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On the Effects of Scenario-Based Video Journaling versus Role Playing on Iranian EFL Learners' Speaking Anxiety and Agentic Engagement

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Abstract

Video-based journaling involves learners recording reflective monologues in response to scenario prompts, creating a low-stakes, self-directed space for verbal practice and metacognitive processing. This study aimed at examining the effects of scenario-based video journaling versus role playing on Iranian EFL learners' speaking anxiety and agentic engagement. To achieve the goals of this study, a quasi-experimental study employing a non-equivalent pretest-posttest control group design was adopted using three intact classes through convenience sampling method which were assigned to two experimental groups and one control group with 20 learners in each. The treatment of the study was carried out over twelve instructional sessions across six weeks. Running ANCOVA ($F(2, 56) = 7.53$, $p = .001$, findings revealed that both scenario-based video journaling ($p = .001$) and role-playing ($p = .006$) diminish speaking anxiety of Iranian intermediate EFL learners, while the influences of these two techniques do not differ ($p = .39$). Similarly, ANCOVA ($F(2, 56) = 10.86$, $p = .000$) results showed that both scenario-based video journaling ($p = .000$) and role-playing ($p = .006$) boost agentic engagement, though the influences of these two techniques do not vary ($p = .78$). Finally, the study offers both learner empowerment and flexibility as well as a more integrated and scenario-driven approach to L2 resource creation.

Keywords: agentic engagement, role playing, scenario-based video journaling, speaking anxiety

1 Introduction

The ability to communicate effectively in a foreign language, particularly through speaking, is a key objective in language education. In fact, speaking is mainly considered as one of the most anxiety-provoking skills for EFL learners particularly in contexts where exposure to authentic communication is limited (MacIntyre, 2017). Speaking anxiety that is commonly defined as a situation-specific form of foreign language anxiety has negative effect on L2 learners' Willingness to Communicate (WTC), fluency, and overall oral performance (Horwitz et al., 1986). Recent studies (e.g., Oteir & Al-Otaibi, 2019; Papi & Hiver, 2020; Teimouri et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2024) keep on confirming that speaking anxiety remains a main barrier in EFL pedagogical settings. In the Iranian EFL context, some studies

have reported that learners experience moderate to high levels of speaking anxiety, which significantly undermines their classroom participation and oral proficiency expansion (Rahnama & Abdolrezapour, 2016).

Scenario-Based Video Journaling (SBVJ) and Role-Playing (RP) are distinct pedagogical interventions designed to simulate real-world communication. SBVJ is a personalized, asynchronous activity where learners respond to specific situational prompts (scenarios) by recording video monologues, allowing for private rehearsal and self-reflection (Hafour, 2023). In contrast, RP is a synchronous, interactive activity where learners adopt assigned personas and engage in improvised dialogue with peers, emphasizing real-time negotiation of meaning and collaborative discourse (Budianto et al., 2024). While both aim to bridge the classroom and authentic language use, they diverge fundamentally in their delivery mode, social dynamics, and the locus of control granted to the learner.

RP has long been a staple in communicative language teaching for its direct simulation of social interaction. Its efficacy stems from requiring learners to spontaneously produce language, manage turn-taking, and employ communication strategies to resolve gaps, thereby developing interactive fluency (Budianto et al., 2024). From a sociocultural perspective, RP provides scaffolded interaction where peers co-construct dialogue, offering immediate but contextualized peer feedback. However, its synchronous and public nature can also provoke performance anxiety for some learners, as errors are exposed in real-time. The engagement in RP is more transactional and interdependent, focusing on shared goal achievement within the role-play framework rather than individual, reflective contribution (Ghonsooly & Seyedrezaei, 2022).

While both SBVJ) and RP utilize contextual prompts to foster communicative practice, their distinct modalities create divergent pathways for influencing Iranian EFL learners' speaking anxiety and agentic engagement. SBVJ, as a private and asynchronous activity, is posited to lower anxiety by providing a safe space for rehearsal and self-reflection, thereby potentially freeing cognitive resources for learners to exercise greater personal agency in crafting and owning their responses—a key component of agentic engagement (Reeve, 2013). Conversely, the synchronous and public nature of traditional RP, though valuable for interactive fluency, may simultaneously heighten anxiety for learners within a collectivist educational culture like Iran’s, where face-saving and fear of peer judgment are pronounced (Namaziandost et al., 2024), potentially constraining the proactive, constructive contributions that define agentic behavior. Thus, the comparative efficacy of these two interventions likely hinges on their differential interaction with the sociocultural dimensions of anxiety and the opportunities they afford for self-directed, agentic participation.

In this context, SBVJ and RP have emerged as two innovative techniques rooted in TBLT. In fact, RP has been one of the most commonly implemented strategies, as it presents learners with simulated real-life situations that encourage interaction and contextualized language use. Studies such as Alabsi (2016) and Dwi and Lolita (2023) suggest that role-play activities can foster speaking fluency and confidence by creating meaningful communicative contexts. More recent findings, however, indicate that while role play can improve speaking performance, its impact on reducing anxiety is not always consistent, particularly for learners who fear negative peer evaluation or lack sufficient linguistic resources (Derakhshan, et al., 2016; Lahbibi & Farhane, 2023). These mixed outcomes highlight the need to explore alternative or complementary instructional approaches that may better address learners’ affective needs.

Given the persistent challenge of speaking anxiety among Iranian EFL learners and the growing stress on L2 learner agency in language education, a comparative investigation of SBVJ and RP is both timely and necessary. Investigating their impacts on learners' speaking anxiety and agentic engagement can present valuable insights for teachers and curriculum designers seeking to implement instructional practices that promote emotionally supportive, participatory, and learner-centered speaking settings.

Despite sustained efforts to improve communicative competence in EFL classrooms, speaking anxiety remains a pervasive and debilitating issue for many EFL learners. Extensive research has demonstrated that speaking anxiety negatively affects learners' oral fluency, willingness to communicate, and overall speaking performance (Hashemi & Abbasi, 2022). This challenge is particularly acute in traditional educational settings where a focus on accuracy and fear of public error can suppress learners' active and agentic participation in speaking tasks.

