

Enhancing EFL Speaking Skills: The Impact of Improv Cards in Role-Playing Technique

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Abstract—Despite advancements in instructional methods, speaking remains one of the most challenging skills for EFL learners, particularly in contexts such as Libya. This study investigates the effect of integrating Improv Cards into role-playing activities on the speaking performance of Libyan undergraduate EFL students. Using a quasi-experimental design, 70 participants were divided into an experimental group (n = 36) and a control group (n = 34). The experimental group engaged in role-plays using Improv Cards, while the control group participated in conventional role-play activities. Pre- and post-intervention speaking tests assessed five key dimensions of speaking proficiency: fluency, grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and comprehension. The results of the study indicated that the experimental group demonstrated significant improvement across all five components of speaking proficiency, with the smallest relative gain observed in fluency. These findings highlight the potential of improv-based role-play as an innovative, engaging pedagogical strategy for enhancing communicative competence in EFL learners. The study provides practical implications for language educators and curriculum designers seeking to implement interactive, learner-centered approaches in similar educational contexts.

Index Terms—role-play technique, speaking skills, Improv Cards, EFL learners

I. INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills are a crucial aspect of language proficiency, especially for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Aizawa et al., 2023). Effective oral communication is vital for academic success, career advancement, and social integration in today's interconnected world. However, many EFL learners continue to struggle with developing their speaking abilities, facing challenges such as grammatical errors, limited comprehension, and a lack of fluency (Alkhaddashi & Abuojaylah, 2023). These challenges are often the result of insufficient exposure to English in real-life contexts, inadequate teaching practices, and a lack of confidence in using the language spontaneously. For Libyan EFL learners specifically, mastering speaking skills is vital not only for academic success (Al-Arifi, 2020) but also for enhancing career prospects and fostering intercultural understanding (Akhter et al., 2020). Despite these needs, Libyan EFL learners often continue to struggle with speaking proficiency due to systemic and contextual obstacles (Alkhaddashi & Abuojaylah, 2023).

Various instructional methods have been proposed to address these issues, ranging from traditional approaches such as the grammar-translation method to more contemporary frameworks such as Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). Nonetheless, speaking-related challenges persist. Research suggests that many learners still lack communicative competence, which impedes fluency and confidence development (Rohmiyati et al., 2025; Alkhaddashi & Abuojaylah, 2023). This ongoing struggle points to the gap between theoretical advancements and practical implementation, often hindered by pedagogical limitations, learner-related factors, and contextual constraints.

Traditional methods are frequently critiqued for their teacher-centred orientation, which tends to emphasize rote memorization and structural accuracy at the expense of meaningful communication and critical thinking. In contrast, modern approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching, and technology-enhanced learning prioritize learner interaction, real-world application, and engagement (Zairjanovich et al., 2025). These methods aim to balance fluency and accuracy by encouraging students to use English in authentic contexts. However, their effectiveness is often limited by practical challenges, such as the need for well-trained instructors and

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adequate resources—conditions that may not be readily available in many Libyan EFL settings (Boughoulid, 2022).

Although technological advancements in language teaching offer promising possibilities, they remain largely unfeasible in EFL contexts such as Libyan classrooms due to inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and unreliable internet access (Al-Atrash, 2023). The absence of digital tools and technical support renders the implementation of technology-based methods impractical, making their integration more aspirational than realistic in such environments.

Among non-technological approaches, role-playing has long been recognized as an effective pedagogical tool in language education, particularly since the rise of CLT (Idham et al., 2022). Role-playing provides learners with a dynamic and interactive platform to practise speaking in real-life contexts, thereby fostering communicative competence. By adopting various roles and participating in simulated dialogues, students engage in meaningful language use that mirrors authentic interactions (Pisciotta & Taddei, 2023).

