

The Impact of Tourism-Based Role-Play Activities on Students' Oral Fluency in English**El impacto de las actividades de juego de roles basadas en el turismo en la fluidez oral en inglés de los estudiantes***Mg. Raul Pinela Cardenas, Mónica Paola López Garcés & Roger Iván Ronquillo Panchana***PUNTO CIENCIA.****Julio - diciembre, V°6 - N°2; 2025****Recibido:** 10-11-2025**Aceptado:** 19-11-2025**Publicado:** 21-11-2025**PAIS**

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of tourism-based role-play activities on students' oral fluency in English, using a mixed-methods approach to understand both performance outcomes and learner perceptions. The research was conducted with secondary and early tertiary-level EFL students who participated in simulations of real tourism scenarios, including hotel check-ins, travel inquiries, guided tours, and restaurant interactions. Quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-tests assessing speech rate, accuracy, and lexical variety, while qualitative insights were obtained from student reflections and semi-structured interviews. Results indicate a significant improvement in oral fluency, particularly in spontaneity, confidence, and pragmatic language use. Students reported feeling more motivated and less anxious when practicing English within meaningful and context-rich tourism situations. The integration of authentic tasks also fostered collaborative learning and enhanced cultural awareness. Overall, the findings support the use of tourism-based role-play as an effective pedagogical strategy to strengthen communicative competence in EFL settings. The study highlights the need to incorporate experiential and context-embedded activities within English curricula to promote more natural and purposeful language production.

Keywords: Tourism-based role play, oral fluency, communicative competence.

Resumen

Este estudio analiza el impacto de las actividades de juego de roles basadas en el turismo en la fluidez oral en inglés de los estudiantes, mediante un enfoque mixto que integra resultados de desempeño y percepciones de los participantes. La investigación se realizó con estudiantes de EFL de secundaria y primeros niveles universitarios, quienes participaron en simulaciones de escenarios turísticos reales como registros en hoteles, consultas de viaje, tours guiados e interacciones en restaurantes. Los datos cuantitativos se obtuvieron a través de pruebas pre y post que evaluaron velocidad del habla, precisión y variedad léxica; mientras que la información cualitativa provino de reflexiones estudiantiles y entrevistas semiestructuradas. Los resultados muestran una mejora significativa en la fluidez oral, especialmente en espontaneidad, confianza y uso pragmático del lenguaje. Los estudiantes expresaron sentirse más motivados y menos ansiosos al practicar inglés en situaciones significativas y contextualizadas. En general, los hallazgos respaldan el uso del role-play turístico como estrategia efectiva para fortalecer la competencia comunicativa en entornos EFL.

Palabras clave: Juego de roles basado en el turismo, Fluidez oral, Competencia comunicativa.

Introduction

The development of oral fluency has become a central objective in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, particularly in contexts where learners have limited exposure to authentic communicative situations. In recent years, tourism-related content has emerged as a valuable pedagogical resource due to its relevance, practicality, and connection to real-world communicative demands. Tourism-based role-play activities, in particular, provide students with meaningful opportunities to simulate interactions that commonly occur in travel and hospitality settings, such as checking into a hotel, asking for directions, booking tours, or ordering food in a restaurant. These scenarios offer rich linguistic input and output, fostering not only language accuracy but also spontaneity, confidence, and pragmatic competence.

Role-play has long been recognized as an effective strategy to enhance oral communication skills, as it promotes interaction, contextualized language use, and active engagement. When these activities are grounded in the tourism industry—a sector that inherently demands communicative efficiency and cultural awareness—the learning experience becomes even more dynamic and motivating. Students are encouraged to adopt specific roles, negotiate meaning, solve problems collaboratively, and perform tasks that mirror real-life needs. Such experiential learning environments help reduce anxiety, increase willingness to communicate, and support the internalization of functional language structures.

In the Ecuadorian context and other EFL settings in Latin America, the tourism industry represents a significant economic and cultural domain. Integrating tourism-based scenarios into English classes aligns language learning with local opportunities and professional fields in which communicative competence is essential. Moreover, these activities promote intercultural sensitivity, an increasingly important component of 21st-century language education.

