

ROLE PLAYS AND SIMULATIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Role plays and simulations promote critical thinking and creativity, encourage students to take risks with new language, and help develop cooperative skills in a safe setting. These exercises also compel students to think on their feet. Unlike skits or plays, role plays do not have scripts. Rather, students are assigned roles and given a scenario with different elements and complications that they must address in their roles. For example, students may roleplay tourists and tour guides who must deal with a flooded town or a situation in which all hotels are booked.

Some activities involving role playing and simulations to teach ESL are now being discussed.

1. Getting to Know You

Instructional objectives-

Students will be able to:

- demonstrate good comprehension during a variety of conversations by verbally and non-verbally responding appropriately
- negotiate and manage interaction with other learners to accomplish tasks
- use written sources of information to support their oral presentations
- paraphrase, summarize, elaborate, clarify, ask relevant questions, and make relevant comments in conversation, debate, and simulations
- negotiate and initiate conversations by questioning, restating, soliciting information, and paraphrasing the communication of others. Students also will practice multi-processing, speaking and listening to new information about other people in fast-paced conversation.

Description

The lesson helps students develop the social skills they need when meeting someone for the first time and emphasizes the importance of getting to know that individual and remembering what they have learned about him or her.

Time

45–60 minutes

Materials

- Role-Play Identity activity sheet (copy for each student)
- Getting to Know You resource sheet (copy for each student)

- Remember Me? activity sheet (copy for each student)

Class layout and grouping of students

Students remain in their seats to receive directions and to fill out their role-play sheets. They then circulate to introduce themselves to the other “attendees” and fill out the work sheet. They return to their desks after they have completed the work sheet.

Procedure

- 1.Explain to the students that they will be simulating a situation in which they are attending a debate conference for the first time. They are expected to be friendly and to find out more about the other “debaters.” Point out that courtesy demands that they listen carefully so they can remember what each debater said. Tell them that they will be quizzed about how much they remember.
- 2.Distribute Role-Play Identity activity sheet and tell the students that they are to use the sheet to create an “identity” for one of the attendees. Review the sheet and ask the students to fill it out. (If you are planning to use the extension activity, ask them to write their name on the back of the sheet.)
- 3.Collect the sheets and distribute them randomly. Tell the students to read and memorize the identity information on their sheet so they can portray that person accurately.
- 4.Distribute Getting to Know You resource sheet. Discuss the sheet and present each phrase in a mock conversation to demonstrate how and when it is used.
- 5.Tell the students that the classroom is now the conference center where the debaters have gathered prior to the day’s sessions. They are to mingle and meet as many people as possible in 15–30 minutes (depending on the number of students present). Remind the students that they must assume the identity of the person on their role-play sheet and gather as much information about the other debaters as possible. They can use the phrases you have introduced to begin their conversations. If a debater asks them a question whose answer is not on their role-play sheet, they should make one up—but always remain in character. As the students mingle, make sure they are using appropriate conversation starters and etiquette.
- 6.After time is up, call, “TIME!” Distribute the Remember Me? activity sheet and review the rules. Tell the students that they have five minutes to fill in the chart on the activity sheet. After five minutes, call time and ask the students to return to their desks.
- 7.Review the charts briefly to see who has the most signatures.
- 8.Have the students turn in their Role-Play Identity sheets. Read each character description without the name and see if the students can guess the name of the debater you have described.

Assessment

You can assess performance as the students circulate, introducing themselves to and carrying on conversations with other debaters. Correct when necessary.

Extensions and Modifications

Have each student keep circulating until she finds the person who is holding the Role-Play Identity sheet that she wrote.

Activity Sheet

Role-Play Identity

Name (make one up): _____.

Interests (choose three and prioritize according to preference):

_____ Being with family

_____ Debating

_____ Eating

_____ Football

_____ Playing computer games

_____ Reading

_____ Sewing

_____ Shopping

_____ Sleeping

_____ Traveling

_____ Writing

Unique Trait (Create your own. You may have up to three for this activity.):

- _____
- _____
- _____

Resource Sheet

Getting to Know You

- Nice to meet you.
- Pleasure to meet you.
- I have heard a lot about you.
- How are you doing?
- Great day for debating—what do you think?
- Did you find your way here okay?
- What's new in Kolkata?
- How long have you lived there?
- What brings you all the way here?
- Know where I can find a great sports club/CD store/comic shop?
- I'd like you to meet my new friend, X.
- X, this is Y. Y, this is X.
- So, what do you like to do in your spare time?

