SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES

Communication in Real-Time: ESL Students' Perception of "TIME OUT" Role Play

Lee Keat Fong¹*, Ena Bhattacharyya¹ and Shahrina Md Nordin²

¹Department of Management and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS, 32610 Seri Iskandar, Perak Darul Ridzuan, Malaysia
²Project Management Office, Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS, 32610 Seri Iskandar, Perak Darul Ridzuan, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Many ESL students struggle with communicating English language orally. The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of a new role play technique which enhances speaking activities in the ESL classroom. "Time Out" role play provides students with opportunities to communicate freely and spontaneously in real-life situations. The researchers utilised a qualitative research design where 94 students (Form 4 and 5 classes) in a secondary school in Perak experienced this role play in classroom setting. Qual + qual mix-method was adopted where the dominant (big "Q") is observation and interview. The supplement (small "q") denotes grounded theory open coding. The data was collected from observations, open-ended questions and interviews with selected candidates. Three themes emerged which included influential experience learning, learning by force/compulsion and learning by observation. Role play is said to improve communication skills, enhance vocabulary and induce students for real-life communication. Time Out role play provides that opportunity for all students to communicate spontaneously within real-life like communicative situations. The result of this study indicates that Time-Out role play is successful in achieving the objectives set forth in the Oral Proficiency in English for Secondary Schools (OPS-English) and communication aspiration outlined in the National Education Blueprint (2013-2025).

Keywords: Communicative competence, communicative language teaching, communication skills, personal belief, real-life situation, role play

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia Employers Federation (MEF) states that more than 90% employers state the urgent need for graduates to improve their English proficiency in order to be employable. It has been reported that some fresh graduates, school leavers, and even diploma holders are unable to even construct proper sentences nor make themselves understood in a conversation during job interviews (The Star, 2017). The Education Ministry laments that students struggle and are unable to master communicating in English even after learning the language for 13 years at primary, secondary and matriculation levels…" (Hammim, 2011). The cruel reality of students who are unable to string together coherent sentences in English after 13 years of schooling, propels educators to examine the factors behind the said failure (Daily Express, 2015; Sani, 2016).

From the academia perspective, educators are of the opinion that remedial action needs to be addressed at the school level as university professors admit that they are unable to solve the said problem within the short stint of time that students are in the university (Sani, 2016). The spiraling problem of graduates' lack of communication skills is traced back to the foundation laid in English language proficiency classrooms in the formative school years, as this is where a longer period of engagement is available with the students.

In many ESL classrooms in Malaysia, there is limited access to the exposure of conversing and speaking English language in the classroom as many students do not usually obtain much exposure to the English-speaking environment and have limited practice of speaking in English. The students' lack of communicative ability is compounded by the fact that it is not compulsory for students to speak the language as it is merely one of the subjects within the national school curriculum. As a result, with the lack of English language speaking skills, the problem of social anxiety and low levels of interpersonal confidence is escalated.

Mansor and Hasan (2015) write, "in normal classroom teaching in Malaysia, much time is spent in teaching reading comprehension and writing. Activities for development of oral skills are still lacking" (p. 5). Reports also mention that although candidates score an A for written papers in the Malaysia National Examination (SPM), they may not qualify for an A score in spoken English (Lim, 2011). In view of the said gap, the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025) has initiated the Oral Proficiency in English for Secondary Schools (OPS-English) to improve the English oral and aural skills of Malaysian students.

Despite such efforts, one of the impending factors to enhance communication skills within an ESL classroom is due to time constraints. A single 40- minute session or double-period session will not necessarily create the motivation for students to form an English-speaking-environment. Over and

above such situational constraints, teachers in ESL classrooms are required to meet the target of adequate syllabus, besides the literature component class (Abate, 2015). In brief, the researchers decided to create a new form of role play to arouse students' interest; get everybody in the class to develop and execute the role-play dialogue at real-time within the allocated constraints. Studies indicate that classroom role play activities encourage student participation to speak English in such fun filled environment (Kumaran, 2010).

