

ESL Developmental Continuum P–10

Teaching strategy – Role play

Focuses on

Speaking Listening Reading Writing

Most useful for students at stages

A1 A2 BL B1 B2 B3 SL S1 **S2 S3 S4**

Purpose of this activity

Role plays can be a particularly effective way of debating current political or environmental issues with a class. Students can be given role play cards, which give details about what sort of person they are, and what position they are taking on a particular issue, for example tagging and graffiti art on buildings. A scenario is then set up and the students put forward their various subject positions as they explore the issue.

How this helps ESL students in particular

By 'performing' in a role other than their own, students are licensed to explore other ways of being and doing in English. Students may feel free in role play to voice opinions they would not normally be brave enough to state. As well, role plays are fun and motivating for students. Exploring current issues in role play also has the benefit of bringing the outside world and both colloquial and highly formal language into the classroom.

Procedure

In a role play, students do not play themselves; they are assigned a role to play as if they were that person. The role could be a type of person (e.g. 'concerned mother') or it could be a specific person (e.g. Vincent van Gogh or a fictional character that the students have studied).

An example of how this could be used is:

- After viewing a film over several lessons, students could choose one of the characters.
- They take on the role of that character and are interviewed as that character by a pair partner for an article about them in a magazine.

Alternatively, students could develop a scene that could have been in the movie, but wasn't, and develop that scene as group work and act it out for the class.

Acknowledgments/reference

For examples of role play scenarios to try, see:

Harmer, J. (2003). *The practice of English language teaching*. London: Longman

Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and learning in the classroom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.