

**THE EFFECT OF USING IMPROV CARDS AND
FEEDBACK IN ROLE-PLAYING ON
SPOKEN PRODUCTION, MOTIVATION,
AND ATTITUDES AMONG EFL
LIBYAN UNDERGRADUATES**

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by

RABAA SAID MOHAMED ALJNGAWI

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“And if you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in Favor]” (Qur’an 14:7)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALLT	Audio -Lingual Language Teaching
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
CAR	Classroom Action Research
CF	Corrective Feedback
CL	Cooperative Learning
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
DM	Direct Method
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELLs	English Language Learners
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	English for Special Purpose
GTM	Grammar Translations Method
MENA	Middle East North Africa
RP	Role Play
SPSS	Statistical Package of Social Science
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
VIFA	Variance Inflation Factor analysis
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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**KESAN PENGGUNAAN KAD IMPROV DAN MAKLUM BALAS DALAM
PERMAINAN PERANAN TERHADAP PRODUKSI LISAN , MOTIVASI,
DAN SIKAP DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR
SARJANA MUDA EFL LIBYA**

ABSTRAK

Dalam konteks pendidikan Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL), terutamanya di negara seperti Libya di mana Bahasa Inggeris bukan bahasa ibunda, usaha untuk melibatkan pelajar dan meningkatkan kemahiran bertutur mereka kekal sebagai satu cabaran besar. Kaedah tradisional sering gagal untuk memotivasikan pelajar secara berkesan atau membangunkan keupayaan komunikasi mereka dalam konteks dunia sebenar. Kajian kaedah campuran ini menangani cabaran tersebut dengan meneroka kesan penggunaan Kad Improv dan maklum balas diperibadikan dalam teknik main peranan terhadap kemahiran bertutur, motivasi, dan sikap pelajar sarjana muda Libya yang mengikuti kursus EFL. Menggunakan reka bentuk kuasi-eksperimen, kajian ini menggabungkan kaedah kuantitatif dan kualitatif untuk memberikan analisis yang komprehensif tentang impak strategi pedagogi ini. Komponen kuantitatif melibatkan dua kumpulan: kumpulan eksperimen (n=36) yang menjalani aktiviti main peranan yang diubah suai menggunakan Kad Improv dan menerima maklum balas diperibadikan, serta kumpulan kawalan (n=34) yang melaksanakan kaedah main peranan biasa. Ujian kemahiran bertutur yang menilai lima komponen utama—pemahaman, tatabahasa, sebutan, perbendaharaan kata, dan kelancaran—dijalankan ke atas kedua-dua kumpulan bagi menilai peningkatan prestasi. Keputusan menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan secara statistik dalam kelima-lima aspek kemahiran bertutur dalam kalangan kumpulan eksperimen

berbanding kumpulan kawalan. Di samping itu, soal selidik berstruktur digunakan untuk menilai perubahan dalam motivasi dan sikap pelajar terhadap pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris. Data kualitatif pula dikumpulkan melalui respons terbuka dan perbincangan reflektif selepas intervensi, dan dianalisis secara tematik bagi menonjolkan pengalaman dan persepsi peserta. Pendekatan dua hala ini membolehkan pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang bagaimana intervensi pedagogi tertentu mempengaruhi hasil pembelajaran. Hasil kajian menunjukkan peningkatan yang ketara dalam kemahiran bertutur bagi kumpulan eksperimen berbanding kumpulan kawalan. Pelajar yang menggunakan Kad Improv bersama maklum balas melaporkan peningkatan motivasi dan sikap yang lebih positif terhadap komunikasi lisan dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Mereka menyatakan peningkatan keyakinan, kesediaan yang lebih tinggi untuk mengambil bahagian dalam perbualan Bahasa Inggeris, dan mengiktiraf kepentingan praktikal latihan main peranan yang disokong oleh maklum balas. Dapatan ini mencadangkan bahawa integrasi Kad Improv dan maklum balas dalam aktiviti main peranan dapat memberi manfaat yang besar kepada pelajar EFL dengan menjadikan proses pembelajaran lebih menarik dan berkesan. Kajian ini memberikan bukti yang kukuh kepada pendidik dan pereka kurikulum untuk mengguna pakai teknik interaktif seperti ini, yang bukan sahaja meningkatkan kemahiran bahasa, tetapi juga memupuk persekitaran pembelajaran yang positif dan bermotivasi. Hasil kajian ini berpotensi untuk mempengaruhi strategi pengajaran EFL bukan sahaja di Libya tetapi juga dalam konteks yang serupa di seluruh dunia, ke arah memupuk kemahiran komunikasi yang lebih berkesan dan hasil pendidikan bahasa yang lebih positif.