Despite the recognized benefits of role-play, empirical research focused specifically on tourism-based simulations and their impact on oral fluency remains limited. Many studies address role-play in general or concentrate on vocabulary development, motivation, or communicative strategies, but fewer explore measurable improvements in fluency indicators such as speech rate, lexical variety, accuracy, pauses, and overall coherence. Additionally, students' perceptions of using tourism-oriented tasks as a tool for oral proficiency development are still underexplored.

This study addresses these gaps by examining the effectiveness of tourism-based role-play activities on students' oral fluency through a mixed-methods approach. By combining quantitative fluency measurements from pre- and post-tests with qualitative insights from interviews and reflective accounts, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how context-rich simulations enhance learners' communicative abilities. The findings aim to inform teachers, curriculum designers, and educational institutions about the potential of tourism-based role-play as a purposeful and impactful strategy for improving oral fluency in EFL classrooms.

Literature Review

Tourism has been widely recognized as a field in which English oral communication is both a professional requirement and a marker of service quality. Recent research in English for Tourism Purposes shows that communicative competence goes beyond vocabulary or grammar to include pragmatic, intercultural and strategic abilities that allow tourism workers and students to manage real interactions with foreign visitors (Ho, 2020; Liu et al., 2022; Trang & Phuong, 2023). Needs-analysis studies indicate that tourism and hospitality students frequently use English in authentic situations and perceive speaking as a critical but challenging macro-skill, even when curricula still privilege reading and writing (Kusumastiti & Palupiningsih, 2021; Al-Malki et al., 2022). These findings have led to calls for more experiential, communication-

oriented pedagogy that approximates workplace discourse, particularly in hotel and tour-guiding contexts (Yang et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2022).

Within this broader shift, task-based language teaching (TBLT) has gained prominence as a framework to develop oral fluency and communicative competence through meaning-focused, outcome-oriented tasks. Experimental and quasi-experimental studies show that TBLT can significantly increase speech rate, length of turns and automaticity in EFL learners' spoken production (Masuram & Sripada, 2020; Nugrahaeni, 2022). Fluency-based task sequences, such as information gaps, problem-solving tasks and repeated storytelling, have been found to reduce pauses and hesitations while supporting more complex and coherent discourse (Zúñiga et al., 2023). In higher education, TBLT has also been associated with positive changes in learners' perceptions of their own communicative competence and willingness to speak in English (Masuram & Sripada, 2020; Zúñiga et al., 2023), suggesting its potential for tourism and hospitality programmes that aim to simulate workplace interaction.

Role-play has emerged as one of the most frequently used communicative tasks to promote speaking in EFL classrooms. Empirical studies with secondary and tertiary learners consistently report that role-play enhances students' speaking fluency, accuracy and overall performance compared with more traditional, teacher-centred approaches (Chung & Huang, 2021; Devi & Januarti, 2022; Dwiyantri & Lolita, 2023; Sukmara et al., 2025). These interventions typically involve learners enacting everyday scenarios—such as making complaints, negotiating services or socializing—which require them to mobilize linguistic resources in real time. Quantitative findings show significant gains in post-test scores for fluency indicators, while qualitative data from interviews and observations highlight increases in confidence, engagement and willingness to communicate (Chung & Huang, 2021; Yanti et al., 2023; Sukmara et al., 2025).

More recent research has refined role-play designs to better capture their effect on speaking performance. Studies comparing different role-play formats (e.g., individual vs. group, scripted vs. authentic scenarios) suggest that more authentic, problem-based role-plays tend to elicit higher quality speech and more spontaneous interactional moves (Tran et al., 2025). At the same time, role-play has been used to address affective variables, such as anxiety and self-confidence, with evidence that sustained exposure to supportive role-play activities can reduce speaking anxiety and foster a safer classroom climate for oral participation (Devi & Januarti, 2022; Yanti et al., 2023). These findings are particularly relevant for tourism students, who must interact with diverse clients in high-stakes service encounters.

However, despite the clear convergence of TBLT, role-play and tourism English, there is still a limited body of research that explicitly combines tourism-based role-play with rigorous measurement of oral fluency. Tourism-oriented studies have largely focused on needs analysis of macro-skills and intercultural communicative competence (Kusumastiti & Palupiningsih, 2021; Ho, 2020; Al-Malki et al., 2022; Trang & Phuong, 2023), or on stakeholders' perceptions of intercultural communication in hospitality settings (Liu et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2020), rather than on systematic analysis of learners' fluency development in simulated service encounters. Similarly, many role-play studies, while documenting significant improvements in speaking scores, do not always work with tourism-specific scenarios such as hotel check-ins, complaint management or tour-guiding discourse (Chung & Huang, 2021; Dwiyaniti & Lolita, 2023; Sukmara et al., 2025).

