

Analysing EFL Learners Speaking Skills through Authentic Materials and Role Play Activities

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ABSTRACT

One of the key components of learning English as a foreign language (EFL) is speaking skill, which requires the capacity to interact, express ideas, and communicate well in natural surroundings. In the meantime, many EFL students still struggle to reach their ideal speaking ability. This study aims to investigate how well real materials and role-playing exercises help students improve their speaking abilities. Descriptive quantitative research was conducted, gathering data employing questionnaires sent to twenty English Education undergraduate students during semesters 2, 4, 6, and 8. The surveys were meant to gauge how well students thought real materials and role-playing applied and how it affected their speaking ability. Following the sessions, most students reported gains in fluency, confidence, and verbal interaction skills. The results show that in EFL classrooms, including real materials and role-playing exercises can successfully teach English speaking.

Keywords: EFL, Speaking Skills, Authentic Materials, Role Play Activities.

INTRODUCTION

Language is basically speech (Bashir, 2011). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, the ability to speak in public is not just a skill or additional skill that is good to have, but is also a skill that is very valuable in various aspects of life (Pratiwi et al., 2024). Learners are required not only to grasp grammar and vocabulary but also to apply them in fluent, accurate, and contextually appropriate verbal interactions. Unfortunately, learning environments that are often isolated from genuine language use can hinder the development of this crucial competence.

In this modern world, communication skills play a vital role and one must have mastery over these skills to get success in their respective fields (Lucia ADAM et al., n.d.). So, speaking is the most important skill among all the four language skills in order to communicate well in this global world (Rao, 2019). Challenge faced by EFL students is confidence in speaking skill (Pratiwi et al., 2024). Recognizing these challenges, this study focuses on two promising pedagogical approaches to enhance EFL learners' speaking skills: the **use of authentic materials** and **role-play activities**.

Authentic materials are important tools for use in ESP classes for, as we have clearly shown, they motivate and immerse learners in specific areas of the target language in which practice is needed (Torregrosa Benavent et al., n.d.). which encompass a wide range of real-world texts, audio, and visuals (e.g., news articles, advertisements, YouTube videos, podcasts, everyday conversations), serve as a bridge connecting the classroom environment with language use outside of it. The use of authentic materials in EFL classes is not new, because teachers started using them in the 1970s as a result of the spread of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach (Hamed Al Azri & Hilal Al-Rashdi, 2014). Authentic materials should be the kind of material that students will need and want to be able to read when travelling, studying abroad, or using the language in other contexts outside the classroom (Berardo, 2006). These materials offer direct exposure to living language, complete with cultural nuances and relevant communication contexts, allowing learners to experience how English is genuinely used by native speakers. Authentic materials bring learners into direct contact with a reality level of English (Heitler, 2005).

On the other hand, Role play Activities is useful for learners to promote their speaking skills. Role play activities (RPA) are powerful language teaching methods that entail all of the learner's interactive involvement in the learning process (Altun, 2015). Furthermore, Byrne (1986), role play can be grouped into two forms, playing written and unwritten roles. Role play has the ability to develop and enhance content skills as well as skills needed for future success by incorporating realistic, or real-world, problem (Oradee, 2013). Provide a dynamic and safe simulated environment for learners to practice their speaking skills. Through scenarios designed to resemble real communication situations, learners are encouraged to take on roles, improvise, and respond spontaneously. This not only helps them apply linguistic knowledge in a functional context but also builds confidence and reduces speaking anxiety.

The combination of these two strategies is expected to create a more immersive and interactive learning environment, encouraging learners to

actively engage in the communication process and develop their speaking fluency and accuracy. And creates an immersive language-learning experience that emphasizes practical language use. Authentic materials provide learners with exposure to the language as it is used by native speakers in various contexts, while role play activities give them the chance to practice that language in simulated real life situations. This synergy between exposure and practice is crucial for fostering both linguistic competence and communicative confidence. Moreover, these strategies encourage learners to move beyond the theoretical knowledge of grammar and vocabulary and to focus on how to apply that knowledge in real world conversations.

Therefore, this article aims to comprehensively analyse how the synergistic integration of authentic materials and role-play activities impacts the improvement of EFL learners' speaking skills. We will investigate the effects of this approach on various aspects of speaking proficiency, including fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and the use of communication strategies. Through an in-depth analysis, we hope to provide valuable empirical insights for educators, curriculum developers, and EFL learners alike to design and implement more effective teaching practices in developing essential real-world speaking competence

METHOD

This research use the Quantitative descriptive approach with data collection techniques through questionnaires. The purpose of the study was to measure students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using authentic materials and role play activities in improving their English speaking skills. This study used a quantitative survey design. Data was collected using a closed questionnaire, where respondents chose answers based on a predetermined scale. The questionnaire results were statistically analysed to obtain a quantitative picture of students' perceptions and experiences.