**THE EFFECT OF USING IMPROV CARDS AND FEEDBACK IN ROLE-
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ABSTRACT

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, particularly in regions such as Libya where English is not the native language, engaging students and improving their speaking skills remains a significant challenge. Traditional methods often fail to motivate students effectively or develop their communicative abilities in real-world contexts. This mixed-method study addresses these challenges by exploring the effects of integrating Improv Cards and personalized feedback within role-playing techniques on the speaking skills, motivation, and attitudes of Libyan undergraduate students enrolled in EFL courses. Employing a quasi-experimental design, the research combines quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of these pedagogical strategies. The quantitative component involved two groups: an experimental group (n=36) that participated in modified role-play activities using Improv Cards and received personalized feedback, and a control group (n=34) engaged in role-play methods. Speaking tests, assessing five key components of speaking skills—comprehension, grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency—were administered to both groups to evaluate performance enhancements. Results showed statistically significant improvements in all five speaking skill areas among the experimental group compared to the control group. Additionally, structured questionnaires were used to assess changes in students' motivation and attitudes towards English language learning. Complementing the quantitative data, qualitative data were gathered through open-ended responses and

reflective discussions post-intervention, with thematic analysis highlighting the participants' experiences and perceptions. This dual approach allowed for a deeper understanding of how specific pedagogical interventions influenced learning outcomes. Results of the study revealed a significant improvement in speaking skills among the experimental group compared to the control group. Students using Improv Cards with feedback showed increased motivation and more positive attitudes towards engaging in spoken English communication. They reported enhanced confidence, a greater willingness to participate in English conversations, and recognized the practical relevance of the role-playing exercises facilitated by feedback. These results suggest that the integration of Improv Cards and feedback into role-playing activities can substantially benefit EFL learners by making the learning process more engaging and effective. This study provides compelling evidence for educators and curriculum designers to adopt such interactive techniques, which not only enhance language proficiency but also foster a positive and motivating learning environment. The insights gained from this study have the potential to influence EFL teaching strategies not only in Libya but in similar contexts globally, promoting more effective communication skills and positive educational outcomes in language learning.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Speaking skills are a critical component of language proficiency, especially in the context of English as a Foreign Language (Aizawa et al., 2020). Effective communication in English is essential for academic success, professional opportunities, and social integration in a globalized world. However, many Libyan EFL undergraduate students encounter significant challenges, such as grammatical structure issues, lack of comprehension, and difficulties with fluency, in developing their speaking abilities (Alkhaddashi & Abuojaylah, 2023). These challenges often stem from limited exposure to English in everyday contexts, insufficient practice opportunities, and a lack of confidence in using the language spontaneously (Alkhaddashi & Abuojaylah, 2023).

Speaking skills are fundamental to the EFL learning process as they enable learners to express their thoughts, ideas, and emotions fluently and accurately (Suban, 2021). Proficiency in speaking not only involves correct pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary but also the ability to engage in meaningful and coherent conversations (Aizawa et al., 2020). For EFL learners, particularly Libyan undergraduates, mastering speaking skills is crucial for several reasons.

First, academic success is heavily reliant on strong speaking abilities. English is often the medium of instruction in higher education institutions worldwide. Students proficient in speaking can participate actively in classroom discussions, presentations, and group work, which are integral parts of the academic curriculum in Libya (Al-

Arifi, 2020). Effective communication skills enable them to articulate their ideas clearly, ask questions, and engage in academic debates, thus enhancing their learning experience and academic performance.

Second, professional opportunities are significantly enhanced for individuals with strong English-speaking skills. In the global job market, employers increasingly seek candidates who can communicate effectively in English (Akther, 2022). Fluency in speaking English opens doors to a wide range of career opportunities, particularly in international companies and organizations. It enables graduates to work in diverse environments, collaborate with colleagues from different cultural backgrounds, and represent their organizations confidently in international forums (Akther, 2022).

Third, social integration is facilitated by effective speaking skills. Being able to communicate fluently in English allows EFL learners to build relationships, share experiences, and integrate into diverse cultural settings (Sulistyowati, 2022). This is especially important in today's interconnected world, where individuals frequently interact with people from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Proficient speaking skills enable learners to navigate these interactions smoothly, fostering mutual understanding and cultural exchange (Akther, 2022).

In many EFL contexts, developing speaking skills remains a persistent challenge due to factors such as limited classroom time, large class sizes, exam-oriented curricula, and lack of authentic communication opportunities (Cheptabok, & Cherobon, 2024; Somé, 2025; Tuan & Mai, 2015; Zhang & Rahimi, 2014). These constraints often result in minimal student talk time and limited interaction, hindering oral proficiency development. Additionally, in many Asian and Middle Eastern countries, English is taught as a foreign language with little exposure beyond the

classroom, contributing to learners' low confidence and speaking anxiety (Al-Noursi, 2013; Nguyen & Boers, 2020).

Similarly, in the Libyan EFL context, undergraduate students face significant obstacles in developing their speaking proficiency (Alkhaddashi & Abuojaylah, 2023). One of the primary challenges is the limited exposure to English outside the classroom. In Libya, English is not commonly used in daily life, reducing opportunities for students to practice speaking in authentic contexts. This lack of exposure impedes the development of fluency and confidence (Aldarasi, 2020; Alkhaddashi & Abuojaylah, 2023; Athawadi, 2019; Diaab, 2016).