In the Iranian EFL context, this problem is particularly acute, as instructional practices often emphasize accuracy, examination performance, and teacher-centered interaction, leaving learners with limited opportunities to engage in low-anxiety, meaningful oral communication (Hasan, 2021; Papi & Hiver, 2020). Consequently, many Iranian EFL learners remain reluctant to participate actively in speaking tasks, which hinders the development of communicative competence. This complex problem is multifaceted, rooted in psychological, pedagogical, and contextual factors that hinder effective oral communication.

Secondly, there is a critical issue of disengagement and a lack of learner agency (Kargar Behbahani & Razmjoo, 2023). Many conventional teaching methods position learners as passive recipients of knowledge rather than active, proactive agents in their own learning process. The concept of agentic engagement, defined as students' constructive contribution into the flow of instruction to support their own learning (Reeve, 2013), is often underdeveloped. Furthermore, to mitigate speaking anxiety, communicative techniques such as role playing have been widely adopted in EFL classrooms. Although role play has been shown to improve speaking performance and interactional competence, empirical findings regarding its effectiveness in reducing speaking anxiety are inconsistent (Derakhshan et al., 2016; Lahbibi & Farhane, 2023). To sum, the main purpose of this study was to explore the influences of scenario-based video journaling versus role playing on Iranian EFL learners' speaking anxiety and agentic engagement.

Finally, beyond anxiety reduction, recent educational research has emphasized the importance of agentic engagement, defined as learners' proactive contribution to the flow and direction of instruction through expressing preferences, asking questions, and seeking meaningful involvement (Reeve, 2013; Reeve & Shin, 2020). Unlike behavioral or cognitive engagement, agentic engagement highlights learners' role as active agents in shaping their learning experiences. Empirical studies in second language education have demonstrated that agentic engagement is positively associated with motivation, willingness to communicate, and sustained classroom participation (Iwaniec & Khaled, 2024; Khajavy et al., 2018). However, little research has examined how specific speaking-oriented instructional techniques such as video journaling and role playing may differentially influence learners' agentic engagement.

2 Literature Review

One of the theories of this study is the Affective Filter Hypothesis (AFH) which elaborates how negative emotional factors such as anxiety can have effect on language learning (Krashen, 1985). Given this theory, SBVJ and RP are expected to decrease EFL learners' speaking anxiety by presenting supportive and dynamic and less threatening communicative-based contexts.

The other theory of this study is Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1986), which stresses the role of self-reflection, self-efficacy and social interaction in learning; video journaling boosts self-observation and reflection, while RP makes easy learning through modeling and interaction as well.

At the heart of the current study is the concept of agentic engagement, which conceptualizes students as active contributors who deliberately can form their learning experiences (Reeve, 2012). Both SBVJ and RP are assumed to motivate EFL learners' proactive engagement, decision-making, and initiative in speaking tasks.

Related to our current study, Alzurfi et al. (2025) assessed the effect of RP on Iraqi EFL learners' speaking anxiety and speaking ability. To fulfill the purpose of their study, they employed a mixed-methods design. They selected 60 EFL learners and assigned them randomly into two groups of the experimental and control. RP was used as the treatment in the experimental group and the participants of the control group continued conventional method. Their quantitative findings showed RP significantly decreased speaking anxiety. The qualitative results indicated that RP enhanced confidence and fluency of students.

In their study, Assadi et al. (2025) investigated the effects of RP on EFL speaking proficiency. They selected 40 EFL learners as the participants and assigned them randomly into two groups of the experimental and control. RP was used as the treatment in the experimental group. The results of their study indicated that the participants of the experimental group who received RP as the treatment performed significantly better than the participants of the control group.

In one study, He and Wang (2025) conducted a study into Chinese College students' sense of empowerment and agentic engagement in EFL writing. They selected 468 second-year EFL learners who were studying at English field. They were drawn from six universities. The statistical results indicated that all dimensions of learner empowerment were positively correlated with agentic engagement, with competence exhibiting the most robust link. Additionally, findings showed that learner empowerment had significant effect on predicted agentic engagement, with competence emerging as the sole significant predictor.

In their study, Latifah et al. (2025) explored the impact of authentic materials on EFL learners' speaking motivation and anxiety focusing on a project-based learning approach. With employing a quasi-experimental design, they selected 42 EFL learners given their availability and willingness. They used questionnaires before and after the treatment to collect the required data. The results indicated that authentic materials had significant effect on enhancing EFL learners' speaking motivation. At the end, they came to this conclusion that authentic materials had dual effect. While they promote intrinsic motivation and engagement, they may also lead to cognitive challenges that sustain anxiety.

In his study, Fiani (2025) examined the effect of RP technique on enhancing EFL learners' speaking skill. He reviewed 24 related articles published from 2022–2025. The results showed that RP

had significant effect on enhancing EFL learners' vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency as well as confidence by recommending a secure and engaging setting. Additionally, it decreases language anxiety and reinforces imaginative and cooperative activities.

In another study, Gharibian and Sadeghi (2025) investigated the effect of L1 use on vocabulary learning, class engagement, enjoyment, and anxiety among Iranian EFL learners. To do their study, they selected 40 beginners and assigned them randomly into two groups including experimental group and control. The findings of this study indicated that the participants of the experimental group who used Persian as their first language proved better vocabulary learning, higher class engagement, lower anxiety, and greater enjoyment, and the results indicated that L1 employment boosts learning outcomes and makes a more useful and supportive setting for EFL learners.

In their study, Lisa et al. (2025) explored RP-based pedagogical model on improving EFL learners' speaking readiness in professional contexts. They selected 58 EFL learners as the participants. The findings manifested two key dimensions, namely (1) learning-teaching activities in RP-based pedagogical model and (2) EFL students' experiences, consisting of perceived benefits and challenges faced.

Similarly, Sukmawati et al. (2025) investigated the usefulness of employing RP on improving speaking skill of children aged 7-10 as EFL students at Ebisie English course. They used qualitative methodology to evaluate the effects of RP on EFL learners' motivation and speaking skill. They concluded that RP can have positive effect on EFL learners' speaking ability and it leads to social interaction and it decreases levels of stress on EFL learners.