However, like other instructional strategies, role-playing is not without its limitations. Milarisa (2018) argues that role-play activities can become repetitive and time-consuming, often demanding considerable preparation that may detract from coverage of other curriculum components. Additionally, Flora and Sukirlan (2021) note that fear of embarrassment may inhibit student participation, especially among those with lower confidence in their speaking abilities. To counter these challenges, they recommend integrating Improv Cards into role-playing tasks to increase engagement and spontaneity. Yet, their study was conducted in an online environment, raising questions about the effectiveness and adaptability of this approach in traditional face-to-face classrooms. Therefore, the current study aims to investigate how the integration of Improv Cards into the role-playing technique affects the speaking skills of Libyan EFL undergraduates compared to the traditional role-playing technique.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Role-Playing as a Transformative EFL Strategy*

The exploration of pedagogical approaches in English language education has identified a variety of strategies aimed at improving students' speaking skills. Among these, the role-playing technique—an integral component of CLT—has proven effective in addressing the challenges associated with developing spoken English proficiency (Haliwanda, 2021). The core premise of this technique is that assuming different roles within specific contexts can significantly enhance language use. This idea was initially introduced by Ladousse (1995) and later expanded upon by Flora and Sukirlan (2021).

An analysis of the instructional principles underlying role-play reveals that it extends beyond basic language drills. By adopting various roles, students are not only required to express themselves in English but also to view situations from new perspectives and engage in dialogues that may differ from their personal experiences. This immersive interaction creates a dynamic and creative learning environment where students feel more comfortable experimenting with language. As Ladousse (1995) observes, such an atmosphere lowers the fear of making mistakes and fosters risk-taking, contributing to a more supportive and enjoyable classroom experience.

Moreover, role-playing serves two key functions: it enables learners to articulate their thoughts and helps them demonstrate their understanding of language use across diverse social contexts (Siahaan, 2022). Simulated interactions—from casual conversations to formal professional exchanges—expose students to the social and cultural nuances of English. This not only broadens their vocabulary and communicative range but also enhances their cultural awareness (Siahaan, 2022). Regarding this, Harmer (2003) emphasizes that the benefits of role-play extend beyond linguistic development to include personal growth. When implemented effectively, role-playing provides opportunities for learners to reflect on their emotions and experiences, fostering emotional intelligence and empathy alongside communicative competence. In line with these perspectives, Ladousse (1995) and Moosa et al. (2024) argue that role-playing bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. By simulating authentic situations, students are encouraged to use English meaningfully and interactively. Such practice promotes fluency and confidence as learners collaborate, negotiate, and communicate within their assigned roles.

B. *Effectiveness and Challenges of Role-Playing in EFL Instruction*

Role-playing has been widely recognized as an effective pedagogical technique for enhancing speaking skills in EFL contexts. Numerous studies have confirmed its positive impact on students' conversational abilities and its alignment with the principles of CLT (Al-Garni & Almuhammadi, 2019; Neupane, 2019). Through role-play, learners can improve fluency, build confidence, and overcome common challenges associated with spoken English. This approach has been extensively examined across diverse EFL settings, with various studies consistently supporting its effectiveness in developing learners' speaking competence (e.g., Alzboun et al., 2017; Arham, 2016; Basit, 2019; Bhatti, 2021; Krebt, 2017; Negara, 2021; Nasihah, 2019; Pinatih, 2021; Togimin & Jaafar, 2020). However, despite these benefits, several studies have identified limitations that may hinder the successful implementation of role-playing activities. Time constraints, student boredom, and inconsistent levels of engagement are among the key challenges reported in previous research (e.g., Benabadji, 2007; Flora & Sukirlan, 2021; Milarisa, 2018). These issues can diminish classroom interaction and reduce learning opportunities. For instance, when only a few students actively participate, the dynamic and collaborative nature of role-play may be compromised, preventing the full realization of learning

objectives. Additional concerns include difficulties in designing engaging scenarios, encouraging voluntary participation, and sustaining audience interest during performances (Altun, 2015; Flora & Sukirlan, 2021). Collectively, these factors can present some practical barriers to the effective use of role-playing in EFL classrooms.

C. Improv Cards in Role-Play

Speaking skills are essential for EFL learners but remain challenging due to limited opportunities for authentic communication. Role-playing, a key CLT technique, helps improve fluency and confidence. Recently, incorporating improvisational (Improv) Cards into role-play has shown promise in boosting engagement and spontaneity. This study explores the impact of this approach on Libyan undergraduate EFL students' speaking performance.

