

The Benefits of Role-Playing in Improving Students' Interaction with Literary Texts in Literature Classes

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Abstract

Role-playing activities among EFL students in literature classrooms have been used to teach literature in various countries; however, there is little study on this topic among Iraqi students. This study intends to describe the fostering activity of "Role-Playing" in literature class, which is regarded as the first step in action research to alleviate the problems in teaching English literature in Iraq. Twenty-five students took part in the pre- and post-activities for the English Literature session. Post-session interviews were conducted to learn more about the students' perspectives. These activities attracted students' interest in literary works and improved their capacity to appreciate the stories included in Iraqi preparatory school curricula. The findings of the current study confirm that there is a clear difference between the students' pre and post-interactions with the events of the literary text. The current study approves that the Role-playing activity is a stimulating and fostering tool in increasing the Iraqi learners' interactions with the literary text. Thus, the role-playing method in literature class is more effective and fruitful than traditional methods of presenting literary texts, particularly in drama.

المُلخَص

تم استخدام فعاليات "تمثيل الأدوار" بين طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في صفوف الأدب لتدريس النصوص الأدبية في مختلف البلدان؛ على الرغم من ذلك، هناك دراسات قليلة بالعراق حول هذا الموضوع بين الطلاب العراقيين. تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى وصف الفعالية النشطة "تمثيل الأدوار" في صف الأدب، والذي يعتبر الخطوة الأولى في البحث العملي لتقليل من صعوبات ومشاكل تدريس الأدب الإنجليزي في العراق. أشرك الباحث خمسة وعشرون طالبًا في الأنشطة السابقة واللاحقة لجلسة الأدب الإنجليزي. وأجريت مقابلات بعد الجلسة لمعرفة المزيد عن وجهات نظر الطلاب. جذبت هذه الأنشطة اهتمام الطلاب بالأعمال الأدبية وحسنت قدرتهم على تقدير القصص المدرجة في مناهج المدارس الإعدادية العراقية. نتائج الدراسة الحالية تؤكد على وجود فرق واضح بين تفاعل وأداء الطلاب القبلي والبعدي مع أحداث النص الأدبي. تقر الدراسة الحالية بأن فعالية "تمثيل الأدوار" تعتبر أداة محفزة ومعززة في زيادة تفاعل المتعلمين العراقيين مع النص الأدبي. ومن ثم فإن أسلوب تمثيل الأدوار في حصة الأدب أكثر فعالية وإثماراً من الأساليب التقليدية في عرض النصوص الأدبية، وخاصة في العمل المسرحي.

١. Introduction

The term "dramatic role-playing in education" has several definitions. Courtney and Jossart (٢٠٠٧) assert that students gain access to a particular text through their interactions with the literary work within it. Holden (١٩٨١), on the other hand, defines drama as a student's performance in which he imagines himself in a different setting, outside of the classroom, or taking on the identity and skin of another person. Many teachers have effectively used role-playing in the classroom to address interpersonal conflicts and teach human-relationship skills (Vrettos, ١٩٨٣). Role-playing has also been used to assist students comprehend topics by dramatizing literary and historical works, as well as historical or current events. In all of these uses, role-playing allows the student to face and clarify (١) his connections with others, (٢) his knowledge and expectations of society, (٣) his self-evaluation and lifestyle, and (٤) how academic content may be relevant to his daily responsibilities (Chesler & Fox, ١٩٦٦). In essence, role acting calls on students to step outside of their everyday roles and give up their usual behavior patterns in favor of adopting the roles and behaviors of others. Either a real person or a fictional character could play this other role. Although the initial line's characters and situation were made up, the action was intended to represent a subset of real student behavior that the teacher had seen on the playground. The student takes on the character of another person in the present or a different period and location. He tries, to the greatest extent possible, to speak, act, and feel like the other person. Thus, the audience, teacher, and actor-students may all observe and comment on the actions more objectively. Role-playing is beneficial in a variety of contexts and establishments (Druckman, D. (٢٠٠٧). It has been used to help one party understand the other side's position, sentiments, and actions in the resolution of protracted labor-management disputes. This is not to say that disagreements have disappeared or that opinions have evolved on their own; rather, it means that both sides have developed a deeper comprehension of one another's worries and interests, which has made it possible for them to communicate more openly and patiently with one another.