In the same vein, Tran et al. (2025) examined the effects of two formats of authentic RP on young EFL learners' speaking performance. They selected EFL learners and assigned them randomly into two groups of the experimental and control with equal number of the participants. Experimental group students worked in groups, while the control group's participants prepared individually. The results of their study showed that the participants of the experimental who received RP as the treatment performed significantly better in speaking skill.

In their study, Zhong et al. (2025) investigated EFL learners' engagement in project-based speaking activities focusing on multi-dimensional perspective. They selected 96 first year students from a Chinese polytechnic and assigned them randomly into two groups of the experimental and control. Project-based activities were the treatment employed in the experimental group. Conventional method of teaching was used in the control group. The results of their study showed that project-based learning significantly enhanced behavioral, cognitive and emotional engagement. In addition, they came to this conclusion that project-based learning did have any significant effect on agentic engagement.

In another study, Nouri and Zarfsaz (2024) examined the effects of role-playing on learners' speaking anxiety and confidence. Their results indicated that role-play provided learners with a more comfortable and interactive space to practice speaking, leading to lower anxiety levels and greater classroom participation.

In another study, Maulina (2024) explored the way to empowering EFL learners' engagement through project-based learning activities. The participants included 28 seven-grade students. For collecting the required data, observation checklists, student surveys, performance evaluation and qualitative comments received from teachers were used as the instruments. The results showed that

project-based learning activities had significant effect on students' involvement. In addition, the treatment also enhanced their motivation. Additionally, qualitative results showed that students felt more self-confidence.

For example, Kargar Behbahani and Razmjoo (2023) investigated the use of video journaling among Iranian EFL learners. Their findings showed that video-based reflection significantly improved learners' speaking fluency and reduced anxiety. This supports the present study's use of SBVJ as a method for enhancing oral performance in a low-pressure environment.

In another study, Xie (2023) examined the effectiveness of an RP activity in improving EFL learners' communicative skills. The researcher came to the conclusion that RP is considered an interesting way of teaching and it can usefully boost the enthusiasm of EFL learners' oral communication teaching as well as teaching effect.

In their study, Namy Soghady et al. (2022) examined the effect of dialogic tasks on Iranian EFL learners' language learning anxiety. To do their study, they selected 13 EFL learners through a convenience sampling method. The participants were at two levels of language proficiency, including upper and lower intermediate. Dialogic tasks were the treatment. The findings showed that dialogic tasks had a significant effect on decreasing Iranian EFL learners' anxiety.

Henry and Thorsen (2020) focused on agentic engagement in language classrooms and found that instructional environments promoting autonomy and personal expression increased students' motivation and initiative. This aligns with the theoretical foundation of the current study, where SBVJ and RP are expected to foster agency.

Despite these promising results, few studies have directly compared SBVJ and RP within the same experimental design. Moreover, limited research has examined their effects on both speaking anxiety and agentic engagement simultaneously, especially in Iranian EFL institutes. The present study aims to address this gap by providing empirical evidence on the relative effectiveness of these two techniques.

3 Research Questions

The research questions of the present study were presented in this way:

1. Does scenario-based video journaling affect speaking anxiety of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?
2. Does role-playing affect speaking anxiety of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?
3. Is there a significant difference between the effects of scenario-based video journaling and role-playing on speaking anxiety of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?
4. Does scenario-based video journaling affect agentic engagement of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?
5. Does role-playing affect agentic engagement of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?
6. Is there a significant difference between the effects of scenario-based video journaling and role-playing on agentic engagement of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

4 Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest research design with two experimental groups to investigate the effects of SBVJ and RP on two affective variables in language learning: speaking anxiety and agentic engagement.

Concerning the variables of this study, it can be stated that the independent variable of the study was the kind of instructional method, operationalized at two levels: SBVJ and RP. The dependent variables were speaking anxiety and agentic engagement.

4.2 Participants

To fulfill the objective of this study, the researcher selected 90 intermediate EFL learners as the target population. To ensure homogeneity, the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) (2019) was administered. Those students whose scores were between 29 to 39 based on the rubric of OPT were considered to be intermediate, and they were selected as the research sample (n=60). Learners at this level indicate emerging control of grammar, an expanding vocabulary, and the ability to find out and make simple connected speech. In fact, the convenience sampling method was used for selecting the participants. The participants included both males and females, and their ages ranged from 16 to 21. The course book of the participants at the time of conducting this study was Speak Out for Intermediate. The participants were members of six intact classes. The research assigned the classes randomly into three groups, including two experimental groups and one control, each with an equal number of 20 participants.

4.3 Instruments

To fulfill the objective of this study, the researcher employed (a) the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) (2019), (b) the Speaking Anxiety Scale (SAS), and (c) the agentic engagement. In the following section, the researcher explains each of them.

4.3.1 The Oxford Placement Test

The Oxford Placement Test (OPT) (2019) was administered to ensure the homogeneity of the participants. The test encompasses 60 multiple-choice items assessing vocabulary, grammatical structures, and cloze comprehension. For each item, learners were required to select the correct answer from four options within a 50-minute time limit. The reliability of the test was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha, indicating satisfactory internal consistency (.91). In this study those students whose score fell 40-47 were considered to be the research sample (n = 60).

4.3.2 Speaking Anxiety Scale

The next instrument was the Speaking Anxiety Scale made by Chowdhury (2014). This instrument includes 25 items in which each item has a 5-point scale where "1" = "Entirely disagree", "2" = "Disagree", "3" = "Not sure", "4" = "Agree", and "5" = "Entirely agree". The participants were asked to select the suitable choice. The possible minimum and maximum mean score for each person will be 25 and 125 respectively. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability index of this scale in the context of this study was assessed to be .81. Meanwhile, the face and content validity of the Speaking Anxiety Scale was confirmed by three experts holding Ph.D. in EFL.