Building on the foundational research of Huang and Shan (2008), Flora and Sukirlan (2021) have recently introduced an innovative adaptation of the role-playing technique by incorporating improvisational (Improv) Cards to enhance active participation and turn-taking among learners. Improv Cards, as defined by Halpern et al. (1994), present prompts or scenarios designed to elicit spontaneous, imaginative speech, offering learners opportunities to practice language in a creative and dynamic way. Their integration into English language teaching represents a strategic approach that can foster greater learner autonomy and confidence in speaking. Through improvisation, students can improve vocabulary, fluency, and communicative competence within an engaging and supportive learning environment (Sowden et al., 2015). In a recent study, Flora and Sukirlan (2021) divided 28 participants into experimental and control groups to investigate the effects of Improv-card-based role play on speaking proficiency. Using pre- and post-tests assessing various speaking dimensions—including comprehensibility, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency—they found a statistically significant improvement in the experimental group. After just three intervention sessions, this group outperformed the control group, with a mean post-test score of 24.571 compared to 20.143.

Unlike traditional role-play activities, which often rely on pre-written scripts, improvisational techniques require learners to respond extemporaneously, closely mirroring the spontaneity of real-life conversations. This unpredictability is central to developing the ability to generate contextually appropriate responses on the spot. Fauzan (2012) emphasizes that regular exposure to improvisational practice can help learners become increasingly proficient and comfortable with spontaneous speech. The use of time-limited improvisational tasks further encourages creative expression among learner, prompting them to manage the flow of dialogue and maintain narrative coherence effectively. This approach aligns with key principles of Vygotsky (1978) sociocultural theory of learning, which emphasises the vital role of social interaction in cognitive development. Role-playing with Improv Cards provides a meaningful context for learners to co-construct knowledge, negotiate meaning, and engage in authentic communicative exchanges. Moreover, this method supports learners' progression within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) through peer and teacher scaffolding, thereby enhancing both linguistic competence and communicative abilities.

Despite these promising results, the application of this method in Arab EFL contexts—particularly among Libyan EFL learners—remains underexplored. The current study seeks to fill this gap by examining the effects of role-playing with Improv Cards on the speaking skills of undergraduate Libyan EFL students. This focus responds to the persistent challenges Libyan learners face in acquiring spoken English, which hinder their social and professional advancement (Diaab, 2016). Given that opportunities for authentic spoken interaction are often limited in Libyan educational settings, incorporating improv-card-based role play may offer a practical and effective strategy for improving speaking proficiency.

In contrast to Flora and Sukirlan's (2021) virtual implementation and lack of initial placement testing, the current study employed a placement test prior to the intervention to assess students' English proficiency. This step was crucial for tailoring the intervention to learners' linguistic abilities, ensuring it was accessible and effective across different proficiency levels. Moreover, the intervention was conducted in a face-to-face classroom setting, allowing for real-time interaction and immediate feedback. This context also facilitated differentiated instruction, enabling the instructor to better address challenges related to the use of Improv Cards.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Design of the Study

The current study employed a quasi-experimental design to collect data from the participants to answer the research question. The study adopted non-random sampling techniques for the selection of participants, consistent with a quasi-experimental research design framework. After a previous contact with the university's administration, the researchers were informed that 120 students are currently studying in the civil engineering department for the second academic year at Bani Waleed University. The researchers have gained consent from 70 male and female students to participate in the study. These participants were subsequently divided into two groups: an experimental group, consisting of 36 randomly selected individuals, and a control group, comprising the remaining 34 participants.

