

Giving Voice to Future Hospitality Professionals: Students' Perceptions of Role-Play in Developing Self-Efficacy in Speaking English

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Role-play; Students' perception; Speaking self-efficacy; Vocational education; English for specific purposes; Hospitality students Copyright © 2026 Vifada Journal of Education. All rights reserved.	This study investigates how eleventh-grade hospitality students at SMKN 3 Payakumbuh perceive role-play activities in developing their self-efficacy in speaking English. Employing a descriptive quantitative design, the research involved 121 students selected through total sampling. Data were gathered using a 20-item questionnaire that measured five self-efficacy dimensions. Descriptive statistical analysis revealed that the students generally viewed the instructional technique positively. Among the evaluated aspects, the perception of role-play as a relevant speaking activity received the highest mean score (2.91), showing that learners found the simulations highly realistic for their vocational context. Furthermore, students demonstrated a strong willingness to participate (2.88) and the courage to continue speaking despite grammatical or pronunciation errors (2.89). Although emotional comfort recorded the lowest mean (2.65), it still fell within the positive category, indicating that speaking anxiety remained manageable. These findings suggest that implementing simulated workplace interactions effectively supports students' psychological readiness to communicate. Consequently, language educators in vocational schools should consistently integrate practical role-play tasks to strengthen both the communicative competence and the self-belief of their learners.

1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of global interaction has transformed various sectors, including the hospitality industry, where English proficiency is a critical asset (Crystal, 2003). Vocational students today require dynamic, interactive, and contextualized learning experiences to prepare for real-world interactions (Nunan, 2003). Previous studies have reported that hospitality employees must demonstrate strong communication competence to effectively serve international clients and handle professional inquiries (Al-Jufri et al., 2024; Rusmawan et al., 2025). These findings indicate that mastering English speaking is no longer an alternative but a fundamental necessity for vocational graduates entering the globalized workforce.

Among various instructional techniques, role-play has become one of the most widely implemented pedagogical methods in vocational English classrooms. The integration of role-play into educational settings is consistent with the development of experiential learning designed to improve speaking effectiveness. Role-play facilitates the simulation of real-world scenarios, allowing students to practice language through assigned roles that mirror professional workplace interactions in a safe environment (Ladousse, 1987)

This learning approach is deeply supported by Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which explains that self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their capability to execute specific tasks, acts as a primary determinant of communicative success (Bandura, 1997). In addition, the concept of speaking confidence suggests that structured oral activities help learners manage anxiety and process linguistic information

more efficiently (Griffiee, 1997). Therefore, role-play activities have the potential to support vocational students' psychological needs while promoting active engagement and emotional resilience.

In vocational hospitality education, verbal communication plays an essential role because most professional duties involve direct guest services and procedural interactions. One of the core competencies required is handling customer inquiries, which refers to communication techniques specifically designed to provide excellent service (Al-Jufri et al., 2024). Consequently, hospitality instruction requires pedagogical methods capable of simulating practical procedures systematically and interactively. However, speaking English in these contexts involves complex psychological challenges, including the fear of negative evaluation, linguistic hesitations, and managing performance anxiety. These characteristics require comprehensive practice and supportive environments, creating a pedagogical challenge when students lack of self-efficacy.

Despite the advantages of interactive methods, the implementation of effective speaking instruction in formal vocational education remains challenging. Students continue to encounter various psychological barriers, prominently low self-efficacy in speaking English, which manifests as communication apprehension and reluctance to participate in oral activities (Adkia et al., 2025). Similarly, Ardhana and Sadikin (2025) identified that students with low self-efficacy consistently view speaking tasks as personal threats, avoiding oral participation due to the fear of making errors.

Preliminary observations and informal discussions conducted in the Hospitality Program at SMK Negeri 3 Payakumbuh revealed that role-play activities have been implemented in English speaking lessons, particularly for hospitality-related topics. Classroom instruction has integrated these simulations to help students practice serving guests and handling customer interactions. However, although this technique has been applied, it is not fully understood how students perceive these activities and whether they genuinely contribute to developing their self-efficacy in speaking English. The observations further indicated that students' perceptions dictate their level of engagement. Students who perceive the activities positively are more likely to participate, whereas those who feel unsupported remain passive. These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that students' perceptions are crucial in evaluating the effectiveness of a teaching technique because they reflect how learners interpret and respond to their learning experiences (Aldaihani et al., 2015; Mauludin et al., 2023). This situation reflects the necessity to evaluate the psychological impact of the instructional practices currently implemented in schools.