4.3.3 The Agentic Engagement

Students' agentic engagement in EFL learning was assessed using the corresponding items from Reeve's (2013) work. The original items were slightly contextualized by adding words like "In our English class." This scale contains five items. For the measure, the researcher used the 1–7 response scale that ranges from ''strongly disagree'' to ''strongly agree'' with ''agree and disagree equally'' serving as the midpoint (4). The scale was examined for its validity by three experienced TEFL university instructor. Moreover, the reliability of the (agentic engagement) was estimated via Cronbach's alpha (.92) in this research.

4.4 Data Collection Procedure

The implementation of the study was carried out over eight instructional sessions across six weeks. To ensure homogeneity, the OPT (2019) was administered to 90 EFL learners before the intervention. Based on the results, 60 EFL learners whose scores fell between 40 and 47 were considered to be the research sample (n=60). They were members of six intact classes. The researcher assigned the classes randomly into three groups, including two experimental groups and one control group. An equal number of participants (n=20) was in each group. It is worth mentioning that a 30-minute orientation session was held for each group to explain the upcoming tasks and expectations. The procedure consists the following phases:

4.4.1 Pretest

All three groups completed two standardized instruments, including SAS and the agentic engagement scale, to assess their baseline levels.

4.4.2 Treatment

4.4.2.1 Treatment for SBVJ Group.

Phase 1: Scenario Prompt Delivery and Explanation (In-Class, 10-15 minutes)

At the beginning of the week (e.g., in class), the instructor introduced the session's scenario to the SBVJ group. The instructor explained the context, the learner's "role" in the scenario, the intended audience, and the key communicative goal (e.g., "You are a customer trying to return a faulty item; your goal is to be polite but firm"). Key vocabulary and useful phrases relevant to the scenario were briefly reviewed. Learners were encouraged to ask clarification questions.

Phase 2: Individual Preparation and Rehearsal (Out-of-Class, Self-Directed)

Learners took the scenario prompt and prepared their response individually outside of class time. They were instructed to: Plan: Brainstorm ideas and structure their response. Draft: Write notes or a brief script, but were strongly encouraged not to read it verbatim in the final video. Rehearse: Practice their speech multiple times to improve fluency, pronunciation, and coherence. This phase was crucial for fostering agentic engagement as learners take proactive control of their learning process, deciding how and when to prepare.

Phase 3: Video Recording and Submission (Out-of-Class, by a set deadline)

Using their smartphones or computers, learners record a video of themselves speaking in response to the scenario.

Guidelines for the video:

Length: 1.5 to 3 minutes.

Format: The video must show their face to allow for non-verbal communication analysis (by the researcher).

Learners were allowed multiple attempts. They can re-record until they were satisfied with their performance, a feature designed to reduce speaking anxiety. The video file is submitted to a designated platform (e.g., a private class channel, Google Classroom before the next session.Phase 4: Instructor Review

The instructor watched the videos and provided brief, formative, and encouraging written or audio feedback, focusing on content achievement and one or two specific points of language use (e.g., "Great job explaining the problem clearly. Next time, try to use more linking words like 'furthermore' or 'however'."). This feedback loop was essential for sustaining engagement.

4.4.2.2 Treatment for RP Group.

Phase 1: Scenario and Language Input (15 minutes)

The same scenario was to the SBVJ group is introduced to the RP group. The instructor provides a more detailed explanation, including: The roles involved (e.g., Student A: Customer, Student B: Shop Manager).

The specific goals for each role

A brief model dialogue or a clear outline of the interaction

Key vocabulary, functional language (e.g., phrases for apologizing, suggesting alternatives), and pronunciation features were explicitly taught and practiced as a class.

Phase 2: Collaborative Preparation and Planning (15 minutes)

Students were paired or placed into small groups according to the roles required by the scenario. In their groups, they collaborate to: Discuss Strategy: How will they approach the conversation? What will they say first? Brainstorm Language: They pool their linguistic resources, helping each other with vocabulary and grammar. Practice Quietly: They may run through the role-play once or twice in a low-stakes manner. This collaborative problem-solving was a key site for agentic engagement.

Phase 3: Role-Play Enactment (15-20 minutes)

This was the core of the treatment. Pairs/groups enact the role-play in front of the class or within their small groups.

Guidelines for enactment:

Each enactment should last approximately 3-5 minutes.

Students were encouraged to use props or gestures to make it more realistic.

The focus was on fluency and strategic communication over absolute accuracy.

While some pairs perform, the rest of the class acts as an audience, perhaps with a listening task (e.g., "Note down two good arguments the customer made"). This public performance is the primary context for observing speaking anxiety.

Phase 4: Following the role-play enactments, the instructor facilitated a structured plenary feedback session focused on reinforcing positive performance and providing formative guidance. The feedback was deliberately kept brief and supportive to maintain a low-anxiety atmosphere and ensure the primary focus remained on the communicative practice.

4.4.2.3 Control Group: Standard Speaking Practice. The control group received the standard, business-as-usual instruction to develop speaking skills. This involved the common techniques usually used in the Iranian EFL classroom, which were often teacher-fronted and based on the course textbook. The control group covered the same predominant topics as the experimental groups (e.g., "At the Restaurant," "A Job Interview" etc.) to maintain content consistency.

Instead of structured SBVJ or RP, this group engaged in typical speaking activities such as 1) Drills and Repetition: Choral repetition of dialogues or key phrases from the textbook; 2) Teacher-Led Q & A: The teacher asks questions to the whole class or individual students about the topic; 3) Short, Unrehearsed Pair Discussions: Students were given a simple discussion prompt related to the topic (e.g., "Discuss your favorite food with your partner for 3 minutes") with minimal preparation or language support; and 4) Reading Dialogues Aloud: Pairs of students practice and then read aloud pre-written dialogues from the textbook.

4.5.3 Posttest

After the intervention, both groups retook the SAS and agentic engagement scale to assess changes in the target variables. All sessions were conducted by the same instructor to ensure consistency, and all ethical principles, including informed consent and confidentiality, were strictly followed.