٢. Literature Review

Role-playing in the language classroom is an incredibly beneficial and entertaining endeavour for both instructors and learners (Abraham, ٢٠١٨). It is evident that language's function is derived from the necessary situations it exists in, not from its forms. Even though the contexts vary, there are some universal principles that all context types should adhere to (Newmeyer, ٢٠٠٠). In order to design educational programs primarily based on situations rather than being

constrained by sentence forms to apply to teaching subjects, Wilkins D. (١٩٩٤) proposed notional syllabuses. The use of communication in language applications has grown in popularity. Wilkins brought up role-playing, which is simply mimicking reality, according to it. By virtue of the environments and their "roles," the students must communicate effectively.

The technique is as follows: When organizing role-playing practice, the teacher should provide a framework and numerous roles for students to prepare for and then perform in class (Baruch, ٢٠٠٦). Multiple groups can work on the performance. When one student performs, the other students act as an audience, analyzing the advantages and disadvantages afterwards. The discussion itself is an example of practice. Empirical data from Wilkins' research and theories indicated that role-playing is an effective approach for animating the teaching and learning environment, piquing learners' interests, and making language acquisition mandatory. Wilkins provided general numbers and theories for role-playing, but other researchers employed other researchers for the subject, resulting in new concerns that needed to be addressed. Role-playing is a popular technique for examining learners' pragmatic skill, according to Fraser, Rintell, and Walters (١٩٨٠). The speaking act can therefore remain constant while the environmental aspects vary, and numerous contextual elements are crucial in predicting a speaker's behavior during a role-play.

According to Alghamady, (٢٠٢٢) and Rashid & Qaiser (٢٠١٧) role-playing is an effective strategy for fostering student interactions. The teacher offered the students general rules to follow. First, all pupils had the opportunity to move and express their thoughts and attitudes while acting out a role. Second, students collaborated to solve challenges. The teacher declared that all students will participate in the exercise. The goal of this activity was to maximize student contributions to the activity's success. When one student makes a simple error during the play, it is best to fix it afterward. Role-playing is essential for pupils to rapidly increase their critical thinking skills and comprehension of literary texts. (Chen & Wu ٢٠٢٣). In addition to fostering an appreciation for variety, teamwork, originality, and artistic imagination, drama-based pedagogical practices improve students' language abilities, classroom interactions, and learning experiences

(Belliveau and Kim, ٢٠١٣). Even more significantly, students' interpretations of literary texts have greatly benefited from drama-based instructional strategies. What follows is an analysis of the positive

effects of drama role-playing on students' linguistic competence and social and cultural growth as it pertains to the study of English literature.

٣. Objectives of the study

١. To investigate whether the Role-Playing activity is a stimulating tool in literature class or not.
٢. To examine the learners' ability to comprehension of the literary text.

٤. Methodology

The research design for this study is qualitative. Unlike quantitative data, which is primarily reliant on mathematical and statistical data, qualitative research is introspective and subjective (Hubbard & Power, ١٩٩٩). The researcher used a variety of data collection approaches to assure accuracy. Data collection methods included audio recordings of class discussions and role-playing sessions. I used two distinct approaches to portray the literary material. The first sessions are presented to the entire class without the role-playing activity, whereas the second sessions are presented with the role-playing activity.

٥. Data analysis and results

According to the learner interviews, role-playing allows most students to better understand the literary work theme. The preparations conducted before the performance are beneficial, assisting pupils in understanding the literary work's substance. In particular, the offered lesson using a role-playing technique pulls students' attention to the performance and allows them to better understand the topic represented by the performance. As a result, when the class watched the group's performance, they all felt compelled to compare. Furthermore, the stimulating methods assist students retain the work's concept.

٥. Conclusion

In light of the findings of the current study; the role-playing strategy is an activating and stimulating technique for increasing the learners' interaction and comprehension of the literary text. Furthermore, students get to know one another better in this activity. This activity also improved learners' attention and interest in the literary text and increased their understanding of the dramatic text by providing cooperative learning opportunities and breaking down learning into smaller steps. During the role-playing activity, the teacher gave the students some general guidelines to follow. First, all the students had the freedom to move and express their opinions and attitudes while acting in a role. Second, students worked together to solve problems. The current study proved that the role-play activity encourages most of the students to take part in this activity. When one

student makes a simple mistake, after the play it is advisable to correct the mistake. Thus, this study confirms that the Role-playing activity among Iraqi students has a positive impact on learners' interaction and comprehension of the literary text.

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