The interview questions centered on:

1. Exploring how often and effectively learners use authentic materials (such as real-life conversations, news articles, videos, etc.) to practice speaking.
2. Understanding learners' confidence and engagement with speaking English through role play.
3. Determining the extent to which learners feel their speaking skills improve after practicing with authentic materials and role play.
4. Evaluating the effectiveness of using authentic materials and role play compared to other speaking practice methods.

The researcher directly administered the questionnaire. Participants then filled it out on their own, following a brief explanation of the study's aim and an assurance that their personal data would remain confidential.

FINDINGS

This study investigates whether the use of authentic materials and role play activities affects students' skills in speaking classes. Based on 34 respondents of English education students in semester 2, 4, 6, and 8 who have been observed through questionnaires, several different results have been found between individuals.

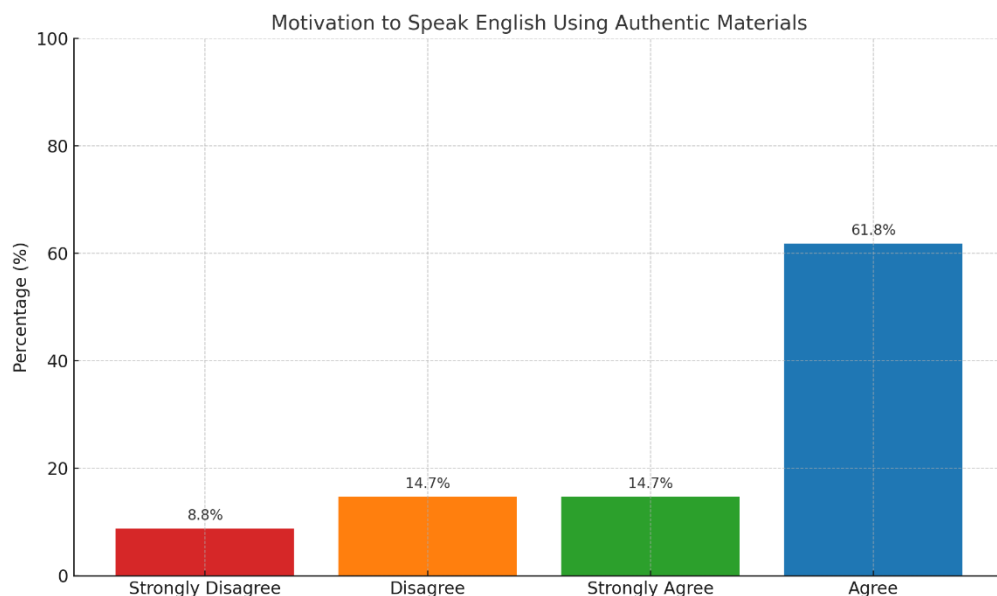
Table 1:
Questionnaire Results

Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Agree
I feel more motivated to speak in English when using authentic materials such as videos and articles.	8.8%	14.7%	14.7%	61.8%
The authentic materials used in class are relevant to my daily life.	8.8%	0%	17.6%	73.5%
I feel that my speaking skills have improved after using authentic materials.	8.8%	8.8%	14.7%	67.6%

I feel more confident speaking English after doing role play activities.	5.9%	5.9%	14.7%	73.5%
Role Play makes speaking lessons more interesting.	5.9%	0%	23.5%	70.6%
I feel that role play helps me use English more naturally.	8.8%	5.9%	17.6%	67.6%
I feel that my speaking skills have improved since using authentic materials and role play.	5.9%	8.8%	17.6%	67.6%
I feel more prepared to speak in real life situations after practicing with authentic materials and role play.	5.9%	8.8%	26.5%	58.8%
I understand communication context in English more	5.9%	8.8%	23.5%	61.8%

quickly when
using the
authentic
materials
approach.

Graphic 1:
Motivation to Speak English Using Authentic Materials



DISCUSSION

The findings from the survey on the effectiveness of authentic materials and role play activities in enhancing EFL learners' speaking skills align closely with the theoretical and empirical foundations discussed in the referenced articles. The data reveal a strong positive perception among students, with a majority agreeing or strongly agreeing that these methods improve motivation, confidence, fluency, and real-life communication preparedness. However, the results also highlight nuanced challenges and areas for

improvement, which warrant further exploration in light of existing literature.

