Effects of Using Role-Play on Iranian Female EFL High School Students' Speaking Performance, Anxiety and Motivation

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Abstract

The present study was conducted in order to investigate the effect of role-play technique on Iranian female junior high school students' speaking ability, anxiety, and motivation. This research attempted to clarify whether or not using role-play activities in English classrooms and EFL contexts might enhance a more acceptable speaking ability and also motivation and decrease the anxiety of students in grade 8 in Nasle Payam Junior High School. To answer this question, 60 pre-intermediate students were selected through convenience sampling method. After homogenizing, finally 40 students were selected. Then, the participants were divided into experimental and control groups, 20 students in each group. A pre-test of speaking, speaking anxiety questionnaire (FLCAS), and speaking motivation questionnaire were administered to both groups. Then, the experimental group was instructed speaking through role-play technique while the control group was taught with respect to the existing methods. After two months of treatment, the post-test of speaking was administered in which the participants in both groups were asked to answer the posttest questions. Also, the questionnaires of anxiety and motivation were administered to students at the end of the treatment. The data obtained from this study was analyzed through ANCOVA. The results indicated that role-plays teaching technique has a significant effect on female EFL school learners' speaking performance, however, it has not a significant effect on female EFL school learners' speaking anxiety and motivation.

Key terms: role-play, speaking performance, speaking anxiety, motivation.

Introduction

Speaking is one of the four main skills that has to be learnt by EFL students in learning English. Although for having a successful learning of language all four skills should be assimilated but the most emphasis is on the teaching of speaking skill in recent methodologies. Teachers Emotional Intelligence can be very important because the EFL teachers can create friendly environment for learners to speak well (Tadayon, Zohoorian, & Hooshmand, 2023). As Oxford Dictionary (2009, p. 414) described, speaking is "the action of conveying information or expressing one's thoughts and feelings in spoken languages". Richards (2008) believes that during the speaking we want to do something, find others ideology, explore some aspects of the human world for being together. This means that students can communicate easily and explore their ideology if they speak fluently. Furthermore, EFL learners can enhance their syntactic competence to express their emotional feelings in English language to their EFL friends in various contexts (Kashef, Alavinia, & Khabazian, 2023).

According to Jones (1989, p.14) "speaking is a form of communication, so it is important that what you say is conveyed in the most effective way. How you say something can be as important as what you say in getting meaning across". By this opinion speaking is known as communicating skill, so speakers should be able to express their intention to convey the message effectively. As McDonough and Shaw (2003, p.134) described "there are some reasons for speaking involving expressing ideas and opinions: expressing a wish or a desire to do something; negotiating and/or solving a particular problem; or establishing and maintaining social relationships and friendships. Besides, fluency, accuracy, and confidence are important goal in speaking". So, speaking as one of the language skills, must be taken seriously by learners to have an effective communication. For defining speaking, simply we can say that using words with a usual voice, saying words, knowledge and ability to use language, expressing feelings, ideas, and thoughts are all speaking. This skill which needs to use some different abilities simultaneously, which can develop at the different rates. The aim of using speaking components by students is to speak foreign language effectively, and student must study those components to be successful in learning speaking. It means that the students first have to practice to speak and then they should master speaking components. At the time that students are practicing to speak, they can improve their language components all together. It is believed that there are four speaking components (fluency, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation), However, Haris (1969) described that the speaking components consist of five elements which are fluency, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension.

Soraya (2010) conducted a study to examine how cooperative group work enhances students' speech competency and communicative abilities. This study set out to characterize two variables: the independent variable, cooperative group work, and the dependent variable, its contribution to the improvement of learners' oral proficiency. Self-completion questionnaires were

used to collect the data from instructors who had taught oral expression at Mentouri University in Constantine's Department of English as well as third-year LMD students. There were 33 participants in this study. The findings indicate that cooperative group work is the most effective strategy for improving students' language use and oral engagement in the classroom, both of which have an impact on students' oral proficiency.