Despite the importance of speaking skills, many Libyan undergraduate students face significant obstacles in developing their proficiency (Alkhaddashi & Abuojaylah, 2023). One of the primary challenges is the limited exposure to English outside the classroom. In Libya, English is not commonly used in daily life, reducing opportunities for students to practice speaking the language in real-world contexts. This lack of exposure hampers their ability to develop fluency and confidence (Aldarasi, 2020; Alkhaddashi & Abuojaylah, 2023; Athawadi, 2019; Diaab, 2016).

Another challenge is the insufficient practice opportunities within the educational system. Traditional language teaching methods often emphasize reading and writing over speaking and listening. As a result, students may excel in grammar and vocabulary but struggle with oral communication (Owen & Razali, 2018; Toro, 2019). The lack of interactive and communicative activities in the classroom further exacerbates this issue, leaving students ill-prepared for real-life conversations.

Role-playing techniques have been widely recognized as a valuable pedagogical tool in language teaching (Idham et al., 2022). They provide learners with

a dynamic and interactive environment to practice speaking in real-life scenarios, thereby enhancing their communicative competence. Role-playing allows students to assume different roles and engage in dialogues that mirror real-world interactions (Pisciotta & Taddei, 2023). This not only improves their language skills but also boosts their confidence and motivation. However, role-play activities also have limitations. Specifically, role-play can sometimes be perceived as boring or time-consuming in many EFL classrooms. For instance, Milarisa (2018) highlighted that role-play exercises can be particularly time-consuming in large classes, where students often become disengaged while waiting for their turn. To address these challenges, this study integrates improv cards and structured feedback into role-playing tasks—an approach that remains under-researched, to enhance the effectiveness of role-play and overcome its limitations.

Despite the challenges faced by Libyan EFL undergraduates, teaching strategies such as role-playing, the use of improv cards, and the provision of feedback offer promising potential. By fostering a supportive and interactive learning environment, these techniques can improve students' speaking skills, increase their motivation, and positively influence their attitudes toward language learning. This study, therefore, seeks to provide valuable insights into effective strategies for enhancing the oral proficiency of EFL learners in Libya, ultimately contributing to their broader language development and academic success.

1.2 Background of the Study

There are around 6,500 languages currently spoken throughout the world (Hammarstrom, 2016). However, as a result of globalization, English has emerged as the most important language of communication. Given that English is the most widely

spoken language in the world, people gained a widespread perception that English learners have to speak the English language effectively and intelligibly (Ahmad, 2016). As Al-Arifi (2020) pointed out, people from various nations can communicate and understand each other in English. English is currently the most widely spoken second language and serves as the dominant global lingua franca in international communication, business, science, and education (Ethnologue, 2023). As a result, English Learning is becoming increasingly desirable (Kenjabayevna, 2025). English has evolved into a fundamental language of higher education, science, technology, research, business, medicine, and commerce in the twenty-first century. English is playing a very important part in this shifting process as national boundaries are closing, and the globe is becoming a village (Gultekin, 2025).

According to Bsharat and Barahmeh (2020), speaking is the most crucial skill among the four essential language skills when learning English as a foreign language. In today's world, effective communication skills are imperative, and English teachers must equip learners with the necessary competencies to enable fluent communication and adept performance in everyday situations (Krebt, 2017). Yu et al. (2021) also emphasize that students' speaking abilities should be assessed based on their performance in real-life scenarios.

Despite the recognized importance of speaking skills in English language learning, their development is often neglected in EFL classroom practices through the continued reliance on outdated and teacher-centred methods. Many EFL teachers, especially in contexts like Libya, still employ strategies such as rote memorization of dialogues, mechanical repetition drills, and grammar-focused instruction, which offer limited opportunities for students to engage in spontaneous, meaningful communication (Panggua et al., 2020). These practices hinder learners' ability to

develop fluency, confidence, and communicative competence. Furthermore, speaking activities are often underrepresented in assessment and curriculum planning, which further deprioritizes their development (Allafi, 2023).

Earlier studies have consistently highlighted the challenges faced by learners of English in acquiring the language effectively (Riadil, 2020). One prominent factor contributing to these challenges is the inadequate focus on developing English speaking skills within EFL classroom practices (Khasawneh & Khasawneh, 2023). When speaking skills are not given sufficient attention, learners may struggle to achieve fluency and confidence in real-life communication situations, which are essential aspects of language proficiency. This issue in emphasis can lead to a disconnect between classroom learning and practical language use, impacting learners' overall language acquisition journey negatively (Suban, 2021).

Although speaking skills have been underemphasized in some EFL contexts, the importance of English-speaking abilities is well-recognized in academic literature. Numerous studies have been dedicated to helping learners develop their language skills to enhance their academic success (Krebt, 2017). Additionally, proficiency in English is increasingly seen as essential for securing employment opportunities and achieving personal goals (Khajavy & Aghaee, 2022). This underscores the need for more effective teaching strategies that focus on speaking skills to prepare learners not only for academic challenges but also for broader career and personal advancements.