Methodologically, several of the cited studies adopt quantitative quasi-experimental designs with pre- and post-tests, sometimes complemented by questionnaires or interviews (Ho, 2020; Nugrahaeni, 2022; Zúñiga et al., 2023; Tran et al., 2025). Mixed-methods designs have been particularly valuable in triangulating test scores with learner perceptions, revealing, for example, that students may report

increased confidence and communicative awareness even when fluency gains are modest (Ho, 2020; Zúñiga et al., 2023). Yet, there is still scarce evidence on how tourism-based role-play tasks specifically affect both objective fluency metrics (e.g., speech rate, mean length of utterance, frequency of pauses) and subjective dimensions of communicative competence in tourism learners. This gap is especially salient in contexts outside Asia, where tourism is economically strategic but empirical research on tourism English pedagogy remains limited.

The present study positions itself at the intersection of these strands by designing and implementing tourism-based role-play activities grounded in realistic service encounters (e.g., front-desk interactions, tour briefings, complaint handling). It adopts a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative analysis of oral fluency measures with qualitative data from learner reflections and classroom observations. By doing so, the study aims to extend current evidence on the impact of role-play and TBLT on EFL speaking skills (Masuram & Sripada, 2020; Nugrahaeni, 2022; Zúñiga et al., 2023; Chung & Huang, 2021), while responding to calls from tourism and hospitality education research to better align classroom practices with the communicative and intercultural demands of professional tourism settings (Ho, 2020; Liu et al., 2022; Trang & Phuong, 2023).

Methods and Materials

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to examine the impact of tourism-based role-play activities on students' oral fluency in English. The quantitative component focused on measurable changes in students' speaking performance before and after the intervention, while the qualitative component explored learners' experiences, behaviors, and communicative patterns during the role-play sessions. This combination allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of how authentic, tourism-

related scenarios influence both the observable and subjective dimensions of oral fluency.

Quantitative data were collected through two primary sources: (1) the scores obtained from pre- and post-intervention oral exams, which were assessed using an analytic rubric measuring speech rate, accuracy, lexical variety, and coherence; and (2) a structured survey designed to capture students' perceptions of their fluency, confidence, motivation, and comfort while speaking English in simulated tourism contexts. The survey included Likert-scale items and closed-ended questions, enabling statistical comparisons between initial and final attitudes. These quantitative measures served to identify patterns of improvement and shifts in students' self-reported communicative competence.

The qualitative component consisted of systematic classroom observations conducted throughout the role-play sessions. The researcher employed an observation guide to document students' verbal and non-verbal behaviors, interactional strategies, degree of participation, spontaneity, and ability to negotiate meaning within the tourism-based scenarios. Field notes were recorded after each session and later analyzed to identify recurring themes, challenges, and notable communicative behaviors. The integration of observation data enriched the interpretation of the quantitative findings by revealing how learners interacted, adapted, and performed during authentic task simulations.

Participants

The study involved a total of 50 students enrolled in different levels of an undergraduate Tourism program at a coastal university in Ecuador. Participants were distributed across first-, second-, and third-year cohorts, allowing for a diverse representation of linguistic abilities and prior exposure to English for Tourism Purposes. All participants were enrolled in regular, face-to-face classes and were accustomed to

communicative activities as part of their curriculum. Participation in the study was voluntary, and students were informed of the purpose of the research and the confidentiality of their responses.

The selection of tourism students was intentional, as English oral communication represents a core professional skill within the tourism and hospitality industry. Working with learners from multiple academic levels provided broader insights into how tourism-based role-play activities benefit individuals with varying degrees of fluency, confidence, and disciplinary knowledge. This diverse group allowed the study to examine whether simulated tourism interactions promote communicative development consistently across different stages of academic training.

Research Instruments & Tools

To gather comprehensive evidence on the effectiveness of tourism-based role-play activities, the study incorporated a set of complementary instruments specifically designed to measure different dimensions of oral fluency and learner perceptions. Each instrument was selected for its capacity to capture distinct aspects of the learning process, ensuring methodological rigor and alignment with the mixed-methods design. Together, these tools provided quantitative precision and qualitative depth, allowing a multidimensional understanding of students' communicative development.