Insaf Houhou(2012–2013) looked on what makes an approach beneficial for teaching speaking. Additionally, this study presents a few tactics that enhance students' proficiency and support this ability. About 100 students, 25 of them were male and 25 percent were female, with ages ranging from 19 to 38, made up the study's population, along with 10 teachers. Survey questionnaires were one of the quantitative and qualitative research methodologies used in this study. There were two different kinds of questionnaires: one for the teachers and one for the students. The study's findings demonstrated the students' readiness to modify and apply these techniques in order to improve their proficiency in speaking.

Liu and Chen (2015) looked at high school students' language anxiety and motivation to learn when they were EFL learners. There were 155 kids involved, 60 from the academic track and 95 from the vocational track, all attending the same private senior high school in central Taiwan. The purpose of the study was to show whether there are significant differences in learner motivation and language anxiety between academic and vocational track high school students, whether both academic and vocational track students experience above-average levels of language anxiety, and whether language anxiety and motivation are significantly correlated among EFL high school students. To determine the motivations behind the research, two different kinds of questionnaires were created: one for motivation and the other for anxiousness. The study's conclusions showed that, first, there were no appreciable variations in the two student groups' anxiety levels; instead, both felt moderate levels of language anxiety. Second, compared to their peers on the vocational track, academic track students also showed higher levels of extrinsic drive and overall learning motivation. Additionally, a noteworthy inverse correlation was found between motivation and anxiety, two crucial emotional factors.

the aim of the present study is to examine the effects of the role-play technique on Iranian female Junior School students' speaking proficiency, anxiety and motivation. Although several studies have been carried out on speaking and its relationship with variables such as anxiety and motivation in different contexts, few studies, if any, have focused on developing Iranian junior high school students' speaking performance. Since Iran is considered as an EFL context, oral skills are not really emphasized and improved in public educational system. Therefore, this study aimed at bridging the gap in this realm of research.

In this present study, the following research questions were addressed:

1.   Do role-plays have any significant effect on students speaking performance?

2.	Do role-plays have any significant effect on students speaking anxiety?

3.	Do role-plays have any significant effect on students speaking motivation?

Correspondingly, the following hypotheses are formulated:

1.	Role-plays do not have any significant effect on students speaking performance.

2.	Role-plays do not have any significant effect on students speaking anxiety.

3.	Role-plays do not have any significant effect on students speaking motivation.

Method

Design of the Study

This study includes a quasi-experimental design since it investigates the effect of an independent variable on three dependent variables. The independent variable of this study is the use of role-play technique and the dependent variables include speaking performance, speaking anxiety, speaking motivation. When there is a cause-effect relationship between the variables, a sort of experimental design is proposed (Mackay & Gass, 2005).

Participants

Initially, the participants of this study were 60 students of Urmia Nasle Payam Shahed Junior School and all of them were female students of grade 8 which were selected through convenience sampling method. The age range of the participant was between 13 and 15. They were all native Turkish speakers. Majority of the students were at pre-intermediate language proficiency and the others who were at higher or lower levels of proficiency were not considered in the data. Having homogenized them, the researcher chose 40 students including 20 participants in each class. Then, the two selected intact classes were randomly assigned into a control and an experimental group.

Instruments

For the purpose of this study, three instruments were utilized as pretests and posttests including 1) Speaking Interview, 2) Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire entitled Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and 3) Speaking Motivation Questionnaire.

Procedure

The study was conducted at Urmia Nasle Payam Shahed Junior School. The participants formed two intact English classes that were held two sessions a week and the duration of the classes was about 100 minitues. In the beginning, two classes at the same level were selected one as an

experimental group and the other as the control group respectively. One class was taught through role-playing method (experimental group), and the other class was thought through traditional one (control group). All the data was collected during two months (16 sessions). Both groups studied the same book (i.e. English for Schools, PROSPECT 2, published by Ministry of Education and Training (MET)) through two different methods of instruction.

Data Analysis

This study mainly dealt with quantitative data. All the given scores to the tests and questionnaires were entered to SPSS for analysis. The data was analyzed through SPSS software. First, descriptive statistics was reported. Then, a KS test was conducted to examine the normality of data. Then, independent-samples t-test or its nonparametric equivalent Man Whitney U was used to test the hypotheses.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows the descriptive indexes of pretest and posttest scores of speaking performance given by two evaluators.