Traditionally, EFL teachers have employed various methods to support students in developing their language skills, including speaking. Common approaches include the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), Audio-Lingual Language Teaching (ALLT), and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Toro, 2019; Owen & Razali,

2018). While CLT is specifically designed to promote spoken communication, older methods like GTM and ALLT tend to focus more on accuracy, memorization, and written forms, often offering limited opportunities for authentic spoken interaction.

In the Libyan context, as examined in this study by Athawadi (2019), teachers have long utilized traditional teaching methods. These methods, based on behaviorism, emphasize repetition, drills, and memorization to facilitate language learning (Li, 2022). However, these traditional approaches provide limited opportunities for students to engage in authentic English practice. Consequently, they have not been successful in enhancing students' English language proficiency, particularly their speaking skills (Athawadi, 2019).

In CLT, English is practiced through activities that closely simulate real-life situations, where the context and purpose of communication are carefully considered to ensure effective language use (Owen & Razali, 2018). Therefore, Libyan EFL teachers should understand the principles of CLT and apply them in the classroom by creating authentic, meaningful scenarios that reflect everyday communication contexts. CLT emphasizes the interaction between the teacher and the learners to achieve authentic communications inside the classrooms (Anderson, 1993). CLT approach has long been recognized as one of the most effective methods for developing communicative competence in EFL/ESL contexts (Chang, 2011; Savignon, 1991; Hymes, 1971). Originally proposed by Hymes (1971), the concept of communicative competence highlights learners' ability to use the English language appropriately and intelligibly in real-life situations. Since its introduction, CLT has gained global acceptance and has been widely implemented in many EFL and ESL settings to promote learners' interactive and functional use of English (Ozsevik, 2010; Chang, 2011). CLT approach can be implemented through many communicative activities to

provide language learners with the chance to utilize the language in real-time situations. Role-play technique is one of the most important components in achieving communicative competence (Ayuningtias et al., 2019). Role Play is the method of acting out the role given by the teacher in the communicative activities or roles created by the learners (Susanti et al., 2022). This activity aims to enhance proficiency, the vocabulary of meaningful expressions or phrases utilized in real situations. The effect of the role-playing technique has been widely adapted by different researchers in different contexts as in the studies of Magos and Politi (2008), Alzboun et al. (2017), Hamed (2018), and Rao (2019).

While the role-play technique continues to be widely endorsed in EFL instruction—as seen in Yu’s study (2024), recent literature also suggest different activities that improve students’ involvement such activities through drama-based strategies, including the use of Improv Cards. A considerable number of studies have examined role-play as a standalone method to develop speaking skills, with a focus on enhancing learners’ fluency, confidence, and communicative competence (Akter, 2017; Al Saadi et al., 2019; Alzboun et al., 2017; Arham, 2016; Basit, 2019; Bhatti, 2021; Joma et al., 2016; Juvrianto, 2018; Krebt, 2017; Maria, 2018; Nashah, 2019; Negara, 2021; Pinatih, 2021; Togimin & Jaafar, 2020). These studies have generally concentrated on structured, scripted forms of interaction that simulate real-world communication.

More recent work has sought to enhance the spontaneity and engagement of role-play activities by integrating improvisational elements. For instance, Flora and Sukirlan (2021) investigated the use of Improv Cards within role-play activities in an online Indonesian EFL context, aiming to stimulate more spontaneous and interactive

communication among learners. In contrast, Zondag (2021) focused exclusively on improvisation activities, without integrating them into role-play, and primarily explored teachers' perspectives on fostering spontaneous speech among EFL student teachers.

The use of improvisation techniques, particularly through Improv Cards, draws from the traditions of drama and acting and has been increasingly viewed as a way to promote dynamic, interactive, and learner-centered methodologies in language education. As Flora and Sukirlan (2021) and Zondag (2021) suggest, improvisation helps transcend the limitations of scripted role-play, encouraging linguistic creativity and real-time communication. These approaches advocate for the integration of unpredictability and spontaneity into pedagogical practice, elements essential to real-world language use.

Despite these efforts, empirical research on the combined use of role-play and improvisation, particularly with the inclusion of corrective and peer feedback, remains limited, especially in face-to-face classroom settings. Existing studies have been conducted in online environments or have investigated improvisation in isolation, with minimal focus on student-centered outcomes such as speaking confidence, communicative spontaneity, or enjoyment. For example, while Flora and Sukirlan (2021) employed Improv Cards in role-play tasks, their study did not examine learners' perceptions of these activities. Similarly, Zondag (2021) explored improvisation from the teacher's perspective, without evaluating student experiences or performance outcomes in diverse cultural settings.

This lack of learner-focused research is particularly in regions such as the Arab world, where traditional, teacher-centered pedagogies may affect how interactive

techniques are implemented and received (Al-Issa, 2006; Elyas & Picard, 2010). Although CLT has been formally adopted in Libyan education policy, its implementation remains inconsistent and often ineffective due to challenges such as large class sizes, limited teacher training, and a lack of resources (Belazi & Ganapathy, 2023; Orafi & Borg, 2009). These systemic constraints continue to hinder the development of spoken English proficiency among Libyan EFL learners.