B. Data Collection

The data collection process consisted of three main stages: a pre-test, an intervention phase (treatment), and a post-test. Prior to the intervention, a pre-test was administered to both the experimental and control groups to establish baseline oral proficiency levels. The pre-test required students to discuss and describe a given topic, with test items

adapted from Flora and Sukirlan (2021) and modified to align with the English syllabus at Bani Walid University. Students' oral performance was evaluated using a rubric adapted from Harris (1977), assessing five key components of speaking: fluency, grammatical range, pronunciation, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Following the pre-test, the experimental group underwent a structured role-playing intervention over a three-month period, comprising ten sessions of 120 minutes each. The sessions employed a progressive framework, beginning with familiar topics and gradually incorporating more complex, real-life scenarios. The role-play activities were carefully designed to correspond with the university's English syllabus and targeted improvements in fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical accuracy. Initial sessions featured scripted role-plays to allow students to gain confidence through practising structured dialogues. As the intervention progressed, students participated in improvised role-plays using Improv Cards, which introduced unforeseen elements to promote spontaneous conversational skills. Topics covered included daily routines, greetings, job interviews, shopping, travel planning, and social interactions. Activities were conducted in pairs or small groups to maximize active participation.

Each session followed a structured format: students were first introduced to the scenario, then assigned roles and given preparation time. During role-play activities, the instructor monitored students' performances, providing immediate corrective feedback. Peer feedback was also integrated to encourage self-reflection on strengths and areas needing improvement. The intervention concluded with group discussions and reflections designed to consolidate learning outcomes. The stages of the role-playing instructional process are detailed in Table 1. This structured and scaffolded approach facilitated the gradual development of students' confidence and communicative competence, reinforcing language acquisition in an interactive and engaging manner.

TABLE 1
ROLE-PLAYING INSTRUCTIONAL STAGES

Stage	Instruction
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The teacher introduces the role-play topic and explains the objectives. - Students receive Improv Cards or scripted dialogues, depending on the session. - The teacher demonstrates an example scenario. - Students discuss and brainstorm relevant vocabulary and expressions.
Role Assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students are assigned roles and work in pairs or small groups. - The teacher provides guidance on sentence structures and key expressions. - Students practice their assigned roles before performing.
Acting Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students perform the role-play in front of the class or in small groups. - The teacher introduces Improv Cards to encourage spontaneity. - The teacher observes and provides corrective feedback when necessary.
Feedback & Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The teacher gives feedback on pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary. - Students provide peer feedback, discussing strengths and areas for improvement. - Students reflect on their performance and suggest ways to enhance their speaking skills.

C. Data Analysis

This study employed quantitative data analysis using SPSS 25.0 to examine students' performance before and after the intervention. Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values, were used to summarise the data. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test assessed the normality of the dataset to verify the suitability of parametric tests. A paired-sample t-test compared pre-test and post-test scores to determine whether the role-play intervention significantly improved students' speaking skills. Additionally, a MANCOVA was conducted to analyse differences across speaking components—fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension—between the experimental and control groups. These analyses provided comprehensive insights into the effectiveness of the role-playing technique in enhancing oral proficiency.

IV. RESULTS

The primary objective of this research was to investigate the effectiveness of role-playing techniques using Improv Cards in enhancing English-speaking skills. Descriptive statistics were first presented, including means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for the speaking skill pre-test scores of both the experimental and control groups. An independent samples t-test was then conducted to determine whether significant differences existed between the two groups based on their pre-test speaking abilities. This test assesses whether observed differences are statistically significant, with a p-value below the conventional threshold of 0.05 indicating that the differences are unlikely due to chance.

The pre-test speaking scores were evaluated across five key criteria: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Scores ranged from 1 (indicating significant difficulties) to 5 (indicating moderate challenges), reflecting generally low English-speaking proficiency among participants. Both the control and experimental groups demonstrated similar scores across all criteria, mostly between 1 and 3, highlighting widespread challenges in these fundamental language skills. This consistency in pre-test scores confirms that both groups began at comparable proficiency levels, ensuring that any improvements observed post-intervention can be attributed to the role-playing

technique with Improv Cards rather than pre-existing differences. Table 2 presents the overall descriptive statistics for both groups.