Table 1.

Descriptive statistics of scores of speaking performance given by two evaluators

Group	Test phase	Evaluators	Mean	SD	Average	SD
Control	Pre test	Rater1	16.1500	2.60111	16.1250	2.32195
		Rater2	16.1000	2.35975		
	Post test	Rater1	16.2500	2.48945	16.2750	2.00312
		Rater2	16.3000	2.15455		
Experimental	Pre test	Rater1	16.0000	2.82843	16.0250	2.56225
		Rater2	16.0500	2.74293		
	Post test	Rater1	17.0000	2.73380	17.0500	2.29358
		Rater2	17.1000	2.84513		

The mean scores of speaking performance from pretest to posttest in each group are also shown in the following figure (Figure 1).
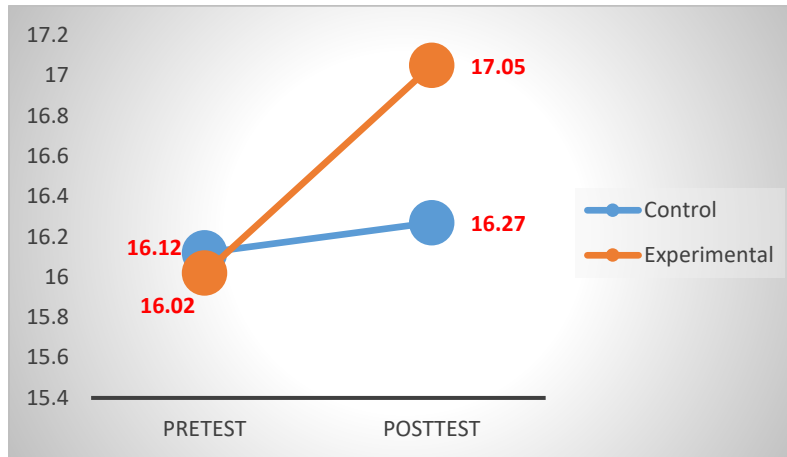

Figure 1. Mean Scores of speaking performance in each group from pretest to posttest

Table 2 depicts intra-class coefficients for pretest and post test data given by two evaluators.
Table 2.
Intra-Class Correlation Coefficient

Test Phase		Intra-class Correlation	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Pretest	Single Measures	.723	.535	.843
	Average Measures	.839	.697	.915
Posttest	Single Measures	.429	.141	.650
	Average Measures	.600	.248	.788

As the results revealed in Table 2, a high degree of inter-rater reliability was found for the pretest data between the two raters. The average measure ICC was .839 with a 95% confidence interval from .697 to .915. Also, a mild degree of inter-rater reliability was found for post test data between two raters. The average measure ICC was .600 with a 95% confidence interval from .248 to .788 Table 3 displays the descriptive indexes of participants' pretest and posttest scores of speaking anxiety.

Table 3.

Descriptive statistics of scores of speaking anxiety in pretest and posttest

Group	Test phase	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Control	Pre test	45.00	66.00	55.6500	5.94957
	Post test	34.00	63.00	49.4500	8.17232
Experimental	Pre test	47.00	66.00	56.8500	4.81527
	Post test	43.00	60.00	50.8000	4.60663

The mean scores of speaking anxiety of participants in each group from pretest to posttest are also shown in the following figure (Figure 2).
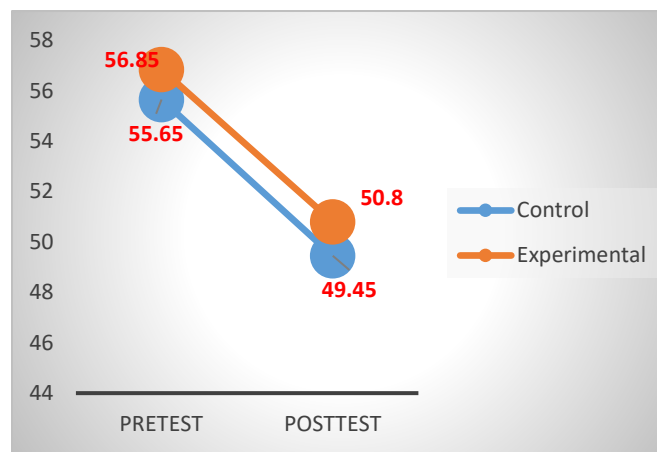