In light of these considerations, this study seeks to address an underexplored area in EFL pedagogy by examining the combined effects of role-play, Improv Cards, and structured feedback on learners' speaking performance and motivation in a face-to-face classroom context. The aim is to provide empirical insights into how these integrated strategies function in culturally specific and resource-constrained environments.

1.3 Teaching English Speaking Skills in Libya

Every year, many foreigners visit Libya for a variety of purposes, including business, education, and tourism. English language skills are critical for young people in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to increase their employment possibilities (Grajek, 2017). Additionally, with the advent of the Internet, English has grown in importance as a means of communication amongst individuals speaking various languages and countries (Doochin, 2019). Hence, the demand for Libyans who can communicate in English increases exponentially.

Therefore, the Libyan government has long emphasized the need for students to learn English beginning in elementary school and to continue through post-secondary education (Omar, 2019). In the past, English language was taught as a basic

subject in the Libyan curriculum from the fifth grade typically around 10 to 11 years old. Since 2016, the Libyan Ministry and Education has changed this system and worked to adopt the English language as a basic subject covering the first year of primary school to the final year of secondary level (Omar, 2019). Although the English language is provided to the Libyan student from the first years of education, most Libyan students lack the ability to speak English language intelligibly (Diaab, 2016). Most of the previous studies related the reason for this problem is due to the utilized methods of teaching English in the classroom (Omar, 2019).

Although the English language curriculum in Libya is designed based on CLT principles, classroom practice remains largely traditional, with many teachers relying on methods such as the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and Audio-Lingual Language Teaching (ALLT). As a result, Libyan EFL teachers should strive to align their teaching practices with CLT by creating real-life communicative scenarios that foster functional language use. This shift is essential, as the primary purpose of language is to facilitate meaningful communication (Belazi & Ganapathy, 2023). The English-language school curriculum in Libya was created to help students improve their spoken communication abilities. However, because it adheres to the traditional technique, this has not been successful (Shihiba, 2011) because of the state of English in earlier decades, which has had an impact on the English teaching profession (Mohamed, 2014). Most ELT classrooms in Libya, particularly those in secondary schools, continue to be teacher-centered, which makes it possible that CLT will not be implemented (Alhmali, 2007; Dalala, 2014; Orafi & Borg, 2009; Shihiba, 2011; Tantani, 2012). When instructing students in Libyan schools, teachers employ Arabic (Alhmali, 2007; Alsied & Ibrahim, 2017; Jha, 2014a; Omar, 2013; Shihiba, 2011), adhere to the Grammar Translation Method, avoid speaking and listening activities to

maximize class time (Orafi, 2008), overuse error correction and monopolize class discussion (Aldabbus, 2008), and place an excessive emphasis on accuracy at the expense of fluency (Diaab, 2016). These are viewed as expressions of the teachers' personal ideas as well (Orafi, 2008). In other words, according to some teachers, the most important components of learning a foreign language are vocabulary and grammar (Aldabbus, 2008).

The lack of appropriate practices has negatively affected the development of speaking and listening skills (Abushafa, 2014). As a result, these skills are often overlooked, which is attributed to their minimal assessment in official examinations (Pathan & Marayi, 2016). These exams primarily focus on written components, leading to unintended consequences, such as reduced student participation in oral activities (Al Moghani, 2003; Altaieb, 2015; Omar, 2013).

This demonstrates a strong gap between, CLT curriculum educational expectations and classroom reality (Altaieb, 2015). This runs counter to Libya's overarching educational goals, which are to develop and support forms of education and to assist students in realizing their possibilities and acquiring information through self-learning (UNESCO, 2008). In fact, speaking is a valuable oral talent used to accomplish a specific goal, but it is the most difficult of the four abilities. According to Kherbouche and Kherbouche (2016), each contact between two or more persons requires the participation of both the speaker and the listener. When a speaker speaks, the listener should hear the generated language. Thus, before they can learn how to speak, the students must first learn how to listen. Furthermore, instructors must pay close attention to integrating both abilities into the learning process simply due to a "natural link between speaking and listening" (Brown, 2000).

In addition, Rao (2019) states that speaking is a more difficult skill than other skills: reading, writing and listening since learners must articulate their ideas spontaneously. It is necessary to understand the obstacles English language learners encounter, and many strategies can enhance learners' speaking abilities. Additionally, to communicate effectively and at a high level of competency, students must have a greater degree of language proficiency. Therefore, various strategies should be applied to find out the most effective method in improving students' speaking ability to be able to use English as a communicative language (Reski, 2020).