4.6 Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using quantitative statistical methods consistent with the quasi-experimental design of the study. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics (i.e., mean, standard deviation) were used to describe the data. Inferential statistics (i.e., one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was performed to examine the significant differences among the three groups' means of speaking anxiety to examine the first, second, and third research questions. Again, one-way ANCOVA was adopted to examine the significant differences among the three groups' means of agentic engagement to investigate the fourth, fifth, and sixth research questions. Besides, all statistical analyses were performed using SPSS software version 26, and the significance level was set at $p < .05$.

5 RESULTS

5.1 OQPT Test Results

To ensure the homogeneity of language proficiency among participants, the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) was administered at the outset of the study. This assessment enabled the researcher to evaluate the participants' general English proficiency prior to the treatment. Descriptive statistics related to the OQPT test are presented in Table 1. The table shows the mean score and standard

deviation for the three groups, i.e. the scenario group (*M* = 34.10, *SD* = 2.27), role-play group (*M* = 32.95, *SD* = 2.39), and control group (*M* = 33.65, *SD* = 2.70) are not far from each other. Also, as shown in Table 1, the of skewness and kurtosis ratios divided by their respective standard errors fell within the range of ± 1.96 indicating the OQPT scores for the three groups were approximately normally distributed.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for OQPT Scores in the Three Groups

Group	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error	Skewness Ratio	Kurtosis Ratio
Scenario	20	34.10	2.269	.507	.201	-.237
Role-play	20	32.95	2.395	.535	.127	.079
Control	20	33.65	2.700	.604	.426	-.465

As shown in Table 2 below, ANOVA did not find a statistically significant difference in proficiency scores among the three groups ($F(2, 57) = 1.11$, $p = .34$).

Table 2

ANOVA for Comparing Three Groups' Homogeneity Scores

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	13.433	2	6.717	1.109	.337
Within Groups	345.300	57	6.058		
Total	358.733	59			

5.2 Addressing Research Questions One, Two, and Three

To check the assumption of the reliability of covariates, Cronbach's Alpha was computed. The covariate was found to be reliable ($r = .85$). In order to perform the analysis, the assumptions of the linearity of the relationship between the dependent variable and the covariate, as well as the homogeneity of regression slopes, were also checked. The results revealed that the linear relationship between posttest of speaking anxiety and the covariate of speaking anxiety was significant ($F = 184.11$, $p = .000$), therefore the linearity assumption was met.

The results revealed that the p-value associated with Levene's test (.09) was greater than the selected significance level (.05); therefore, the homogeneity of variance assumption was not violated for speaking anxiety scores.

The next assumption was related to homogeneity of regression slopes. The results indicated that the p-value for the interaction (Group*Pretest) between group and the pretest of total speaking anxiety was above .05 ($F(2, 54) = 2.26$, $p = .11$) and, therefore, not statistically significant. This means that the pretest and posttest of speaking anxiety scores in the three groups met the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes.

Since all assumptions were met, it was justified to use a one-way ANCOVA. Table 3shows that the mean speaking anxiety score in the scenario group (*M* = 101.10, *SD* = 9.62), role-play group (*M* = 105.35, *SD* = 9.73), and control group (*M* = 104.00, *SD* = 8.21) were similar to each other on the pretest. However, the mean speaking anxiety score in the scenario group (*M* = 96.50, *SD* = 8.09) was

considerably lower than the means in both the role-playgroup (*M* = 100.80, *SD* = 8.81) and the control group (*M* = 103.45, *SD* = 7.09) on the posttest.

Table 3

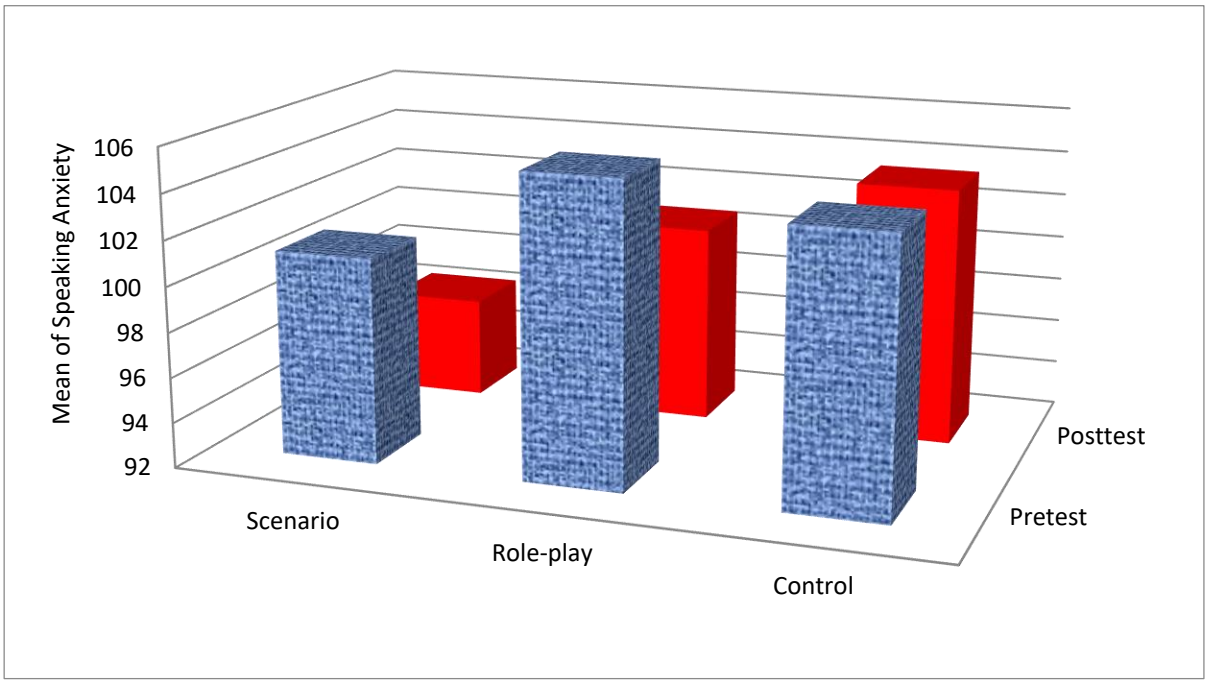
Descriptive Statistics of Speaking Anxiety Scores on Pretest and Posttest

Test	Group	N	Mean	SD	Skewness Ratio	Kurtosis Ratio
Pretest	Scenario	20	101.10	9.624	-.822	-.872
	Role-play	20	105.35	9.729	-.535	-1.132
	Control	20	104.00	8.214	-.504	-.699
Posttest	Scenario	20	96.50	8.095	.459	-.473
	Role-play	20	100.80	8.806	-.609	-1.111
	Control	20	103.45	7.089	-.631	-.651

Additionally, as shown in Table 3 and Figure 2, the distribution of the three groups' speaking anxiety scores met the normality assumption since the skewness and kurtosis ratios over their respective errors were within the range of ±1.96.