Figure 2. Mean Scores of participants' speaking anxiety from pretest to posttest

Table 4 depicts the descriptive indexes of participants' pretest and posttest scores of speaking motivation.

Table 4.

Descriptive statistics of scores of speaking motivation in pretest and posttest

Group	Test phase	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Control	Pre test	26.00	43.00	35.3500	4.52217
	Post test	30.00	43.00	36.1000	3.04181
Experimental	Pre test	28.00	41.00	34.7000	3.09669
	Post test	32.00	42.00	37.0000	2.59554

The mean scores of speaking motivation of participants in each group from pretest to posttest are also shown in the following figure (Figure 3).
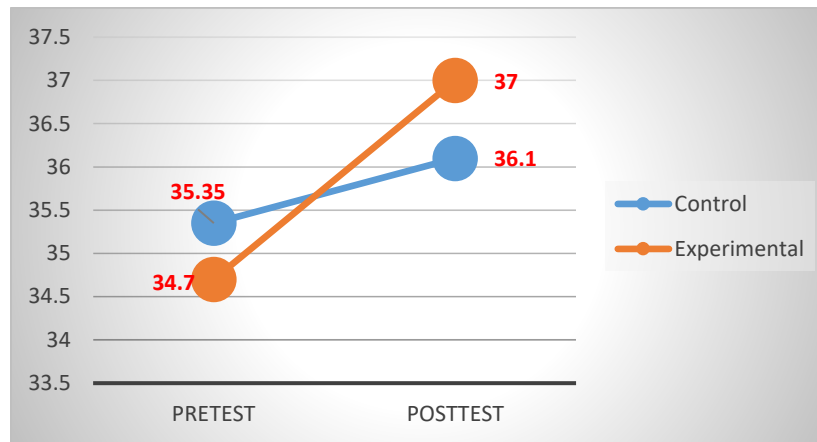
Figure 3. Mean Scores of participants' speaking motivation from pretest to posttest

Testing Research Hypotheses
Testing Null Hypothesis One
H0: Role-plays do not have any significant effect on female EFL school learners speaking performance.
H1: Role-plays have significant effect on female EFL school learners speaking performance.
A one-way Analysis of Covariance was conducted to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between two independent variables (Role-plays group and Traditional teaching group) on a dependent variable (speaking performance) controlling for the covariate (pretest scores of the speaking performance).
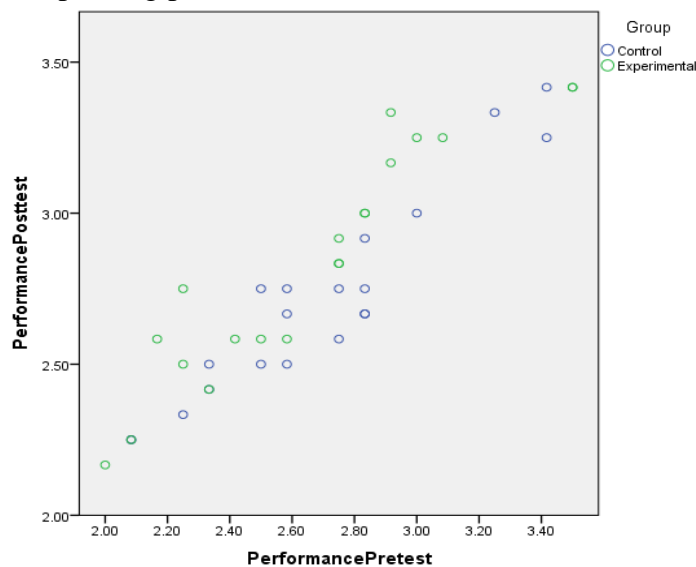

Figure 6. Linearly relationship to the speaking performance at each group

The results of one-way Analysis of Covariance are presented in Table 7

Table 7.