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Developing speaking proficiency remains one of the most persistent challenges for English as EFL learners worldwide. Unlike receptive skills, speaking requires real-time language processing, sociolinguistic awareness, and fluency under pressure, skills that are often underdeveloped in traditional EFL classrooms (Bao & Du, 2022; Zarrinabadi et al., 2021). Teaching English speaking as a foreign language in Libya continues to face entrenched pedagogical challenges. The dominant instructional approaches emphasize rote memorization, grammar drills, and teacher-centered methodologies, with minimal attention given to communicative competence and spoken language proficiency (Li, 2022; Panggua et al., 2020). These traditional methods, which rely heavily on repetition and accuracy in form, often neglect the functional and interactive use of language. As a result, Libyan EFL learners frequently exhibit limited fluency, low confidence, and significant anxiety in real-life speaking situations (Aldarasi, 2020; Alkhaddashi & Abuojaylah, 2023; Athawadi, 2019; Diaab, 2016). Students are inadequately prepared for authentic communication due to a focus on written skills over oral interaction (Owen & Razali, 2018), leading to passive

learning environments that restrict student agency and communicative autonomy (AL-Garni & Almuhammadi, 2019).

In addition to pedagogical limitations, certain classroom dynamics and instructional practices in Libyan EFL contexts may further hinder the development of speaking skills. Educational norms approaches often discourage students from taking linguistic risks or actively participating in classroom discourse (Karash, 2020). Learners frequently experience fear of making mistakes, concern about negative evaluation from peers, and anxiety related to public speaking, factors that contribute to a classroom environment characterized by silence and reduced verbal engagement, ultimately impeding language acquisition and the development of spoken fluency (Milarisa, 2018). These factors contribute to learners' negative attitudes toward speaking activities, reinforcing a cycle of disengagement and low communicative competence (Flora & Sukirlan, 2021).

To address these issues, researchers and educators have advocated for interactive, learner-centered strategies that foster active communication and support affective learning factors. Among such strategies, role-playing has been recognized as a valuable technique for promoting communicative competence, building confidence, and enabling learners to practice language in semi-authentic, meaningful contexts (Krebt, 2017; Arham, 2016; Togimin & Jaafar, 2020; Pinatih, 2021). However, role-playing activities often become repetitive and overly scripted, limiting creativity, spontaneity, and long-term engagement (Zondag, 2021; Milarisa, 2018), which also affect learner's courage to speak out of the scripts and memorization. These limitations necessitate the incorporation of tools that rejuvenate the role-playing model and make it more effective in sustaining learner motivation and active participation.

The use of Improv Cards, as explained earlier, can address these gaps. In the context of this study, Improv Cards refer to a set of prompts designed to simulate spontaneous and unpredictable speaking situations. These cards contain scenario-based cues (e.g., role, situation, conflict, and emotional tone) that compel students to improvise dialogues and respond in real-time without prior preparation. This spontaneity enhances students' adaptability, fluency, and communicative competence by encouraging them to construct meaningful language output in an interactive setting (Flora & Sukirlan, 2021). Unlike rehearsed role-plays, Improv Cards foster a deeper cognitive engagement and stimulate learners' creative thinking and linguistic agility.

Although improvisation as a dramatic and educational tool dates back to the 1970s, the structured use of Improv Cards within EFL contexts, particularly in face-to-face classroom settings, remains underexplored. Prior research has addressed Improv Cards in online or general educational settings (Flora & Sukirlan, 2021; Zondag, 2021), but their integration in communicative language teaching within Libyan tertiary classrooms has not been rigorously investigated. This study addresses this gap by contextualizing Improv Cards within a CLT-based speaking instruction model for Libyan EFL undergraduates.

Feedback plays a critical role in supporting learners' oral language development. As Nassaji (2016) argues, both corrective and formative feedback are essential for guiding learners toward greater linguistic accuracy and fluency. While teacher feedback has traditionally dominated classroom assessment, more recent studies have highlighted the growing value of structured peer feedback, especially when it is anonymized. It reduces social pressure, enhances learner autonomy, and

fosters metacognitive awareness by encouraging learners to evaluate and reflect on their own and others' performance (Yu et al., 2019; Rodríguez et al., 2022).

More recent studies have shown that peer feedback not only supports linguistic accuracy but also promotes deeper engagement and self-regulation in oral tasks. Li and Li (2017) found that structured peer feedback improves learners' noticing of form and ability to self-correct in speaking tasks. Tian and Zhou (2020) reported that EFL learners who engaged in peer feedback activities demonstrated increased speaking fluency and a greater sense of ownership over their learning. Similarly, Zheng et al. (2020) showed that peer feedback in technology-mediated speaking tasks fostered learner autonomy and improved oral proficiency through enhanced reflection and negotiation of meaning. Chen and Hsu (2021) also emphasized that peer feedback, particularly in collaborative speaking environments, contributes to higher levels of interactional awareness and sustained language development over time. Collectively, these studies indicate that peer feedback, especially when implemented in structured, supportive, and digital contexts, can be a powerful tool for enhancing learners' oral language performance, engagement, and confidence.

Motivation is a critical factor in successful language acquisition. According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), intrinsic motivation flourishes when learners experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their learning environments (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Speaking tasks that are authentic, learner-driven, and collaborative, such as those involving Improv Cards, have the potential to satisfy these psychological needs and enhance intrinsic motivation (Dörnyei, 2005). For instance, when learners are given autonomy to construct dialogue based on scenario cues, they often report higher levels of engagement and enjoyment (Flora & Sukirilan, 2021).