Figure 2

Bar Graph for Three Groups' Means of the Speaking Anxiety (Pretest and Posttest)



After controlling for pretest speaking anxiety scores, there is a significant difference in the speaking anxiety scores ($F(2, 56) = 7.53$, $p = .001$, partial eta squared = .21). Furthermore, as shown in Table 5, there is a strong relationship between pretest and posttest speaking anxiety scores ($F(1, 56) = 167.54$, $p = .000$). This indicates that the pretest scores influenced the posttest speaking anxiety scores. Moreover, Table 4 reports that the partial eta squared (effect size) value is .75.

Table 4 *Tests of Between-Subjects Effects on the Speaking Anxiety*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	3245.087a	3	1081.696	65.831	.000	.779
Intercept	221.236	1	221.236	13.464	.001	.194
Pretest	2752.987	1	2752.987	167.543	.000	.749
Group	247.314	2	123.657	7.526	.001	.212
Error	920.163	56	16.431			
Total	607169.000	60				
Corrected Total	4165.250	59				

Then, to identify the significant differences among the means of speaking anxiety of the three groups, pairwise comparisons were conducted. As seen in Table 5, the results revealed a significant difference (p = .001) in the speaking anxiety means between the scenario group, who experienced scenario-based video journaling, and control one, with the mean difference of -4.76, showing lower speaking anxiety for the scenario group. Similarly, the results showed a statistically significant difference (p = .006) in speaking anxiety means between the role-play group and control group, with a mean difference of -3.67 the control group, implying lower speaking anxiety for the role-play group.

However, according to the results shown in Table 5, there was no statistically significant difference (p = .39) between the scenario group and the role-playing group, with a mean difference of just -1.09 in favor of the role-play group.

Table 5

Pairwise Comparisons for Speaking Anxiety Means

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Scenario	Control	-4.76*	1.293	.001
Role-play	Control	-3.67*	1.284	.006
Scenario	Role-play	-1.09	1.306	.394

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

5.3 Addressing Research Questions Four, Five, and Six

Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to assess the reliability of the covariates. The results indicated that the reliability of the covariate was confirmed (r = .85). Additionally, the assumptions of linearity between the dependent variable and covariate, as well as homogeneity of regression slopes, were examined prior to conducting the analysis. The results showed that the linear relationship between the posttest of agentic engagement and the covariate of agentic engagement was significant (F = 137.39, p = .000), and the linearity assumption was met.

Also, the results indicated that the p-value from Levene's test (.06) was greater than the significance level (.05), indicating that the homogeneity of variance assumption was met.

The next assumption was concerns to the homogeneity of regression slopes. The results revealed that the p-value for the interaction (Group*Pretest) between group and the pretest of total agentic engagement was greater than .05 (F(2, 54) = 1.14, p = .32) indicating that the result was not statistically significant. This indicates that the pretest and posttest agentic engagement scores in the three groups met the homogeneity of regression slopes assumption.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of Agentic Engagement Scores on Pretest and Posttest

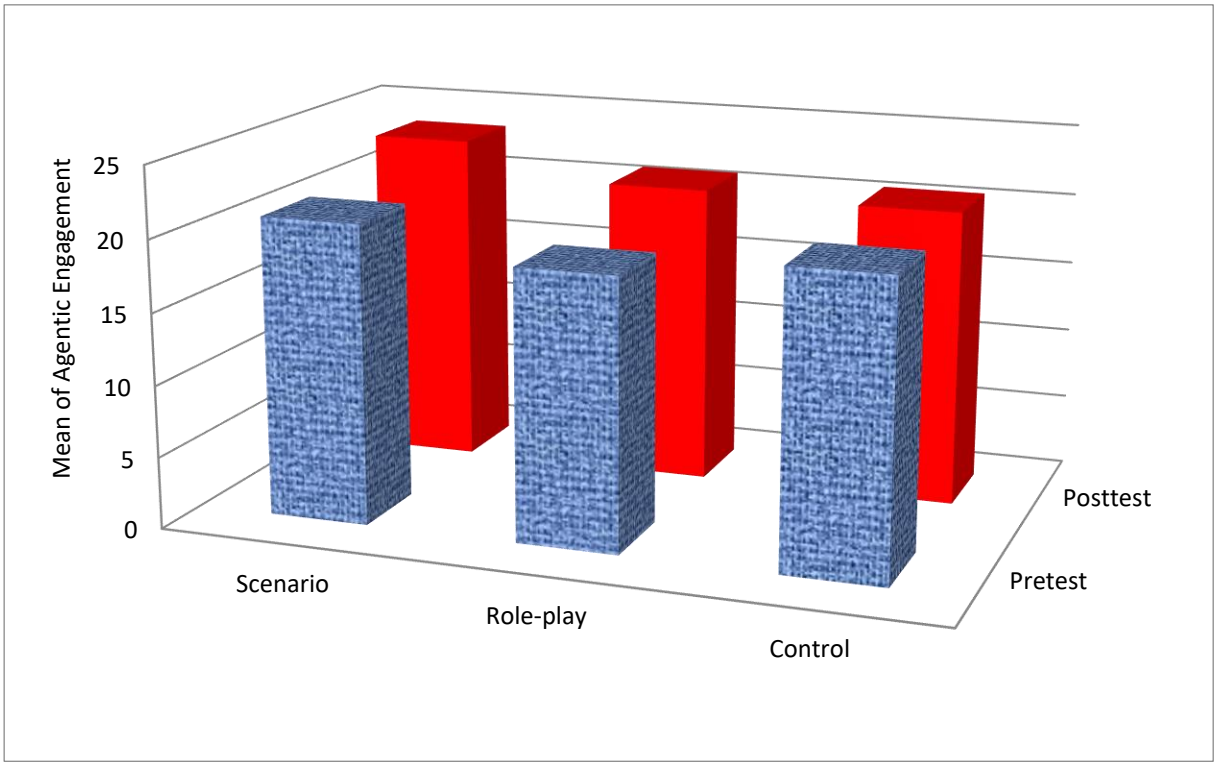
Test	Group	N	Mean	SD	Skewness Ratio	Kurtosis Ratio
Pretest	Scenario	20	20.90	3.684	-.006	-.524
	Role-play	20	18.85	4.082	-.684	-.824
	Control	20	20.35	3.543	-.658	-.655
Posttest	Scenario	20	23.40	3.575	-1.027	-.385
	Role-play	20	21.00	3.129	-.537	-.764
	Control	20	20.70	3.373	-.758	-.714