2. What Am I?

Instructional objectives

Students will be able to:

- use responsive listening
- paraphrase, summarize, elaborate, clarify, ask relevant questions, and make relevant comments in conversation, debate, and simulations
- negotiate and initiate conversations by questioning, restating, soliciting information, and paraphrasing the communication of others
- appropriately seek support and feedback from others
- analyze, synthesize, and infer from information
- use vocabulary to describe and ask about abstract concepts
- multi-process listening and speaking skills

Description

The teacher tapes a concept word to the back of each student. The students must then circulate to find out what word they are.

Time: 45 minutes

Materials:

- Government and Emotion Concepts resource sheet
- small pieces of paper
- tape or pins
- Assorted Concept Tags resource sheet (optional)

Preparation

- Create one tag for each student, using the terms on Government and Emotion Concepts.

Class layout and grouping of students

The students receive their tags at their desks and then walk around the classroom during the exercise.

Procedure

1. Define and discuss the meaning of abstract concept.

Definition: An abstract concept is a term or thought that refers to a quality, an emotion, or an idea such as “sensitivity” or “imperialism,” rather than to a solid or concrete object such as a “truck” or a “football.” Discuss abstract concepts with the students as appropriate or needed.

2. Explain to the students that you will tape an abstract concept involving politics or states of mind to their back. Discuss types of politics or governments and states of mind you will be using so the students can narrow down the universe of words. You may also choose to make a transparency of the resource sheet to give students a preview of the words that will be used in the exercise.

3. Tell the students that they are to ask enough yes or no, or yes AND no questions of another student to guess the concept. As an example, explain that you might have the word sensitivity on your back. To guess your word, you might ask the following questions:

- a. Is it a type of government? NO
- b. Is it an emotion? YES
- c. Is it a concept related to business? NO

d. Is it a feeling or emotion? YES and NO

e. Is it something you learned about in school? YES

The questioning should continue until each student guesses the name of his or her concept. Once they guess, they should circulate to help others students guess their concept.

Assessment

You can informally assess the students' quality of questions.

Extensions and modifications

Once the students have all guessed their tags, have them repeat the exercise using either the words on Assorted Concept Tags resource sheet or words they have chosen.

Resource Sheet

1.Assorted Concept Tags

- Third World debt
- Poverty
- Colonization
- Globalization
- Human rights
- Procrastination
- War
- Knowledge
- Power
- Design
- Format
- Confusion
- Spirituality
- Representation
- Methodology
- Objective
- Answer
- Desire
- Emotion
- Dream
- Charisma
- Invisibility
- Ambitions
- Unity
- Pride

2.Government and Emotion Concepts

- Marxism Happiness
- Anarchy Anger
- Aristocracy Love Hate

- Theocracy Fear
 - Dictatorship Peace
 - Democracy Joy
 - Monarchy Sorrow
 - Socialist state Reverence
 - Confederacy Guilt
 - Federal republic Hope
 - Totalitarian state Jealousy
 - Oligarchy Remorse
- Sadness
Surprise
Disgust
Boredom
Anticipation

3.You Oughta Be in Pictures

Instructional objectives

Students will be able to:

- demonstrate good comprehension during a variety of conversations by verbally and non-verbally responding appropriately
- follow oral and written directions
- negotiate and manage interaction with other learners to accomplish tasks
- initiate and sustain conversations about a range of topics
- elaborate and extend other people’s ideas and words
- persuade, argue, negotiate, evaluate, and justify in a variety of contexts
- show awareness of and exhibit sensitivity to gender and cultural bias issues and concerns
- use culturally and socially appropriate non-verbal communication in social and formal interactions
- use acceptable tone, volume, stress, and intonation, in various settings and with various audiences

Description

Students audition for a role in a movie in which the scenes keep changing.

Time

45–60 minutes

Materials

- sheet of paper (for each student)
- marker (for each group)
- pins (for each student)
- Sample Scenes resource sheet

Preparation

Print out the Sample Scenes sheet and cut into strips.

Class layout and grouping of students: Students work in groups of four.

Procedure

1. Tell the students that you are the casting director who has come to audition actors for a new movie. You will choose the actors based on their performance of a scene from the film. However, although you know what the scene is about, you don't have a script, so they will have to act impromptu. Explain that you get bored easily and so you will likely change the scene, the roles, and the actors every so often.

2. Organize the students in groups of four. Ask the students in each group to count off from one to four so that each person has a number. Distribute the paper, markers, and pins. Tell the students to write their number on the paper—large enough so that everyone can see it—and pin it on.