The challenge has become increasingly significant following the demands of the vocational curriculum, where students must attain speaking fluency within limited instructional time before entering the industry. This condition is further complicated by the imminent transition to industrial internship, where actual communication skills will be tested. Therefore, supportive classroom activities that build psychological readiness and self-efficacy are required. Evaluating students' perceptions of role-play represents a relevant solution because it helps educators understand the affective mechanisms that align with the students' learning characteristics.

Several previous studies have demonstrated that role-play improves students' speaking skills and confidence. For instance, Santoso and Prasetyo (2024) reported that role-play can enhance speaking confidence by providing structured practice opportunities, while Wafa (2022) noted it creates a supportive learning environment. Nevertheless, studies specifically focusing on mapping students' perceptions of role-play activities in developing their self-efficacy in speaking English at SMKN 3 Payakumbuh.

2. Research Design and Methodology

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design. Descriptive quantitative research is defined as a method used to collect, analyze, and describe numerical data to explain a particular phenomenon (Cresswell, 2012). By applying this design, the research was conducted in the Hospitality Program at SMKN 3 Payakumbuh to systematically examine students' perceptions of role-play activities in developing their self-efficacy in speaking English. The population consisted of eleventh-grade hospitality students who had actively participated in English role-play activities during their instructional sessions. Utilizing a total sampling technique, the entire population of 121 students was

selected as the research sample to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the instructional technique (Sugiyono, 2017).

Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire administered digitally via Google Forms. The instrument comprised 20 items systematically developed based on the self-efficacy dimensions outlined by Bandura (1997) and the speaking confidence framework established by Griffie (1997). The questionnaire was adapted by Kadafie (2022) and measured five core indicators: Speaking ability during hospitality role-play, assurance or comfort in speaking English, willingness to participate, courage to speak despite mistakes, and perception of role-play as a speaking activity. Students' responses were recorded using a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4).

Prior to the main data collection, the research instrument underwent rigorous validity and reliability testing to ensure its structural stability and measurement accuracy. A pilot study was conducted involving 30 non-sample hospitality students from another vocational high school who shared identical demographic characteristics with the target population. Construct validity was assessed using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation; the results demonstrated that all 20 items were valid, as the calculated *r*-values (ranging from 0.469 to 0.784) exceeded the critical *r*-table threshold of 0.361. Furthermore, the internal consistency of the instrument was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.909, which indicates a very high level of reliability (Arikunto, 2012).

The collected data were quantitatively analyzed using descriptive statistical procedures facilitated by SPSS version 25. The data analysis focused on calculating the frequency, percentage, and mean score for each questionnaire item and its corresponding indicator. The resulting mean scores were subsequently evaluated to categorize the students' overall perceptions toward the implemented role-play activities. The interpretation of the mean scores was aligned with the classification criteria adapted from Sugiyono (2013). These criteria were utilized to determine the positive or negative tendency of students' perceptions, as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean Score Classification for Students' Perception

Mean Score	Category
3.26 - 4.00	Very Positive
2.51 - 3.25	Positive
1.76 - 2.50	Negative
1.00 - 1.75	Very Negative

Source: Adapted from Sugiyono, 2013

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Findings

Before conducting the data analysis, the research instrument underwent rigorous validity and reliability testing, confirming its feasibility as a data collection tool. Subsequently, the data from the 121 respondents were analyzed using descriptive statistics by calculating the mean scores to systematically describe the hospitality students' perceptions of role-play activities in developing their self-efficacy in speaking English. The summary of the overall findings is presented in Table 2, adhering to the standard presentation format.