The researcher was justified in performing one-way ANCOVA, as the necessary assumptions, including homogeneity of variances and linearity, were met. As demonstrated in Table 6 and Figure 3, the mean agentic engagement scores in the scenario group (M = 20.90, SD = 3.68), role-play group (M = 18.85, SD = 4.08), and control group (M = 20.35, SD = 3.54) were similar on the pretest; however, the mean of agentic engagement in the Scenario group (M = 23.40, SD = 3.57) was higher than the mean of both the role-play group (M = 21.00, SD = 3.13) and the control group (M = 20.70, SD = 3.37) on the posttest.

Furthermore, Table 6 showed that the distribution of the groups' agentic engagement scores met the normality assumption as the skewness and kurtosis ratios divided by their respective errors were within the range of ±1.96.

Figure 3

Bar Graph for Three Groups' Means of the Agentic Engagement (Pretest and Posttest)



After controlling for pretest agentic engagement scores, there was a significant difference in agentic engagement means ($F(2, 56) = 10.86$, $p = .000$, partial eta squared = .28). In addition, as represented in Table 7, a strong relationship was found between the pre-intervention and post-intervention scores ($F(1, 56) = 208.52$, $p = .000$). This indicated that pretest agentic engagement scores influenced posttest scores. Additionally, Table 7 indicates that the partial eta squared (effect size) value reaches.48.

Table 7

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects on the Agentic Engagement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	596.052a	3	198.684	81.483	.000	.814
Intercept	67.196	1	67.196	27.558	.000	.330
Pretest	508.452	1	508.452	208.522	.000	.788
Group	52.953	2	26.476	10.858	.000	.279
Error	136.548	56	2.438			
Total	28986.000	60				
Corrected Total	732.600	59				

Further, to specify the significant differences among the means of agentic engagement of the three groups, pairwise comparisons were conducted. According to the results shown in Table 8, a significant difference ($p = .000$) was detected in the agentic engagement means between the scenario group and control one, with the mean difference of 2.26 on the side of the scenario group. Likewise, the results uncovered a statistically significant difference ($p = .006$) in agentic engagement means between the role-play group and control group, with a mean difference of 1.49 in favor of the role-play group. Nevertheless, it is observable in Table 8, there is no statistically significant difference ($p = .78$) between the scenario group and the role-playing group, with a mean difference of just.78 in favor of the scenario group.

Table 8

Pairwise Comparisons for Agentic Engagement Means

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Scenario	Control	2.265*	.495	.000
Role-play	Control	1.486*	.501	.004
Scenario	Role-play	.779	.506	.130

6 Discussion

The finding that both Scenario-Based Video Journaling (SBVJ) and Role-Playing (RP) significantly reduced speaking anxiety, yet with no statistically significant difference between them, offers a nuanced understanding of affective filter management in the Iranian EFL context. This result suggests that the active, scenario-driven practice inherent to both methods may be a more potent factor than the specific modality (private vs. public) in alleviating anxiety. As theorized, SBVJ likely reduced anxiety through its private, self-paced nature, allowing for desensitization and rehearsal without fear of immediate judgment (Hafour & Al Ghamdi, 2023). Conversely, RP, despite its public performance demands, may have provided a structured, goal-oriented framework that, over repeated sessions,

normalized interactive speaking and reduced apprehension through controlled exposure (Zarei & Rezadoust, 2023).

Similarly, the equivalent positive impact on agentic engagement from both interventions, despite their contrasting social dynamics, underscores the multifaceted nature of this construct. The results indicate that agentic behaviors can be fostered through divergent learner pathways. In the SBVJ group, agentic engagement manifested as learners' proactive personalization of scenarios, strategic planning of their monologues, and control over the recording process, aligning with the self-regulated, reflective agency described by Alghammas (2024). For the RP group, agentic engagement was likely exercised within the social interaction—through negotiating meaning, improvising responses, and collaboratively steering the dialogue with a partner, which reflects the co-constructed agency emphasized in sociocultural theory (Budianto et al., 2024). Therefore, while both techniques successfully encouraged learners to "take charge" of their learning, SBVJ promoted a more internally-directed, reflective form of agency, whereas RP fostered an externally-directed, interactive form. The lack of a statistical difference suggests that both forms of proactive contribution are equally accessible and effective for learners at this proficiency level when tasks are well-structured.

The overarching conclusion that both SBVJ and RP are effective yet undifferentiated in their impact on the measured variables carries important theoretical and practical implications. It challenges a potential assumption that the lower-stakes, private environment of SBVJ would inherently yield superior gains in reducing anxiety or fostering engagement compared to the more traditionally anxiety-inducing RP. Instead, it highlights the power of consistent, task-based practice itself. For educators, this provides valuable flexibility; the choice between implementing SBVJ or RP need not be solely dictated by expected affective or engagement outcomes, but can consider logistical constraints, technological access, and curricular goals. As noted by Derakhshan et al. (2022), the strategic integration of varied interactive and reflective tasks is key. Future research should investigate whether these equivalent effects hold over longer durations or with different learner profiles, and explore qualitative differences in the nature of the anxiety reduced and the agency enacted that were not captured by the quantitative measures employed in this study.

