

A Sympathy Protest *Simulations and Role Play as a Vehicle for Language, Culture and Content in the Language Classroom*

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Some definitions

- **Skit:** Students perform a short sketch in accordance with a written script which is either read or memorized.
- **Role play:** Students act out a particular role, in accordance with the perceived expectations with regard to a character's behavior in a particular context.
- **Simulation:** Students act out real life/real world situations, but are playing themselves.
- **Live action role-playing game (LARP):** A form of role-playing game where the participants physically act out their characters' actions. The players pursue goals within a fictional setting represented by the real world while interacting with each other in character.
- **Cosplay** (a combination of the words *costume* and *play*): A performance art in which participants called cosplayers wear costumes and fashion accessories to represent a specific character.

Why role play and simulations?

- Features of role playing games: goals, rules and obstacles, feedback systems, voluntary participation
- "Role playing/simulation is an extremely valuable method for L2 learning. It encourages thinking and creativity, lets students develop and practice new language and behavioral skills in a relatively nonthreatening setting, and can create the motivation and involvement necessary for learning to occur." – Tompkins, *The Internet TESL Journal*, Vol. IV, No. 8, August 1998.
- Play can be an ideal vehicle for language acquisition for a number of reasons (Sachs, 1984):
 - Since play is not goal oriented, it removes pressure and frustration from the interactive process.
 - There is a strong context that is shared by the interactive partners.
 - Games have reciprocal role structure and variations in the order of elements, as do grammars.
 - Games, like conversations, contain turn-taking.
- "Improvisation teaches scientists to become habituated to listening... They have to observe the other person and totally be focused on them and pick up the signals and use interpersonal cues, which is the first step toward empathy... In improvisation, you're actually tracking what's going on in the other person's head... and if you can't do that, I don't think you can communicate well." – Alan Alda

Resources to help you play:

- Realia from the target language/culture: www.realiaproject.org and www.miscositas.com/realiamenu.html
- Tickets, boarding passes: Ticket-o-Matic: <http://lnx.musicairport.com/boardingpass/start.php>
- Photos from the target culture: Google images: www.google.com/imghp
- Newspaper clippings: www.omninternet.com/news/news.asp
- Other authentic materials: www.miscositas.com/authenticmaterials.html
- Maps: www.worldatlas.com/clipart.htm
- In-flight movies: www.miscositas.com/miscositastv.html
- Manipulatives: toys, fake food, musical instruments, crafts, animals, transportation, etc.
- Write a diary or a Facebook post about your trip: Historical Facebook: www.freetech4teachers.com/2010/08/historical-facebook-facebook-for-dead.html
- Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science: <http://www.centerforcommunicatingscience.org/>



Examples play in action in the language classroom:

- “Politics of Art” - In this short classroom video, watch as high school students read a letter written by Colombian artists protesting a new Spanish policy requiring a visa to enter Spain. Students then role-play Latin American artists, debate the pros and cons of accepting an invitation to exhibit their work in Spain and write a letter in response based on majority opinion. http://www.learner.org/channel/libraries/tfl/spanish/langer_de_ramirez/index.html
- Article: “Viva Colombia/Colombia viva!” - Read about a middle school fantasy trip to the coast of the Colombia centered around the five senses, Colombian music, art, food, geography and history. [http://www.miscositas.com/Viva%20Colombia%20\(LL\).pdf](http://www.miscositas.com/Viva%20Colombia%20(LL).pdf)
- Article: “They’re Taking me to Marrakesh: A Seventh Grade French Class’s Fantasy Trip to Morocco” Morocco is an area of the French-speaking world that does not receive a great deal of attention in the traditional French-language curriculum. By participating in a “Moroccan Festival” students are enabled to “live” in this culture for a day. The unit surrounds students in language and culture in a unified context. Through the integration of geography, traditional literature, and music, a curriculum unit leads to the culminating activity. http://www.jstor.org/stable/399436?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents
- Article: “The Play’s the Thing: The Play’s the Thing - Suspension of disbelief and Simulations as a means of Connecting to Global Communities” – An exploration of the challenges in meeting the Communities standard in our schools and some concrete suggestions for leveraging role plays and simulations for bridging the gap and facilitating global connections in our language classrooms. http://languagemagazine.com/?page_id=122626

Other ideas for simulations

- **Paris Metro fantasy trip** (virtual visit to the Musée d’Orsay via a simulated subway and crêpe-making)
- **Mexican Independence Day** (students take role play leaders in the Revolution; recreation of *El Grito*)
- **Fantasy trip to Senegal** (simulated griot folktale presentation and West African *djembe* drumming)
- **Political Parties Simulation** (students create a name and identity, develop platforms, campaigns)
- **Immigration Simulation** (students play role of an applicant and make a case before an ICE “hearing”)