Positive Perceptions and Alignment with Literature

The survey indicates that 61.8% of respondents felt more motivated to speak English when using authentic materials like videos and articles, while 73.5% agreed these materials were relevant to their daily lives. This corroborates the claims of Nurweni et al. (2020) and Ari et al. (2020), who emphasize that authentic materials bridge the gap between classroom learning and real world language use by exposing learners to natural, context-rich input. For instance, the high agreement (67.6%) that authentic materials improved speaking skills reflects the literature's assertion that such materials enhance linguistic competence through exposure to idiomatic expressions, cultural nuances, and varied registers.

Similarly, role play activities were perceived as highly effective, with 70.6% agreeing they made lessons more interesting and 73.5% reporting increased confidence. These results resonate with Anis (2020), who argues that role play fosters social, emotional, and cognitive engagement by simulating real-life interactions. The data also support Aliakbar & Jamalvadi's (2010) findings that role play encourages spontaneous language use, as 67.6% of students felt it helped them speak more naturally. This synergy between authentic input (materials) and output practice (role play) aligns with Putri's (2020) conclusion that combining both strategies creates an immersive learning environment, ultimately boosting fluency and communicative competence.

Divergent Perspectives and Critical Analysis

Despite the overall positive trends, the survey reveals dissent among a minority of students. For example, 8.8% strongly disagreed that authentic materials improved their speaking skills, and 5.9% reported no confidence gains from role play. These outliers may reflect individual learning preferences or contextual barriers, such as inadequate scaffolding or mismatched material difficulty levels. This echoes concerns raised by Sasaki (1998), who notes that without proper guidance, authentic materials can overwhelm learners, while poorly structured role play may feel irrelevant or intimidating.

Furthermore, the lower agreement (58.8%) on feeling prepared for real-life situations suggests a gap between classroom practice and actual communication demands. This aligns with Wright's (1980) caution that role play must be meticulously designed to mirror authentic scenarios. For instance, students who struggled with role play (e.g., 8.8% disagreement on natural language use) might benefit from clearer rubrics or gradual complexity, as proposed by Anis (2020).

Comparative Insights and Pedagogical Implications

Compared to the referenced studies, the survey's results reinforce the efficacy of authentic materials and role play but also highlight the need for tailored implementation. For example, Nurweni et al. (2020) stress the importance of selecting culturally accessible materials, which could address the 8.8% who found materials irrelevant. Similarly, Ari et al. (2020) advocate for integrating technology (e.g., podcasts or interactive videos) to engage diverse learners a strategy that could mitigate the 14.7% who felt unmotivated by traditional materials.

The survey's strongest endorsement was for role play's ability to make lessons engaging (70.6% agree, 23.5% strongly agree), validating Putri's (2020) emphasis on interactivity. However, the 5.9% who strongly disagreed with its effectiveness might align with Wright's (1980) observation that introverted learners prefer low-pressure activities. Thus, differentiated instruction—combining role play with solo tasks like reflective journals—could cater to varied preferences.

In summary, the survey data substantiate the literature's advocacy for authentic materials and role play as transformative tools for EFL speaking skills. However, the dissenting minority underscores the necessity of adaptive pedagogy, including scaffolding materials, diversifying role play formats, and addressing individual anxieties. Future research could explore longitudinal impacts and gender-/level-based differences to refine these methods further. Ultimately, this discussion affirms that while these strategies are potent, their success hinges on thoughtful, learner-centered implementation.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated the significant benefits of incorporating authentic materials and role-play activities in EFL speaking classrooms. The survey results clearly indicate that these methods effectively enhance students' motivation, confidence, and speaking proficiency, aligning with contemporary pedagogical theories and prior research. A substantial majority of respondents reported positive outcomes, confirming that exposure to real-world language contexts and interactive practice opportunities contribute meaningfully to developing communicative competence.

However, the findings also reveal important considerations for implementation. While most students benefited from these approaches, a minority expressed difficulties, highlighting the need for careful instructional design. Educators must consider factors such as appropriate material selection, clear activity guidelines, and differentiated support to address diverse learner needs. The success of these techniques depends not only on their theoretical soundness but also on their practical adaptation to specific classroom contexts.

For future practice, we recommend:

1. Gradual introduction of authentic materials with proper scaffolding
2. Varied role-play scenarios that cater to different proficiency levels
3. Ongoing assessment of student responses to refine instructional approaches
4. Teacher roles should be changed as a provider, an assistant, a consultant to increase effectiveness in the learning environment(Oradee, 2013).

Further research could explore longitudinal effects, cultural adaptations, and technology integration to deepen our understanding of these methods. Ultimately, this study contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting communicative language teaching strategies while emphasizing the importance of thoughtful, learner-centered implementation in EFL education.

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