Table 2. Summary of Students' Perceptions by indicator

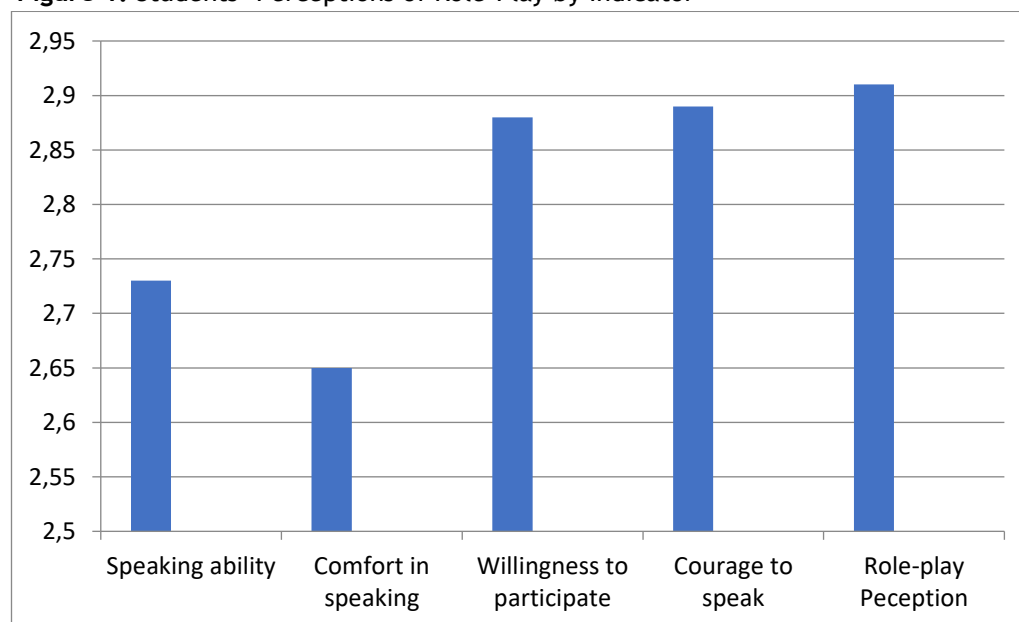
Indicator	Mean	Category
Speaking ability during hospitality role-play	2.73	Positive
Assurance or comfort in speaking English	2.65	Positive
Willingness to participate in role-play	2.88	Positive

Courage to speak despite mistakes	2.89	Positive
Perception of role-play as a speaking activity	2.91	Positive

Source: Primary Data Processing, 2026

To provide a clearer visual comparison of the mean scores across all dimensions, the data are also illustrated in the following chart.

Figure 1. Students' Perceptions of Role-Play by Indicator



As illustrated in Table 2 and Figure 1, the overall responses indicate a comprehensively positive perception across all measured dimensions. The analysis reveals that the eleventh-grade hospitality students exhibit a highly positive tendency in utilizing role-play as a supportive learning activity to enhance their communicative confidence. Although there are slight variations in the mean scores across the indicators, the differences are relatively marginal, illustrating that students' positive perceptions are formed comprehensively. Therefore, the subsequent discussion is structured based on each indicator to provide a more in-depth understanding of the specific questionnaire items and research findings.

3.2. Discussion

As illustrated in Table 2 and Figure 1, the overall responses indicate a comprehensively positive perception across all measured dimensions. The subsequent discussion argumentatively analyzes why these specific findings occurred by linking the processed data with underlying psychological concepts and theoretical frameworks.

Speaking Ability during Hospitality Role-Play

The indicator of speaking ability obtained a mean score of 2.73. Argumentatively, this positive outcome occurs because role-play provides contextual scaffolding. Rather than memorizing isolated grammar rules, students are prompted to use vocabulary directly related to hotel services (as evidenced by item P2 obtaining a high mean of 2.81). This contextualization lowers cognitive load, making it easier for students to retrieve and articulate words. This aligns directly with Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, which argues that enactive mastery experiences—such as successfully executing a simulated receptionist task—are the most influential source of efficacy beliefs. The data confirms the theoretical expectation that simulating workplace realities enhances foundational speaking capabilities.

Assurance or Comfort in Speaking English

Although falling within the positive category, assurance or comfort recorded the lowest mean score (2.65), specifically regarding students' nervousness ($M = 2.59$). The theoretical explanation for this phenomenon lies in the affective filter hypothesis. While students understand the scenario, spontaneous oral interaction in a foreign language still triggers physiological arousal, such as performance anxiety, which Bandura (1997) identifies as a self-efficacy detractor. The data implies that overcoming deep-seated communication apprehension requires more than just a few role-play sessions; it demands sustained, long-term exposure. Therefore, while role-play acts as a catalyst for reducing fear, completely neutralizing anxiety is a complex affective process that takes significant time.