Analysis of Covariance Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Sources	Type lll Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	4.490[a]	2	2.245	145.559	.000	.887
Intercept	.269	1	.269	17.458	.000	.321
Pretest scores	4.323	1	4.323	280.302	.000	.883
Group	.204	1	.204	13.245	.001	.264
Error	.571	37	.015			
Total	313.549	40				
Corrected Total	5.061	39				

There was a significant difference in posttest scores of speaking performance [$F(1,37)=13.24$, $p=0.001$] between the experimental and control groups, whilst adjusting for pretest scores of speaking performance. The partial Eta Squared value indicates the effect size which should be compared with Cohen's guidelines (< 0.2 – small effect, 0.2 to 0.5 – moderate effect, >0.8 – large effect). It can be seen that for speaking performance the effect size is moderate (0.26). This value means that 26 percent of the variance in the dependent variable (speaking performance) is explained by the independent variable (Role-plays teaching strategies). Ideally this number would be fairly large. The estimated marginal means section of the output gives the adjusted means (controlling for the covariate 'pretest') for each experimental and control group (Table 4-8).

Table 8.

Estimate Marginal Means of posttest scores of performance

Group	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Control	2.706[a]	.028	2.649	2.762
Experimental	2.849[a]	.028	2.792	2.905

This simply means that the effect of 'pretest' has been statistically removed. From these adjusted means, it is clear that role-play group outperformed in speaking performance after adjusting for pretest scores.

Post hoc Bonferroni tests (Table 4-9) indicated a significant difference between experimental and control groups (p = 0.001). Comparing the estimated marginal means showed that the most

increase in speaking performance was achieved on role-plays (mean=2.84) compared to traditional teaching group (mean=2.70).

Table 9.

Pairwise Comparisons of posttest scores of speaking performance between groups

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Control	Experimental	-.143[*]	.039	.001	-.223	-.063

Thus, the first null hypothesis is rejected (p<0.05). So, it can be inferred that role-play teaching strategy has a significant effect on female EFL school learners' speaking performance.

Testing Null Hypothesis Two

H0: Role-plays do not have any significant effect on female EFL school learners speaking anxiety.
H1: Role-plays have significant effect on female EFL school learners speaking anxiety.
A one-way Analysis of Covariance was conducted to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between two independent variables (Role-plays group and Traditional teaching group) on a dependent variable (speaking anxiety) controlling for the covariate (pretest scores of the speaking anxiety).

Conclusion

This study investigated the effect of role play as a speaking technique on the speaking performance, anxiety and motivation of Iranian EFL school learners at pre-intermediate level. Initially, the researcher ensured the participants' homogeneity in terms of language proficiency, age range and mother tongue. To this end, 40 students were selected for the study who were assigned to two groups; one experimental group and one control group. After the pre-test, the treatment was run and the technique of role-play was used in the experimental group. The control group was instructed through the conventional method of speaking learning. After the treatment, posttest in speaking, anxiety and motivation were administrated to both groups.

The results showed that EFL learners in the experimental group who enjoyed role-plays as a speaking technique outperformed those in the control group in improving speaking. In other words, a significant difference was found among the performance of the experimental group which was exposed to role-play instruction compared to that of control group. The study indicated that role-play improves and promotes Iranian EFL learners' speaking in contrast to the explicit or conventional method of teaching speaking. However, the findings revealed that there was not any

significant difference in the speaking anxiety and motivation of EFL learners between both groups after implementing role-play technique.

Consequently, it can be said that role-playing is a useful method for teaching speaking in particular and English in general. Actually, a lot of studies have attested to the effectiveness of role-plays in highlighting pupils' excitement. Role-playing is said to be an effective, controlled, and enjoyable approach for teachers and students to practice speaking English. Therefore, it may be argued that using role-plays in the classroom increases variety, provides a change of pace and opportunity for more production, and ignites a passion for language acquisition.

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