work. Few students only (10, 50%) do prefer individual work. This answer is somehow justified in the previous answers, where the majority cited reasons that prevented them from speaking.

### 3.2. Data related to role plays implementation (Cycle1)

Data reported in this section were taken from the first cycle where role-play was implemented. The obtained data are organized as follows:

**Table 2**  
*Student's fluency*

Fluency	poor	Fair	good	Excellent
	50%	30%	20%	00%



When analyzing students' speaking performance, it was found that they still made some mistakes on some observed language elements, namely fluency. Table 2 illustrates that most students have low fluency while the minority only have high fluency. Students who displayed low (poor) fluency were influenced by their mother tongue, and they had difficulties avoiding this as they rarely practiced many times. They hesitated in speaking and repeated sentences which made unclear messages. Most of the students 80% hesitated in practically every sentence, ended sentences halfway, and then repeated them. 20% reached an excellent level, demonstrated low hesitation, and their fluency was not influenced. Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that no one reached an excellent level.

**Table 3**  
*Students' participation*

participation	Low	Average	High
	60%	25%	15%

As reported in Table 3, most of the students were not participating, and this could be related to the committed grammatical and pronunciation mistakes; 60% of students made a lot of grammatical mistakes in almost all sentences; they used mainly fragments, and their sentences were not clear, 25% reached the average, while 15% only could reach a high level.

**Table 4**  
*Creativity and problem-solving*

Solving issues	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
	50%	27%	33%

Each role-play included a specific issue in any society; students were asked to analyze the issue and bring solutions creatively. As reported in Table 4, observation demonstrated that only 33% of students could think critically and bring effective practical solutions to the problem. The rest (87%) explained the problem and tried to make arguments.

**Table 5**  
*Students debate engagement*

Express opinions	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
	55%	30%	15%

Table 5 demonstrates that most students (55%) hesitate, block, or never express their viewpoints if they are not asked. They do not engage in debate and take the role without concretely performing the role. However, few students (15%) could clearly express their opinions and engage in debate using formal expressions to interrupt, argue, stick to their opinions, and even bring new arguments to reinforce their points.

**Table 6**  
*Students' motivation*

Motivation	Low	High
	65%	35%

Observation during the first cycle sessions demonstrates that motivation was relatively low (65%). This could be related to various features like grammatical mistakes and pronunciation, lack of fluency, and lack of vocabulary. However, a few students (15%) displayed high motivation, and it was observed that they participated, and their grammatical or even pronunciation mistakes did not reduce their will to do so.

### **3.3. First Reflection**

The data mentioned above were used to measure whether the implementation of the role-playing technique had met the criteria of success or not. The speaking performance was measured based on various criteria, including fluency, pronunciation, mistakes, etc. These features were grouped into three main categories poor, fair, good, and very good. The application of role-play

activities was considered successful if 70% of students reached a good level of elements being observed. Based on the researcher's calculation, a large number of students (70%) reached the fair level, others (30%) could attain good, while the rest (15%) had a low level. Concerning participation, motivation, and debate engagement, they ranged between low and moderate, and we can say that only a few students reached a high level. This happened because students were not allowed to choose the role or change, there were time restrictions, and the chosen roles were not motivating. Besides, it was observed that most of them could not participate because they feared being judged.

Therefore, it can be said that the implementation of this technique was not successful in the first cycle as the good level did not reach 70%. This made the teacher think about adding new things in the second cycle. First, reconsider the teaching techniques and speak at the students' pace. Second, reducing the group number and allowing them to talk and argue. Third, the teacher managed students' groups and chose the members of each. Additionally, students had the chance to choose their roles and enough time to make arguments. They were given role-plays in advance, where they got enough time to work, and this happened because most of the students complained about the short time to construct arguments.

### 3.4. Data related to role plays implementation (Cycle2)

The following data illustrate the results obtained from the second cycle. At this level, the researcher tried to fill the gaps and improve the methods used in the first cycle.

**Table 7**  
*Student's fluency*

Fluency	poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
	10%	20%	60%	10%

From the analysis of students' speaking performance, it was found that there was a very significant improvement. Table 7 illustrates that most (70%) of students improved their fluency, despite some (30%) still making mistakes, but this did not influence their fluency; they talked without hesitation or long pauses.

**Table 8**  
*Students' participation*

participation	Low	Average	High
	10%	30%	60%

Table 8 reports that 60% of students are engaged and do participate. Observation demonstrates that they had no severe problem providing adequate vocabulary to participate, especially since they had enough time to construct their arguments, which gave them the confidence to participate.