Willingness to Participate in Role-Play

The high mean score of 2.88 for willingness to participate indicates strong behavioral engagement. This occurs because the collaborative nature of role-play shifts the focus from "teacher-evaluation" to "peer-communication." When students practice with their peers, the instructional climate feels less intimidating. This reflects Griffie's (1997) concept of participatory confidence, where readiness to engage is driven by a non-threatening environment. The findings contradict the traditional assumption that vocational students are passive learners; instead, they prove that when provided with an interactive platform, students exhibit a high drive to initiate communication.

Courage to Speak Despite Mistakes

The courage to speak despite linguistic errors achieved a prominent mean of 2.89, with item P14 (trying to speak despite grammar mistakes) peaking at 2.98. The root cause of this high resilience is the "fictional safe space" created by role-play. Because students are acting as characters (e.g., a guest or a waiter) rather than as themselves, the psychological weight of making a mistake is significantly reduced. This strongly resonates with Bandura's (1997) construct of self-efficacy resilience. The data substantiates the premise that role-play successfully builds a psychological buffer, enabling students to persevere through grammatical challenges without viewing them as personal failures.

Perception of Role-Play as a Speaking Activity

The perception of role-play as a speaking activity obtained the highest overall mean (2.91). This happens because vocational students (specifically in the hospitality program) are highly pragmatic learners; they value activities that have a direct correlation with their future careers. Item P18 ($M = 3.04$) proves that the realistic nature of the scenarios is the primary driver of their positive perception. This strongly corroborates Ladousse's (1987) assertion that role-play bridges the gap between the classroom and the real world, proving that instructional relevance is the key to unlocking students' appreciation of the learning process.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

From the process of data interpretation above, this research offers distinct theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, this study enriches Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory within the context of vocational language learning by providing empirical evidence that simulated professional environments directly enhance enactive mastery and resilience, despite persistent affective challenges. Practically, the findings provide a significant contribution to English pedagogy in vocational high schools. It proves to educators and curriculum designers that integrating industry-specific role-play is not merely a supplementary activity, but an essential instructional strategy required to build the psychological readiness and communicative competence of future hospitality professionals.

4. Conclusion

Based on the quantitative data analysis, it can be concluded that the eleventh-grade hospitality students exhibit a highly positive perception of role-play activities in developing their speaking self-efficacy. The research findings reveal that role-play effectively enhances students' courage to speak despite linguistic errors and significantly boosts their willingness to participate actively in oral communication. Furthermore, students overwhelmingly perceive the simulated hospitality scenarios as highly realistic and relevant to their vocational needs, although the data also indicates that managing spontaneous speaking anxiety remains a gradual, ongoing process.

The importance of this research lies in its specific focus on the psychological dimensions of language learning within a vocational context, an area often overshadowed by purely linguistic skill-based studies. This study offers a novel contribution by proving that industry-specific role-play acts not merely as a language exercise, but as a crucial psychological intervention that builds the enactive mastery and communicative resilience of future hospitality professionals. Practically, these findings provide a strong, empirically backed justification for vocational educators and curriculum developers to permanently integrate authentic, simulated workplace interactions into English instructional programs.

Despite these significant findings, this study is inherently limited by its descriptive quantitative design and its specific focus on a single vocational program, which restricts a deeper understanding of the individual, internal barriers students face. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that future researchers conduct qualitative follow-up studies, utilizing in-depth interviews or classroom observations, to thoroughly explore the nuanced affective factors and psychological dynamics of speaking anxiety during role-play. Additionally, expanding this research agenda to encompass other vocational disciplines would provide a broader, more comprehensive understanding of how varying simulated environments impact students' self-efficacy across different fields of study.

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Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools solely to support the scientific writing process. Specifically, Grammarly was used to improve grammar, language quality, readability, and writing clarity. The AI tools were not used to generate research ideas, analyze data, interpret findings, or draw scientific conclusions. All study design, data collection, analysis, interpretation of results, and conclusions were conducted and verified entirely by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the content presented in this manuscript.

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