



## Essential ways of using Role-Play Activities in the Lesson

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**Abstract:** Role- play activities are considered as an essential part of the lesson, because they can enhance pupil's writing and speaking skills in a parallel way. Also teachers can be helped this situation. There are great deal of essential ways of applying this kinds of activities during the lesson. In this article, some of them are given in a short way.

**Keywords:** Activity, role-playing, lesson, instructor, case, using, skills, speaking, advantage, challenging.

**Date of Submission:** 04-11-2021

**Date of Acceptance:** 07-12-2021

Role play exercises give students the opportunity to assume the role of a person or act out a given situation. These roles can be performed by individual students, in pairs, or in groups which can play out a more complex scenario. Role plays engage students in real-life situations or scenarios that can be "stressful, unfamiliar, complex, or controversial" which requires them to examine personal feelings toward others and their circumstances (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p.47).

Unlike simulations and games which often are planned, structured activities and can last over a long period of time, role play exercises "are usually short, spontaneous presentations" but also can be prearranged research assignments (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p.47).

Role playing can be effectively used in the classroom to:

- Motivate and engage students
- Enhance current teaching strategies
- Provide real-world scenarios to help students learn
- Learn skills used in real-world situations (negotiation, debate, teamwork, cooperation, persuasion)
- Provide opportunities for critical observation of peers.

It is widely agreed that learning takes place when activities are engaging and memorable. Jeremy Harmer advocates the use of role-play for the following reasons:

- It's fun and motivating
- Quieter students get the chance to express themselves in a more forthright way
- The world of the classroom is broadened to include the outside world - thus offering a much wider range of language opportunities

In addition to these reasons, students who will at some point travel to an English-speaking country are given a chance to rehearse their English in a safe environment. Real situations can be created and students can benefit from the practice. Mistakes can be made with no drastic consequences.

### Tips on successful classroom role-play

#### Prepare for success

Role-play is possible at elementary levels providing the students have been thoroughly prepared. Try to think through the language the students will need and make sure this language has been presented. Students may need the extra support of having the language on the board. I recently did a 'lost property office' role-play with elementary adults and we spent time beforehand drilling the structures the students would need to use. When the role-play began the students felt 'armed' with the appropriate language. At higher levels the students will not need so much support with the language but they will need time to 'get into' the role.

#### The role of the teacher

Some of the possible teacher roles are:

*Facilitator* - students may need new language to be 'fed' in by the teacher. If rehearsal time is appropriate the feeding in of new language should take place at this stage.

*Spectator* - The teacher watches the role-play and offers comments and advice at the end.

*Participant* - It is sometimes appropriate to get involved and take part in the role-play yourself.

Role-playing exercises can be hard work for the instructor, both in preparation and in execution, but the work tends to pay off in terms of student motivation and accomplishment. As with any big project, it's best to take it one step at a time:

- Define Objectives
- Choose Context & Roles
- Introducing the Exercise
- Student Preparation/Research
- The Role-Play
- Concluding Discussion
- Assessment

Fortunately, much of the work of preparation, once done, can be distributed to other educators. Many well-developed role-playing exercises are available on the scenario pages, organized by topic or by type. Participants are given particular roles to play in a conversation or other interaction, such as an email exchange, typical of their discipline. They may be given specific instructions on how to act or what to say, as an aggressive client or patient in denial, for example, or required to act and react in their own way depending on the requirements of the exercise. The participants will then act out the scenario and afterwards there will be reflection and discussion about the interactions, such as alternative ways of dealing with the situation. The scenario can then be acted out again with changes based on the outcome of the reflection and discussion. One of the biggest challenges of the role playing technique is to get all students to participate and be truly engaged. Instructors might want to consider ways of increasing the likelihood of strong student participation. The instructor might offer a participation grade somehow tied to a short product students produce from their perspective in their given role. It is a good idea to find ways to increase student awareness of the likelihood their group might be called upon to share their answer with the entire class if they are

playing their roles in a group context. The instructor might also consider using some of the role playing tasks in questions on exams and make it clear to students that that is the case. The instructor could even tell them that they might have to answer a question from the perspective of any of the roles, not just the one they were assigned.

Role plays provide students with the opportunity to take part in activities which mirror career-related scenarios. To help students understand the use of role playing sessions, role plays should be content-focused, match learning objectives, and be relevant to real-world situations. Role playing exercises encourage students to think more critically about complex and controversial subjects and to see situations from a different perspective. When properly employed, role plays can motivate students in a fun and engaging way.

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