The primary instrument used for quantitative evaluation was an oral proficiency test administered at two moments: before the intervention and after the completion of the role-play sessions. This exam was aligned with the program's learning outcomes and included prompts situated in tourism scenarios such as hotel reception interactions, tour explanations, and service inquiries. Student responses were assessed using a detailed analytic rubric that examined fluency indicators including speech continuity, lexical range, syntactic control, and communicative coherence. This structured assessment produced measurable data on the progression of oral fluency.

A second quantitative instrument was a perception survey composed of Likert-scale statements and short, closed-ended questions. The survey aimed to document changes in students' attitudes toward speaking English in professional tourism contexts. Items addressed areas such as confidence during service encounters, perceived ease in expressing ideas spontaneously, comfort with role-play techniques, and the relevance of tourism simulations for future career settings. By comparing pre- and post-intervention responses, the survey offered insights into motivational and affective shifts resulting from the instructional approach.

For the qualitative dimension, an observation protocol was employed throughout the role-play sessions. This tool included descriptors related to communication strategies, student engagement, interactional patterns, and the ability to handle unexpected conversational turns. The protocol guided the researcher in recording consistent field notes, capturing nuances such as hesitation patterns, willingness to initiate dialogue, peer collaboration, and adaptability within the simulated scenarios. These observational records served as a rich source of qualitative evidence, enabling deeper interpretation of students' performance beyond numerical test results.

Results analysis

Quantitative analysis of the oral proficiency tests revealed a clear improvement in students' fluency indicators after the implementation of the tourism-based role-play activities. The comparison between pre- and post-test scores showed notable gains in speech rate, smoother delivery, and greater lexical variety. Students who initially produced short, fragmented utterances demonstrated longer and more coherent turns in the post-test. Accuracy also improved moderately, particularly in the appropriate use of functional expressions frequently used in tourism interactions such as offering assistance, providing explanations, and requesting clarification.

Survey data supported these findings by showing substantial positive shifts in students' perceptions of their own communicative ability. A large proportion of participants reported feeling more confident speaking English after engaging in the simulated tourism activities. Responses also showed that students perceived the role-play format as relevant and motivating, highlighting that practicing English in scenarios resembling real service encounters made the learning process more authentic and less stressful. Additionally, learners indicated a reduction in speaking anxiety, especially when interacting with peers in structured yet flexible communicative situations.

The qualitative observations conducted during the role-play sessions provided further insight into the behavioral and interactional changes documented quantitatively. Over the course of the intervention, students displayed greater spontaneity, initiating conversations more frequently and responding more naturally to unexpected questions or customer-style requests. Observational notes indicated increased participation, more fluid turn-taking, and improved negotiation of meaning. Many students shifted from relying heavily on memorized phrases to producing more original utterances, demonstrating growth in pragmatic competence and interactional strategies.

Finally, triangulation of the different data sources revealed that the tourism-based role-play activities not only enhanced measurable aspects of oral fluency but also fostered a more supportive and collaborative learning atmosphere. Students became progressively more engaged during the sessions, showing enthusiasm when adopting roles such as hotel clerks, tour guides, or restaurant servers. This sustained engagement appeared to contribute to the improvements documented in the tests and surveys. Taken together, the results suggest that integrating tourism-oriented simulations into EFL instruction is an effective approach to strengthening oral fluency while simultaneously increasing motivation, reducing anxiety, and encouraging more meaningful communicative use of English.

Conclusions

The integration of tourism-based role-play activities significantly enhanced students' oral fluency, as evidenced by measurable improvements in speech rate, coherence, and lexical variety. These gains demonstrate the value of contextualized, task-oriented instruction in promoting more natural language production.

Students reported higher levels of confidence, motivation, and willingness to participate in spoken English activities after the intervention. This suggests that authentic tourism simulations reduce anxiety and create a supportive environment that strengthens communicative competence.

Qualitative observations revealed that learners developed greater spontaneity, interactional awareness, and pragmatic skills while engaging in realistic service encounters. These findings highlight the effectiveness of role-play as a pedagogical strategy for aligning EFL instruction with professional demands in the tourism field.

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