3. Explain the exercise:

a. You will ask one of the groups to come to the front of the room and assign them a setting and roles. When you say, "START," you will point to an actor who begins the scene anyway that he or she wishes. The other actors should jump in whenever they have something to add. Remind the actors to keep the other roles in mind and so they should say something that will help the others contribute to the scene.

b. Periodically, you will say, "SWITCH ACTORS!" or "SWITCH SCENES!"

c. If you say "SWITCH ACTORS!" the actors currently "on stage" must sit, and you choose a new group to take over the scene. Actors who have not yet contributed to the scene cannot sit down but must take part in the new scene in a new role. The teacher should start the new scene by pointing to an actor who hasn't contributed and calling out a new role that fits the scene. He may be seated only after the scene finishes and he has participated.

d. If you say, "SWITCH SCENES!" the group stays on stage but begins a new scene.

4. After you have explained the procedure, ask one group to come to the front of the room to help you demonstrate, using the following scene. Then begin the exercise using the suggestions on the Scenes resource sheet or those you have developed.

Extensions and modifications

Have the students create their own scenes or contribute a character to a scene.

Scene: Beauty and the Beast

Actor 1: Merchant

Actor 2: Beast

Actor 3: Belle-youngest daughter

Actor 4: Eldest daughter

Actor 5: Second elder daughter

3. Cultural Lessons

4.

Instructional objectives

Students will be able to:

- select and utilize different resources to help understand language
- negotiate and manage interaction with other learners to accomplish tasks
- recognize the need for help and seek assistance appropriately from others
- interpret and respond appropriately to non-verbal cues and body language

- use written sources of information to support their oral presentations
- analyze, synthesize, and infer from information
- analyze the social context to determine appropriate language use
- show awareness of and exhibit sensitivity to gender and cultural bias issues and concerns
- use culturally and socially appropriate non-verbal communication in social and formal interactions
- observe, model, and critique how others speak and behave in a particular situation or setting

Description

This simulation involves learning how to read body language, gestures, and nonverbal language in different cultures.

Time

45–60 minutes

Materials

- Briefing Sheet for the Indian Cultural Advisors played by students (copy for each advisor)
- Briefing Sheet for the Indian Nationals each being representative from the different states of India (copy for each national)
- Briefing Sheet for the New Head of Pan-Indian Student Council
- Name tags or small pieces of paper
- pins or tape

Class layout and grouping of students

Students will receive their directions in their regular seating arrangement and then meet in groups around the room. For the head's address, arrange the desks so that the Head faces the nationals while the advisors face the audience from the side.

Procedure

1. Tell the students that they are about to take part in a simulation to help them understand how social and cultural norms differ. Explain that cultural and social norms are the behaviors, language, gestures, and body language that are used to communicate within a culture.

2. Tell the students that this exercise will simulate what can happen if we don't understand different cultures. You will assign roles to everyone in the class to carry out this simulation.

The setting is the imaginary office of the New Head of Pan-Indian Students Council, belonging to a country like India with complex cultural norms that are often different from each other in different states. The new head is about to make a speech at a reception for noted nationals.

3. Select a flexible, outgoing student to be the Head. He or she could make or break this lesson, so choose wisely. Then assign the other roles. Have the students wear small tags indicating their role to prevent any confusion during the exercise.

4. Distribute the instruction sheets for each role and give the students 10 minutes to read and prepare. Tell them that they may gather with other members of their group, but they may not share their instructions with other groups.

5. Circulate to make sure that the students understand their roles. Remind the nationals that they are to be obvious about showing their displeasure with any cultural faux pas. They can frown, walk away, glare, and so forth. If the ambassador corrects his or her mistake, they should smile and continue to listen politely until he or she makes another mistake.

6. After 10 minutes, ask the students to arrange the room for the speech and reception. Once the room is ready, tell the Head to begin. Feel free to call a Time Out if there is any confusion or if students are not playing their roles appropriately.

7. Once the Head has finished speaking, ask the representative nationals to mingle. They should try to talk to at least three different people and find something new about each one—it can even be a small thing such as the person's name. Circulate to watch the interaction.

8. After 10–20 minutes, ask the students to return their desks to their original positions and sit down for a discussion.

9. Using the following questions, hold a **Socratic discussion** on how the speech and reception went.

Allow representatives from all the roles to speak.

- What was the hardest thing about this exercise?
- Who had the most difficult role in this exercise?
- How did the Head do? Back up your comments with examples of behaviours observed during the exercise.

Assessment

By observing interactions and seeing how well the students correct their behaviour based on non-verbal feedback, you will see how well students think on their feet. This is an excellent exercise to observe how quickly students respond to negative feedback in conversation and speeches.