More recent studies confirm that motivationally rich speaking tasks can improve both speaking proficiency and learner confidence. Papi et al. (2019) found that students with higher intrinsic motivation demonstrated more persistence and better spoken fluency. Zarrinabadi and Pawlak (2021) highlighted the role of autonomy-supportive environments in reducing speaking anxiety and increasing learners' willingness to communicate. In addition, Pham and Nguyen (2020) observed that intrinsically motivated learners tend to take more risks and speak more freely during improvisational speaking activities.

Alongside intrinsic factors, extrinsic motivation, driven by external rewards such as grades, praise, or academic recognition, can also play a significant role in language learning. While often seen as less sustainable than intrinsic motivation, extrinsic incentives can still be effective, especially in structured classroom settings. For example, Alamer (2021) noted that extrinsic motivation was positively linked to short-term oral performance gains among EFL learners, particularly when aligned with clearly defined goals. Similarly, Noels et al. (2019) argued that when extrinsic motivators are internalized, such as learners valuing English for future career opportunities, they can support long-term engagement and persistence. In the context of improvisational speaking, a well-designed feedback or reward system may help sustain participation, especially among students who are initially less confident or intrinsically motivated.

However, the relationship between improvisational speaking tasks and motivation has not been rigorously tested in the Libyan EFL context, where students often experience demotivation due to rigid curricula and limited oral practice (Alkhaddashi & Abuojaylah, 2023). Understanding how motivation interacts with task

type and learning context remains essential to designing effective pedagogical interventions.

In addition to motivation, learners' attitudes toward speaking and learning activities significantly influence their willingness to communicate (Gardner, 1985). Positive attitudes can increase effort, persistence, and risk-taking in communicative tasks, whereas negative attitudes, often shaped by past failures, anxiety, or monotonous instruction, can hinder oral participation (Diaab, 2016). More recent research supports these findings. Khajavy et al. (2018) reported that learners with more positive attitudes toward speaking were significantly more willing to engage in spontaneous communication. Sulis and Philp (2021) found that students' affective responses to speaking activities, including enjoyment and perceived value, predicted greater participation in class discussions. Furthermore, Alamer et al. (2021) found that learners with higher levels of integrative motivation and positive attitudes toward English had stronger oral performance and communicative confidence in EFL classrooms. These findings suggest that fostering both motivation and positive attitudes—especially through meaningful, learner-centered speaking tasks, is crucial to promoting oral proficiency and sustained language engagement.

The theoretical foundation of this study is anchored in CLT, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), and Sociocultural Theory. CLT emphasizes the functional and meaningful use of language in authentic contexts. It prioritizes communicative competence, a multi-dimensional construct encompassing grammatical competence (accuracy), sociolinguistic competence (appropriateness), discourse competence (cohesion and coherence), and strategic competence (negotiation of meaning) (Canale & Swain, 1980). This study specifically focuses on

discourse and strategic competence—aspects most directly enhanced through improvisational activities, by evaluating how students manage meaning in real-time interaction and adapt their language use based on contextual cues provided by Improv Cards.

Sociocultural Theory, particularly Vygotsky's (1986) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), underscores the importance of social interaction in learning. Role-play and improvisation provide scaffolding opportunities, where learners negotiate meaning, co-construct utterances, and engage in mediated dialogues. The collaborative nature of Improv Cards aligns with this theory, as students work together, learn from peers, and are guided by teachers to gradually perform tasks they could not manage independently.

Moreover, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) is used to conceptualize motivation—a central variable in this study. According to SDT, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are supported when learners have control over their learning (autonomy), feel effective in their actions (competence), and experience a sense of connection with others (relatedness). By fostering these conditions, Improv Cards have the potential to enhance learners' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, which in turn can lead to increased engagement and improved speaking performance. Thus, this study aims to fill this gap by examining the effects of Improv Card-based role-play, corrective and peer feedback on the speaking proficiency, motivation, and attitudes of Libyan EFL learners. By drawing on CLT, SDT, and Sociocultural Theory, this study offers a comprehensive, theoretically grounded investigation into how interactive, communicative teaching strategies can transform the EFL speaking classroom in Libya and beyond.

1.5 Research Objectives (RO)

The study sets to achieve four main objectives as clarified as follows:

- RO1. To examine the effectiveness of role-playing techniques with IMPROV cards on the speaking skills of Libyan EFL undergraduates.
- RO2. To identify the impact of role-playing techniques with IMPROV cards on the motivation of Libyan EFL undergraduates to enhance their speaking skills.
- RO3. To explore the role of corrective and peer feedback in role-playing sessions with IMPROV cards on language learning among Libyan EFL undergraduates.
- RO4. To investigate Libyan EFL undergraduates' attitudes towards the use of role-playing with IMPROV cards in the classroom.