TABLE 2
DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS OF THE PRE-TEST OF BOTH GROUPS

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pronunciation	70	1	3	1.83	.742
Grammar	70	1	3	1.97	.761
Vocabulary	70	1	3	1.91	.756
Fluency	70	1	3	1.90	.764
Comprehension	70	1	3	1.76	.669
Valid N (listwise)	70				

The descriptive statistics for the five key assessment areas—pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension—summarize the performance of all 70 participants. The mean scores were as follows: pronunciation, 1.83 (SD = 0.742); grammar, 1.97 (SD = 0.761); vocabulary, 1.91 (SD = 0.756); fluency, 1.90 (SD = 0.764); and comprehension, which had the lowest mean of 1.76 (SD = 0.669). These results indicate moderate variability across the areas, with comprehension showing slightly lower average performance and less dispersion compared to the others. Detailed pre-test results for both groups are available in the supplementary file.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the overall pre-test scores between the two groups. Group 1 (n = 36) had a mean score of 9.19 (SD = 1.009), and Group 2 (n = 34) had a mean of 9.56 (SD = 0.860). The t-test revealed no statistically significant difference between the groups, with p-values of 0.055 (equal variances assumed) and 0.054 (equal variances not assumed), both slightly above the 0.05 threshold. The 95% confidence intervals for the mean difference ranged from approximately -0.813 to 0.084 (equal variances assumed) and -0.811 to 0.082 (equal variances not assumed), encompassing zero and confirming the lack of significant difference. Table 3 presents the detailed t-test results, while Table 4 shows additional analyses of score differences between groups.

TABLE 3
T-TEST RESULTS OF THE PRE-TEST

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
experimental	36	9.19	1.009	.168
Control	34	9.56	.860	.147

TABLE 4
INDEPENDENT SAMPLE TEST FOR THE PRE-TEST

Assumption	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error	95% CI (Lower, Upper)
Equal variances assumed	-1.622	68	.109	-0.364	0.225	-0.813, 0.084
Equal variances not assumed	-1.629	67.30	.108	-0.364	0.224	-0.811, 0.082

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances yielded a p-value of 0.255, indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variances between the groups was met. Therefore, the t-test results assuming equal variances were reported. The t-test produced a t-value of -1.622 with 68 degrees of freedom and a two-tailed p-value of 0.055, indicating a marginally non-significant difference between the groups. When the assumption of equal variances was not applied, the t-value was -1.629 with 67.304 degrees of freedom and a two-tailed p-value of 0.054. In both cases, the p-values were slightly above the conventional alpha level of 0.05, suggesting that the difference in pre-test scores between the groups was not statistically significant.

TABLE 5
DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS OF THE POST TEST OF BOTH GROUPS

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pronunciation	70	1	5	3.17	.964
Grammar	70	2	5	2.99	.876
Vocabulary	70	2	5	3.31	.860
Fluency	70	2	5	3.21	.815
Comprehension	70	1	5	3.00	.885
score	70	10.00	25.00	15.68	4.400
Valid N (listwise)	70				

As shown in Table 5, the post-test results demonstrate the effectiveness of the intervention, providing valuable insights into the potential of innovative teaching methods to transform language education and enhance learning experiences. These positive outcomes emphasize the importance of incorporating interactive and creative approaches into language instruction, facilitating improved language acquisition and fostering positive learner attitudes. Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics for the post-test scores of both groups.

Descriptive statistics for the assessed variables are presented below. For pronunciation (N = 70), scores ranged from 1 to 5, with a mean of 3.17 and a standard deviation (SD) of 0.964. Grammar scores ranged from 2 to 5, with a mean of 2.99 (SD = 0.876). Vocabulary scores also ranged from 2 to 5, with a mean of 3.31 (SD = 0.860). Fluency scores varied from 2 to 5, yielding a mean of 3.21 (SD = 0.815). Comprehension scores ranged from 1 to 5, with a mean of 3.00 (SD

= 0.885). The post-test results revealed a significant difference in speaking performance between the experimental and control groups. The experimental group, which received the role-playing intervention using Improv Cards, demonstrated substantially better outcomes. The control group (N = 34) had a mean score of 17.14 (SD = 4.03, standard error [SE] = 0.67), whereas the experimental group (N = 36) achieved a notably higher mean score of 28.56 (SD = 9.55, SE = 1.64). These findings indicate that the experimental group not only outperformed the control group but also exhibited greater score variability (see Table 6).