**Table 9**  
*Students debate engagement*

Express opinions	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
	5%	25%	70%

Table 9 shows that most students expressed their opinions, mainly if they chose the role to play. The choice was a crucial factor that helped them to demonstrate their viewpoints without fear of being judged. This was far better than the previous cycle. Compared to the first cycle, students were highly engaged in debates, and only a few of them (5%) did not engage in debates. Indeed, students gained more self-confidence when working with different members each time as they shared ideas and knowledge, taking them out of their comfort zone.

**Table 10**  
*Creativity and problem-solving*

Solving issues	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
	10%	15%	75%

Table 10 reveals that thinking critically, bringing creative ideas, and making solutions also witnessed a big jump compared to the first cycle. Most students (75%) engaged in different situations, performing the roles adequately and bringing concrete solutions that can be applied in real life.

**Table 11**  
*Student's motivation*

Motivation	Low	High
	15%	85%

As illustrated in Table 11, motivation increased compared to the first cycle. It has been observed that 85% of students were motivated to participate in class, perform roles, and bring concrete solutions. Most of them mentioned enjoying role-play sessions more than anything else.

### 3.5. *Second reflection*

The researcher used data from the second cycle to see if the implementation of role plays reached the criteria of success or not. Based on the data, most students' performances, participation, debates engagement, and fluency improved. The devoted time preparing dialogues allowed students to bring creative ideas and relevant solutions to the issues. Besides, the fact that the teacher chose the group members helped students to be more engaged in debate, and they broke the obstacle of being judged by others each time the group contained new members. Since students' speaking performance, participation, motivation, creativity, and making solutions for each meeting showed significant improvement, the second cycle met the success criteria. About 70% of students could reach speaking qualifications and perform roles creatively. The study can be stated as a successful research project, and accordingly, the action research was stopped. This statement was reinforced by post-role-play data summarized following section.

### 3.6. *Post-role-plays implementation data*

This part illustrates data gathered after ceasing to role-play activities in the classroom herein; the researcher wanted to check the impact of role-playing on the students' speaking performance and validate this action research.

**Figure 4**  
*Students' participation*

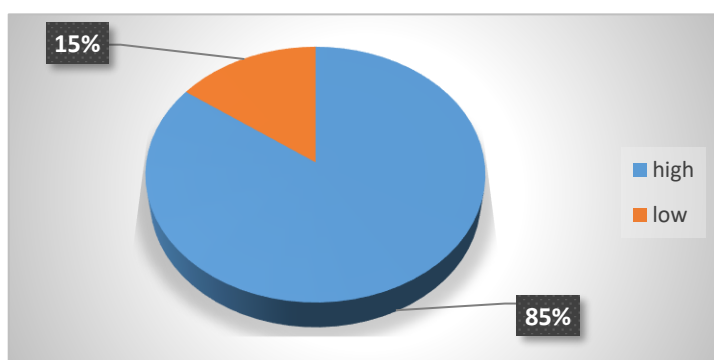


Figure 4 reveals that students' participation, even when not practicing role-plays, was high (85%). There was a variety of reasons, according to students, that led them to keep high motivation and frequent participation. Table 12 illustrates various reasons for keeping students engaged and participating in the classroom.

**Table 12**  
*Reasons that kept students engaged*

Item	Statement
1	I can now speak English in front of my classmates as we keep working in groups, and each time we learn from each other.
2	I got rid of my fear of expressing my thoughts in English through frequent practice and task achievements.
3	Because I like to share my ideas and explain them
4	When we play roles, I won't have enough time to think about others; you can say that makes me feel like I'm part of the session maybe.
5	I feel so happy
6	I like group work because when we work all together, we learn new things.
7	Working with my friends made me feel confident, and I can now introduce new ideas.
8	The last group work was so fun, and it helped me to get rid of stress.
9	I like it because it enables us to see how others think.
10	I like to play a character.
11	It is not boring.
12	I like sharing my opinion and expressing my feelings on various topics. Role plays help me to be more confident and get rid of social anxiety.
13	It is an easy and smart way to work with others.
14	I perform the role as if I am living it in real life.

Answers in Table 12 show that students, through role-playing activities, could experience new things, analyze, and think without fear of judgment. Besides, real-life context, highlighted in this technique, helped them develop social and communicative skills along with speaking.