1.6 Research Questions (RQ)

The study addresses four questions as follows:

The current study aims to answer the following questions:

- RQ1. How do Role-Playing techniques with IMPROV cards affects the speaking skills of Libyan EFL undergraduates?
- RQ2. To what extent do Role-Playing techniques with IMPROV cards affect the level of motivation of Libyan EFL undergraduates to improve their speaking skills?

RQ3. How does corrective and peer feedback during Role-Playing sessions with IMPROV cards influence language learning among Libyan EFL undergraduates?

RQ4. What are the attitudes of Libyan EFL undergraduates towards the use of Role-Playing with IMPROV cards in the classroom?

1.7 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study can be articulated through several key points, highlighting its potential contributions to educational practices, theoretical frameworks, and future research in English language learning. The study aims to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of role-playing techniques integrated with IMPROV cards in improving speaking skills among Libyan EFL undergraduates. By assessing the outcomes, this research could validate and recommend pedagogical strategies that may be more effective than traditional teaching methods, which are often limited in promoting communicative competence (Li, 202; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This could influence curriculum development and teaching practices not only in Libya but potentially in similar EFL contexts (Nassaji, 2016).

Speaking skills are critical for academic success and professional opportunities in a globalized world (Canale & Swain, 1980). This study focuses on enhancing these skills through practical, engaging methods like role-playing with IMPROV cards, potentially leading to better linguistic competence and increased confidence among students. This, in turn, could significantly impact students' academic performance and future career prospects (Gass & Selinker, 2008; Tuan & Mai, 2015). By investigating the impact of these role-playing techniques on students' motivation, the study could

shed light on intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence language learning (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Understanding these motivational dynamics can help educators design more effective learning experiences that engage and inspire students, thereby improving learning outcomes (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

The research also explores the attitudes of Libyan undergraduates towards learning techniques, offering insights into cultural receptivity and educational preferences in the region. This can help educators and policymakers tailor educational approaches that are culturally and contextually appropriate (Elyas & Picard, 2010). The study contributes to the body of knowledge in sociocultural theory, communicative language teaching, experiential learning, motivation theory, and constructivism. By integrating these theoretical frameworks, the research not only tests their applicability in a specific context but also enhances understanding of how these theories interact and can be applied in practical, educational settings (Vygotsky, 1986; Ellis, 2003).

Investigating the role of corrective and peer feedback within role-playing sessions offers a deeper understanding of peer-to-peer interaction and its effects on language acquisition. This aspect of the study could provide valuable insights into how learners benefit from or are challenged by the feedback of their peers, which is crucial for developing autonomous and learning skills (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). By documenting the effects and student perceptions of role-playing with IMPROV cards, this study paves the way for further research in similar contexts. Future studies could explore longitudinal impacts, variations across different language levels, or comparative analyses with other educational tools (Liu & Carless, 2006; Gielen et al., 2010).

1.8 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study involves 70 Libyan EFL undergraduate students from the Department of Civil Engineering at Bani Waleed University, Libya, during the academic year 2023–2024. While the findings may offer valuable insights, the limited sample size and specific institutional context may affect the generalizability of the results to broader populations of EFL learners in Libya or other educational settings. A larger and more varied sample across departments and universities would enhance the applicability of the findings.

The study consists of 16 instructional sessions, each lasting 120 minutes. This timeframe, while substantial, may still not be long enough to fully capture long-term improvements in speaking proficiency or sustained changes in motivation, as language acquisition is a gradual process (Ellis, 2003). The duration was set based on administrative constraints at the university, which could limit the depth of the intervention's impact.

The use of role-playing activities and IMPROV cards may be influenced by cultural factors. For example, students from different cultural backgrounds may vary in their comfort levels with improvisation, open expression, or peer feedback, potentially affecting participation and outcomes (Hofstede, 2001; Elyas & Picard, 2010). These cultural aspects could impact how students engage with the activities and respond to the learning environment.

External variables beyond the researcher's control may also influence the results. These include participants' previous language learning experiences, their initial English proficiency, and any additional exposure to English outside the classroom during the intervention period. Such factors may contribute to individual

differences in learning outcomes and should be considered when interpreting the study's findings (Dörnyei, 2005; Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

1.9 Definitions of Key Terms

1.9.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a learner-centered approach that emphasizes meaningful interaction and communicative competence—defined as the ability to use language appropriately in real-life contexts (Richards, 2006). While communicative competence includes speaking, it also involves grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980), making it a broader construct than speaking skills alone. In this study, CLT is operationalized through role-play activities using IMPROV cards to simulate authentic communication scenarios.

1.9.2 Corrective Feedback

Corrective feedback refers to responses provided to learners to address errors in their language use, guiding them toward more accurate language production (Nassaji & Kartchava, 2020). In this study, both the teacher and peers provide corrective feedback during role-playing sessions. Teacher feedback focuses on more complex or recurring issues, while peer feedback emphasizes mutual support during interactive tasks. Corrective feedback supports learning by raising learners' awareness of errors and encouraging self-monitoring (Lyster & Ranta, 1997).

1.9.3 English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to the study of English in contexts where it is not the dominant language and is rarely used outside of the classroom