TABLE 6
T-TEST RESULTS FOR THE POST-TEST

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Control	34	17.1389	4.02955	.67159
Experimental	36	28.5588	9.55428	1.63855

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine whether post-test speaking scores differed significantly between the experimental and control groups. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances revealed a violation of the homogeneity assumption ($F = 27.94$, $p < .001$), requiring the reporting of results under both equal and unequal variance conditions. Assuming equal variances, the t-test showed a highly significant difference between groups, $t(68) = -6.581$, $p < .001$, with a mean difference of -11.42 (SE = 1.74) and a 95% confidence interval ranging from -14.88 to -7.96. When equal variances were not assumed, the results remained significant, $t(43.85) = -6.449$, $p < .001$, with a 95% confidence interval of -14.99 to -7.85. These findings confirm that the experimental group, which received the Improv Card-based role-play intervention, outperformed the control group in post-test speaking scores, demonstrating the effectiveness of the intervention in enhancing oral proficiency.

TABLE 7
INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST FOR THE POST TEST

Assumption	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error	95% CI (Lower, Upper)
Equal variances assumed	-6.581	68	< .001	-11.42	1.74	-14.88, -7.96
Equal variances not assumed	-6.449	43.85	< .001	-11.42	1.77	-14.99, -7.85

Given the violation of the homogeneity of variances assumption, the t-test results assuming unequal variances are more appropriate for interpretation. Under this condition, the t-test yielded a value of -6.449 with approximately 43.85 degrees of freedom, while the equal variances assumption produced a t-value of -6.581 with 68 degrees of freedom. In both cases, the p-values were less than 0.001, indicating a highly significant difference between the groups. The mean difference was -11.42 (SE = 1.74), with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -14.89 to -7.85, confirming that the experimental group (Group 2) performed significantly better than the control group (Group 1) in post-test speaking scores.

Further analysis using tests of between-subjects effects revealed significant group differences across several components of speaking skills. For pronunciation, group membership had a significant impact ($F = 73.182$, $p < 0.001$), accounting for 51.8% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = 0.511$). Grammar was similarly affected ($F = 23.866$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 26.0% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = 0.249$). Vocabulary also showed a significant group effect ($F = 21.643$, $p < 0.001$), with 24.1% of the variance explained (adjusted $R^2 = 0.230$).

In contrast, fluency did not show a statistically significant difference between groups ($F = 2.459$, $p = 0.122$), with group membership accounting for only 3.5% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = 0.021$). However, comprehension was significantly influenced by group membership ($F = 17.813$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 20.8% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = 0.196$). Overall, these findings suggest that the role-playing intervention with Improv Cards significantly improved pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension, though it did not yield a statistically significant improvement in fluency.

TABLE 8
RESULTS OF THE TESTS BETWEEN SUBJECTS FOR POST-TEST BETWEEN GROUPS

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	Pronunciation	3550.693 ^a	1	3550.693	73.182	<.001
	Grammar	13.765 ^b	1	13.765	23.866	<.001
	Vocabulary	12.334 ^c	1	12.334	21.643	<.001
	Fluency	1.598 ^d	1	1.598	2.459	.122
	Comprehension	11.209 ^e	1	11.209	17.813	<.001
Intercept	Pronunciation	7528.693	1	7528.693	155.172	<.001
	Grammar	618.222	1	618.222	1071.863	<.001
	Vocabulary	762.734	1	762.734	1338.419	<.001
	Fluency	720.684	1	720.684	1109.047	<.001
	Comprehension	624.695	1	624.695	992.718	<.001
Group	Pronunciation	3550.693	1	3550.693	73.182	<.001
	Grammar	13.765	1	13.765	23.866	<.001
	Vocabulary	12.334	1	12.334	21.643	<.001
	Fluency	1.598	1	1.598	2.459	.122
	Comprehension	11.209	1	11.209	17.813	<.001
Error	Pronunciation	3299.250	68	48.518		
	Grammar	39.221	68	.577		
	Vocabulary	38.752	68	.570		
	Fluency	44.188	68	.650		
	Comprehension	42.791	68	.629		
Total	Pronunciation	14092.000	70			
	Grammar	677.000	70			
	Vocabulary	820.000	70			
	Fluency	769.000	70			
	Comprehension	684.000	70			