**Figure 5**  
*Attitudes toward role-play*

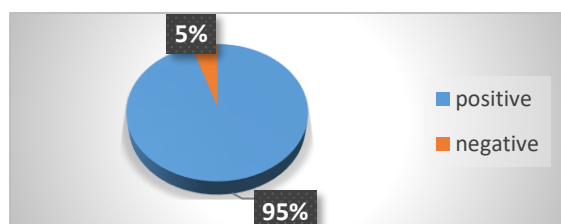


Figure 5 illustrates that implementing an engaging activity and learning through interaction promote students' positivity about the activity in general and speaking specifically. Also, it must be mentioned that role plays helped students to get rid of stress and keep participation pace in the classroom. Students' positive attitude about role plays is justified in the following table.

**Table 13**  
*Reasons that made students like role plays*

Item	Statement
1	We think differently, taking into consideration many standards.
2	A good chance to share ideas with your group.
3	Roles we have been through could give us insights as we were exposed to real-life situations.
4	We could put ourselves in someone else's shoes and think flexibly.
5	I had the chance to think differently and get out of my comfort zone.
6	Role-play gave me more confidence to work alone as I no more fear expressing my opinions.
7	Because with my group, WE Do work together funnily.
8	Improving my social skills.
9	Group work helped me to develop myself.
10	I could help others and be more creative because there were so many ideas from everyone in the group.
11	It helped me to develop my communication skills, and the challenge increased between my friends, and this strived us to do our best. I also could get rid of stress, anxiety, and being judged by others.

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12	It helped me to be more fluent.
13	We could share different ideas, and each one of us could greatly defend his point of view.
14	I could think creatively.
15	It made me more social with my classmates, and it also helped me to develop new ideas.

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Table 13 reveals that the role-playing technique was beneficial for students and successful as action research. According to students' statements, this implementation went beyond developing speaking performance and increasing oral qualifications. This didactic method gave them insights into real-life situations and developed their communicative skills, mainly in the target language.

#### 4. Discussion

As previously mentioned, various studies focus on speaking performance and highlight role-playing as a didactic strategy crucial in developing students speaking skills, fluency, pronunciation, etc. The present investigation tends to go beyond increasing speaking qualifications; it investigates the impact of role plays in EFL classes and gives a new perspective. In other words, it contributes to understanding the relationship between role plays, speaking skills, creative thinking, and solving problems.

The main objective of this study was to shed light on the importance of including role plays as a solution first to motivate students to speak and second, to help them get insights about real-life situations using the target language. Third, to make them think creatively and get accustomed to problem-solving instead of just writing and learning scripts by heart. Thus, the previous statistics report that learners gradually developed in oral expression sessions (Pham & Unaldi, 2022). Besides, being included in different roles tackling various social topics made them think out of the box and think critically about certain situations. Based on the findings of this study, it was shown that the appropriate application of the role-play technique could significantly improve students' participation, creativity, and motivation during the instructional process.

The findings of this research show that the student's skills in speaking had improved significantly from one meeting to the next meeting, from one cycle to another, and this is maintained in the obtained results of each cycle. Speaking performance improved from 35% to 75%, where most reached good levels. Another finding shows that most students enjoyed performing role-play due to its challenging nature, which appeared in their performances in class. Besides, their motivation raised from 35% to 85%. Indeed, the classroom environment became more alive, and students were actively involved in the instructional process. Their stress and anxiety were reduced as they laughed at each other's mistakes rather than being inverted or shy, and they seemed more relaxed and excited while performing.

Results also show that students gained more social competencies, clearly illustrated in their performances; their participation improved from 15% to 60%. Also, how they think and bring solutions changed as they are now more involved in the issue and bring more creative and realistic solutions. This improvement might be due to the role play technique as it involves students with real-life issues, and each role they perform makes them think differently without giving much importance to judgment. This joins the contributions on role plays where many researchers insist on the benefits of this didactic techniques; this experience allows them to improve communication skills and creativity, boost social awareness, independent thinking, and verbalization of opinions (Umam, 2011; Yüzlü & Dikilitaş, 2022).

#### 5. Conclusion

The obtained results of this investigation demonstrate that role plays, in consequence, have a tremendous effect on EFL students' performance. Indeed, they developed many speaking skills while performing different roles, improved various verbal qualifications, and eradicated obstacles. Adding to developing fluency and expressing their opinions, they could also learn a new skill: thinking critically while engaged in real-life situations. Making a practical context also helped them creatively solve the

attributed problems. Hence, role-play in this investigation could balance developing speaking skills and involving students in real-life contexts using the target language in real-life contexts, highlighting that all these factors contributed to building learners' cognitive abilities and made them productive language users.

The results also denote that student gained positive attitudes towards the speaking course and this increased classroom motivation. This research offers interesting findings that support understanding how students' speaking, thinking, and communicative skills are developed through role-plays. The implemented action research gives teachers, learners, and curriculum designers valuable insights.

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