Also, concerning Scenario-Based Learning, these findings reinforce the view that Scenario-Based Learning engages presenting learners with authentic, context-rich scenarios that reflect real-life challenges, encouraging them to apply language and problem-solving skills in meaningful ways. Instead of learning isolated grammar points or vocabulary items, Scenario-Based Learning makes students engage in simulated contexts that demand communicative interaction and reflection (Errington, 2021).

In addition, findings are consistent with those of Alhasan et al. (2024), who demonstrated that Scenario-Based Learning has progressively incorporated into digital platforms, giving rise to techniques such as Scenario-Based Video Journaling (SBVJ). In fact, they found that in SBVJ, learners respond to hypothetical but realistic speaking prompts by recording their thoughts and responses via video. This type of learning result in several advantages such as diminishing performance pressure, allowing for self-paced production, and improving personalized reflection.

Regarding role-playing, these results confirm the earlier observation by Zhang and Tsung (2021) that role-playing is as an effective strategy to diminish speaking anxiety. By making learners engaged in simulated but meaningful situations, role-playing helps them to practice language in a less judgmental and more dynamic atmosphere. In the same vein, Nouri and Zarfsaz (2024) uncovered that

role-play allows learners to build confidence, encourage risk-taking, and promote peer interaction, which leads to decreasing stress levels and increases willingness to speak.

Likewise, our findings are in line with Nouri and Zarfsaz's (2024) study, in which they explored the influence of role-playing on speaking anxiety and confidence of learners. They discovered that role-play provides learners with a more comfortable and interactive space to practice speaking, which results in less anxiety levels and more classroom participation.

7 Conclusion and Implications

This study set out to investigate the differential effects of two interactive pedagogical techniques—scenario-based video journaling and role-playing—on the complex interplay of speaking anxiety and agentic engagement among Iranian intermediate EFL learners. What we found, however, was subtler and, frankly, more encouraging. For our group of Iranian English learners, both approaches proved remarkably potent. They each carved their own path—one through private reflection, the other through shared performance—yet arrived at a similar destination: students speaking up with less fear and more initiative. The real story isn't about which technique trumped the other, but that they both served effective for change. That shared effectiveness, despite their different journeys, is perhaps the most compelling takeaway.

Moving beyond the comparison, the data provide unequivocal support for the individual merit of each technique. The significant results confirm that both scenario-based video journaling and role-playing serve as potent, standalone interventions. Critically, their efficacy is two-fold: they meaningfully reduce the emotional barrier of speaking anxiety and, at the same time, constructively build the learner's agentic engagement. This simultaneous impact on affect and agency is particularly valuable. It indicates that well-structured practice can achieve more than skill development; it can reshape the learner's emotional relationship with speaking and their role in the classroom. Therefore, this convergence of outcomes highlights a clear imperative for curriculum design: purposeful communicative activities, whether private or public, are essential to holistically address the challenges of developing speaking competence.

At first glance, one might anticipate a clear methodological victor. Yet, the data revealed a more interesting story: the lack of a statistically significant difference between the two approaches. This key finding forces a deeper interpretation. It appears that despite their distinct formats—one offering a private rehearsal space, the other a public simulation—both techniques functioned as different pathways to the same positive outcome. This outcome equivalence powerfully implies the existence of common, underlying pedagogical mechanisms. Perhaps the shared, vital ingredients are not the mode of delivery, but rather the conditions it creates: deliberate practice within a scaffolded scenario, a transition from observing to doing, and the cognitive rehearsal that precedes performance. Thus, the practical choice for an educator may shift from seeking a definitively "better" method to selecting the most appropriate one—guided by classroom context, student personality, or the specific nuance of the learning challenge at hand.

Taken together, the findings offer a compelling empirical case for integrating both scenario-based video journaling and role-playing into language instruction aimed at holistic learner development. Their proven, and notably equivalent, efficacy in tackling the intertwined challenges of anxiety and passivity provides educators with two robust, evidence-based options for fostering confident and self-

directed language use. This conclusion moves the discourse from a debate over superiority to a more pragmatic consideration of contextual suitability and learner fit. To build upon this foundation, future scholarship should now probe the longitudinal durability of these benefits, the mechanisms of their transfer to genuine communication, and the nuanced, lived experiences they produce—essential work for honing the application of these significant educational strategies.

The results of the current study offer both learner empowerment and flexibility. In fact, educators are now aware of empirical evidence that authenticates two distinct pedagogical tools instead of the need for a single best method. Therefore, the practical choice between applying video journaling or role-playing can be deliberately personalized into contextual and learner-specific factors.

However, this study has several limitations that must be noted. The implications point toward a more integrated and scenario-driven approach to resource creation. Rather than treating speaking activities as generic exercises, there is a clear mandate to develop banks of rich, culturally relevant, and cognitively engaging scenarios specifically crafted for dual-purpose use. These materials should include detailed prompts suitable for private video journal reflection as well as adaptable frameworks for collaborative role-play, acknowledging that the same thematic context can fuel different modes of practice.

The outcomes of this study emphasize the need to move beyond just linguistic or methodological training to include explicit preparation in affective pedagogy. Thus, pre-service and in-service teachers require training lessons that deal with the theoretical and practical aspects of managing learner anxiety and proactively promoting engagement. Actually, this study offers tangible techniques for such training courses. Effective programs should engage teachers in experiencing both scenario-based video journaling and role-playing methods as learners, design their own scenarios, and practice how to give feedback that targets both language development and psychological comfort.

Teacher bias reflects a potential limitation of the study, as the classroom instructor also served as the researcher. This dual role may have effect on instructional delivery, participant behavior, or data interpretation, despite efforts to maintain objectivity. Future studies may decrease this limitation by involving independent instructors or external observers.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors have conducted the study, collected data, analyzed and interpreted the data, and written up the manuscript.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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