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate the significant benefits of incorporating Improv Cards into role-playing activities to enhance various aspects of EFL learners' speaking skills. Pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension all showed substantial improvement, while gains in fluency were comparatively modest. These outcomes align with existing research that underscores the value of interactive and spontaneous learning environments in effective language acquisition. The marked improvement in pronunciation supports previous findings (e.g., Alzboun et al., 2017; Arham, 2016; Krebt, 2017; Nasihah, 2019), which highlight that interactive speaking tasks enhance phonological accuracy. The spontaneous use of Improv Cards prompted learners to articulate clearly in real time. This reinforces Huang and Shan's (2008) claim that immediate verbal output contributes to improved pronunciation.

Significant gains in grammar and vocabulary align with findings reported by Flora and Sukirlan (2021), who noted that role-playing activities promote syntactic awareness and lexical development. The improvisational format encouraged students to use a wider range of vocabulary and grammatical structures without relying on scripted dialogue. This supports findings reported by earlier studies (e.g., Alzboun et al., 2017; Basit, 2019; Krebt, 2017), which suggest that spontaneous speech fosters linguistic flexibility and accuracy. Comprehension also improved notably, likely due to the necessity of processing unpredictable conversational turns. This finding echoes the work of Arham et al. (2016) and Nasihah (2019), highlighting how real-time interaction enhances listening and contextual understanding. It also reinforces Huang and Shan's (2008) assertion that active listening is central to developing language proficiency. However, gains in fluency were comparatively modest. While Flora and Sukirlan (2021) and Pinatih (2021) highlight the potential of improvisational techniques to improve fluency, the present study suggests that the cognitive demands of spontaneous interaction may hinder speech flow. This is consistent with Altun (2015), who observed that EFL learners often experience hesitation and self-correction during unscripted speaking tasks, which can temporarily disrupt fluency.

These findings strongly support Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, particularly the concept of the ZPD. The use of Improv Cards fostered socially interactive, scaffolded learning environments where learners co-constructed meaning, negotiated language use, and internalized new forms. Operating at the edge of their linguistic competence with support from peers and instructors, students gradually developed autonomy and confidence in spoken English.

The integration of Improv Cards into role-playing significantly improved learners' pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension, with more modest gains in fluency. These findings suggest that using spontaneous, interactive, fun, and playful cards-based activities embedded within role-plays offers a great context for learning, leveraging communicative language teaching and social constructivist theory principles. The approach enables language use in real time with peers, thereby incorporating communicative competence features and the zone of proximal development. A practical option for low-resource EFL contexts, the approach promotes learner engagement, creativity, and confidence. Overall, improv-based role-play offers a flexible, impactful strategy for improving speaking skills in EFL classrooms.

VI. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight the positive impact of integrating Improv Cards into role-play techniques on EFL learners' speaking skills. Significant improvements were observed in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension, while fluency showed more modest gains. These results align with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning and the ZPD, as learners engaged in scaffolded, collaborative interactions that supported real-time linguistic development. The unpredictability of Improv Cards stimulated cognitive engagement and encouraged spontaneous language use.

This study offers practical implications for EFL educators seeking to enrich speaking instruction. Improv Cards serve as a dynamic alternative to traditional role-play, fostering spontaneous communication and increasing student motivation. A balanced integration of structured practice and improvisational tasks can promote comprehensive skill development and create a more engaging classroom environment that supports oral proficiency. Contributing to the field of second language acquisition, this research provides empirical support for the use of improvisational techniques and extends the application of social constructivist and engagement theories by emphasizing learner interaction, motivation, and responsiveness. However, the study has some limitations. The context-specific sample may affect generalizability, and the less pronounced improvement in fluency suggests a need for additional strategies to enhance real-time speech production. The focus on short-term outcomes also leaves the long-term effects of Improv Card use unexplored.

Future research should include longitudinal studies to assess sustained impact, explore effects across varying proficiency levels and cultural settings, and investigate the integration of digital tools—such as AI-driven speaking platforms—to complement improv-based methods. Additionally, examining individual differences in learner responsiveness could offer valuable insights for tailoring instruction to diverse learner needs.

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