

## THE USAGE OF ROLE PLAY TECHNIQUES IN TEACHING SHORT STORY FOR AVERAGE LEVEL OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

*Teaching short stories to non-English speakers has proven to be a huge obstacle due to the lack of proficiency. Though it was difficult for them, some techniques can be implemented to teach short stories in a simpler approach for them to understand. In concern over this matter, a study was conducted in Kolej Yayasan Melaka. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of using role play in ESL classroom. The college sampled was from average level of Diploma students. The students were observed and given questionnaires. The major result of this study shows that students enjoyed learning literary text through role play. This indicates that students were motivated in understanding the short stories. The results of the findings revealed that most of the students considered that role play also increased their confidence level. It is further hoped that, lecturers would attempt to incorporate role play techniques in their ESL classes as this activity will provide an enriched learning ambience for both the students and lecturers.*

**Keywords:** Role play, non-English speakers, short story, ESL classes, average level, Diploma students.

### INTRODUCTION

This study is carried out to investigate the use of role play techniques in teaching literary text to Diploma students. Role playing are not practiced effectively in Malaysian ESL classrooms as they may be time consuming. Due to time constraint, ESL Lecturers prefer to teach literary texts in the conventional way just by reading aloud or summarizing the texts. However, according to Brumfit (1985) the conventional way of conducting a literary text hardly gives the learners an opportunity to use language and develop fluency through it. Literary texts often put students off due to their length and the language (Ambrosia, 2003). So to enable students to understand literary texts, role-play gives a support for listening and producing meaningful language. It also provides situations for reading and writing. Besides that it helps one to understand text read and it stimulates them to understand the literary texts more in depth by analyzing the plot, character and language style. In addition, it also prepares learners to be competent users of the English language not only in ESL classroom but also in their immediate world.

According to Amidon (1987), research has shown that role playing provides the student with the dramatic conflict and clarification of their relationship with others. According to NurWanira (Melta & Forum, 2008), role-play can be implemented in ways such as dividing the students into groups and require them to act out the characters according to the provided scenario. She also explains that students did enjoy the activities and some of them were overly-excited especially the assertive and active students. The reason she used role play in teaching ESL literary text is because learners can gain a lot of benefits as it conveys positive effects to the learners' cognitive, affective, emotional and psychomotor developments. She also stressed that learners who were very shy able to cope with the activity.

Role-Play really helps learners in ESL classroom for better understanding. It also helps learners to have a better interpretation about literary texts that they have being taught (Pazarina, Melta & Forum, 2008). It is also believed that role play provides the quality of engagement where the students are more participative where there is an improvement in the quality of participation of shy students (Nesamalar & Chitravelu, 2003).

The main purpose of this study is to determine how students have learnt the literary text effectively through role play, how role play has built up their confidence level and tap their creativity thinking skills. Additionally it also explores into students' perception; attitude and interest towards learning literary text.

This study hopefully would help lecturers to implement role play activities to get the students involve and to enhance their interest towards literary text. Besides that, after a period of time students will be likely to be more competent in their speaking because acting requires speaking skills.

## METHODOLOGY

Participants for this study were 20 students of average Diploma level in Kolej Yayasan Melaka in a suburban area in Melaka. The students who are involved are from the same college.

The study is based on group dramatization on a chosen text which was carried out randomly in class. All parts of the story are extracted out for the students to role play and students will be given a choice of events from the text to role play. Since it is a mixed ability class, groups will be chosen by the lecturer according to the student's proficiency level. First, advanced students will try to improvise the scene in a text by using their own words, and act it out later. Second, intermediate students will be given a scenario from the literary text and, students participate confidently. Thirdly, low proficiency students will be given the dialogue from the extracted piece in a literary text and students act it out using the prepared masks.

This is an experimental study which involves both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative approach is used to study on how many students really enjoyed learning through role playing. Questionnaires will be given to students to answer based on the techniques measured. The questionnaires aim to acquire the variation of the respondents' background information, attitude towards role play and to discover the overall respondents' attitude and interest towards the study done in the classroom using role play. The Likert scale will be the best one to show the number of questionnaires and respondents attitudes which can be measured in the class towards the use of role play.

The first instrument used is the observation known as the qualitative approach. In this study, the researcher becomes a non-participant observer to analyze respondents' attitude, interests and motivation before, during and after role playing. The observation sheet consists of one section. It focuses on the quantitative study of the respondents' attitude, interest and motivation. The observation will be recorded based on the scales prepared to grade respondents' interest, and attitude of the activities. The researcher then uses her own words to describe the interactions made in the activities.

## DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

### Observation

The first instrument to be used is the observation. The observation was recorded by using the rating scale which was created by the researcher.

### Respondents' Interest, Participation and Attitude in 'Role Play'

Aspects of participation	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Interest</b> ( respondents curiosity, attention towards the literary text)	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Participation</b>	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Creative thinking</b>	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Kinesthetic learning</b> ( acting & movement )	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Collaboration</b> (teamwork)	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Enjoyment</b> (confidence & self-esteem)	5	4	3	2	1

Figure 1: Respondents' Interest, Participation and Attitude in 'Role Play'

In this activity, role play was conducted using the literary text of “Rich Man Invites Poor Student to Dinner”. Most of the respondents showed some interest, where they paid attention towards the literary text. Although it was their first time doing this role play, 60% seemed to be curious and the others showed less interest, due to their attitude towards the text. Respondents were participative because most of them were assigned to prepare on it. 60% of the respondents were creative where they added humor in their role play and made some sound of animals and nature when they were acting. The respondents did a lot of body movements and formation. They made good usage of the space provided. Teamwork was good; respondents discussed and help their members by delegating the roles to be acted out. Hence, there were some who had low self-esteem and lack of confidence probably because it was their first time involving in a role play.

### Questionnaires

The second instrument are questionnaires. Respondents were given one set of questionnaires to be answered. The questionnaires consist of the background information, respondents’ interest and also the overall respondents’ attitude and interests towards the study done in classroom using role play. From here, we can determine the number of students really enjoyed learning literary text through role playing.

**Table 1: Respondents Background Information and Interests in Role Play Technique**

Scales Questions	Positive feedback		Uncertain	Negative feedback		Total of Respondents
	Strongly Agree	Agree		Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	18			2		20
2	19	1				20
3	9	11				20
4	18		2			20
5	18	2				20
6	9	8	2	1		20
7	18			2		20
8	11	6	3			20
9	10	7	3			20
10	3	10	7			20

The overall results shown are positive. Most of the respondents accept the importance to acknowledge the role play technique used in teaching ESL literary text. Based on the results, the research questions are all answered.

**a) Is role play effective enough to teach ESL literary text?**

Overall it’s clear that, role play is an effective way to teach ESL literary text. The tables below are explained in detailed;

*Role play was your first exposure to learn literary text.*

Strongly Agree	Disagree
90%	10%

The results above shows that, 90% of the respondents are new to role play, where as 10% of them have done role play activities before.

***Role play made you understand the literary text in depth.***

Strongly Agree	Agree
95%	5%

95% of the respondents strongly agreed and 5% agreed that role play had made them to understand the literary text in-depth, which answers the research question.

***In future, would you consider this technique to be included in learning ESL literary text?***

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain
15%	50%	35%

Majority of the respondents agreed that this technique should be included in learning ESL literary text. These respondents have understood and enjoyed this technique. 35% of the respondents were uncertain because they were not bothered if the literary texts were taught through a conventional way or by using role play.

**b) Does role play build up students' confidence level?**

***The role play with masks helps you to act better.***

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
45%	40%	10%	5%

45% of the respondents strongly agreed and 40% agreed that by using masks, it helped them to act better. This is because, the respondents could do funny acts without showing his face, and this brings out the confidence in them. 10% of the respondents were uncertain. Most likely these respondents were acting as a narrator, so as a result they did not have the chance to use the masks.

***Role play helps build your confidence level.***

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain
55%	30%	15%

It shows that 55% of the respondents strongly agree and 30% agree that role play build up their confidence level and 15% were uncertain respectively, which reveals that not all of them feel their confidence level were achieved due to lack of interest or physical disorders at the present moment. However, the overall result was overwhelming and this has answered the research question.

**c) Does role play help tap the creative thinking skills among the students?**

***Role play helps you to bring out your hidden talent and sharpen your acting skills.***

Strongly Agree	Uncertain
90%	10%

90% of the respondents gave positive feedback where they agree that role play helps them to speak using the correct pronunciation. 10% was uncertain because they felt that they were not convinced whether role play had helped them to speak using the correct pronunciation although they had participated in the role play.

***Expression and dialogue reading is important in a role play.***

Strongly Agree	Agree
90%	10%

The results above shows that, 90% of the respondents strongly agreed and 10% of the respondents agreed that expression and dialogue reading is important in a role play, which further explains that expression brings out the talent within them.

**d) Were you able to think out of the box just to make a difference in acting out?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain
50%	35%	15%

The respondents here are very positive; they themselves realized that they should make some changes, as not to follow exactly from the text, but yet used their imagination to create a remarkable role play for the audience. Based on the results shown, 50% of the respondents strongly agreed, and 35% of them agreed that role play tap their creative thinking skills.

**CONCLUSION**

Overall, the findings gathered from the research carried out have answered the research questions which were presented earlier. Based on the observation and findings, respondents enjoyed role play. Apart from that, respondents were also motivated to speak up and engage themselves in the next round of role play activities. The research was successful and this technique can be implemented in other variant classes that will lead to success and confidence among the students.

Literary texts are rich in information that students can relate to, enabling them to question and represent their thoughts through role play. In thinking creatively about how to and what to use to represent their understanding, learners are automatically thinking critically as well as creatively in the ESL classroom. Students will easily remember what they have acted out and will face less difficulty in understanding the literary texts.

The role of the researcher in this experimental study is one of the decision maker, facilitator and coach. The researcher plans and supports the activities that allow students to plan to come up with own scripts, and supporting students in acting and responding to the literary text in appropriate ways. Learning becomes student-centered when students begin to role play reflecting their ideas, creativity and understanding of the text.

To inculcate interest in ESL literary texts, certain techniques and tools need to be administered to provide students with a strong path .Reading aloud or learning through the conventional way can drown the interest and cause boredom to the students. Thus, activities such as role play would provide inspiring learning experiences for both the students and the teachers in future although there might be time constraint.

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