Despite such intentions, there are also other constraints that add challenges in carrying out such tasks. Studies indicate that not all teachers carry out role play as a speaking activity because of time constraints, low availability of role play materials and difficulty of class control. Abidin, Osman, and Hosseini (2012) indicated that one of the possible reasons for the lack of English language communication is due to the disparity in the socio-economic background. Students feel that they are not up to par in terms of socio-economic background and thus, this leads to passiveness. Secondly, childhood experiences that do not enhance positive self-efficacy, lack of positive encouragement, love and support from parents and society may contribute to students' feeling of inferiority and insecurity. Benabadji (2007) hints the problems of class management in role play arise when there is loss of class control where only a few students are involved in role play, and that minimal learning takes place when

all students do not interact spontaneously. Role plays are deemed challenging for low proficiency students. As such, ESL teachers need to overcome ESL students' lack of English language communication skills in the language classrooms.

To overcome this communicative problem among ESL students, role play can be used as an effective tool to help students regain confidence (Islam & Islam, 2012). In "Time Out" role play, the main focus is to develop communication and creative thinking skills for quick response. In other words, minimal studies are conducted on non-verbal gestures during communication such as emotions, expression and body language. Studies have indicated that ESL teachers and researchers face difficulty in conducting role play in classrooms even with advance level students. Among the various types of hindrance in role play includes difficulty and time constraint in writing an interesting script, obtaining good volunteers as actors/actress, encountering negative response in recruiting voluntary actors/actresses, redundancy in play (when the dialogue is forgotten), and also audience boredom (Altun, 2015). There is a need to create "a holistic approach that must start from students themselves to like, love and possess the right attitude and motivation in learning English"(Daily Express, 2015).

This study is aimed at utilising role play to create effective communication and engagement among ESL students in meaningful real-life communicative tasks. The purpose of this study is to examine the

effectiveness of "Time Out" role play in developing communication skills in similar real-life situations. The research questions posed in this study are:

1) How do ESL students perceive the use of "Time Out" role play tasks in the classroom?

2) In what ways do ESL students believe that "Time Out" role play facilitates real-life interaction outside the classroom?

3) How does "Time Out" role play improve English communication skills?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU), the think tank of Malaysia, has cited that 50 per cent of Malaysian students fail the 1119 paper or International English Examination (Sani, 2015). In addition, Abdul Samat (2016) states that the Malaysian educational system emphasizes more on reading and writing skills. This leads to less emphasis on the speaking component as schools aim to produce good results in the national examinations. Abdul Samat reveals that there is lack of novelty and authenticity in teaching speaking in Malaysian ESL classrooms. The challenge for teachers is to motivate students to speak, inculcate confidence in using the language, which aptly implies being fearless in making errors while communicating in English in the ESL classrooms.

In the pursuit of increasing oral proficiency in second language, it is acknowledged that Malaysian students are by nature introvert, shy and inexpressive. As such, their cultural background may have inadvertently hindered them to use English as they feel others may laugh at them for their pronunciation or lexical mistakes. This is validated in Condon and Ruth-Sahd (2013)'s study which observed student roles in traditional Asian culture to mainly sit quietly and take notes while the professor does all the talking with barely minimal participation in classroom discussions. The reasons for them to feel isolated is limited knowledge of English and also because they are non-native speakers (Idrus & Nazri, 2016).

To bridge the communicative gap and shyness among ESL students in speaking, the researchers referred to drama education and role play approaches in the ESL classroom research. Shokri and Philip (2014) conducted a study with drama activity for Malaysian pre-university students. The participants viewed drama experience as fun and beneficial to learn the language. Such method allowed participants to fully utilise the language when they were acting. The knowledge they acquired taught them how to resolve issues or problems in real-life situations and familiarise themselves with role-plays in the society. In fact, Abdul Samat (2016) studied the impact of process drama for ESL communicative ability which indicated the need for real life like situations via drama process to be engaged in using the language as opposed to learning English via the 'chalk and talk' technique.

Thus, the following discussion relates to the various studies on methods of instilling

interest in the use of role plays to create communicative competence in the ESL classroom. Among the suggested criteria include reference to i) "human touch" character traits, ii) real-life scenarios, iii) fitting roles for inclusiveness of all participants, iv) fair distribution of roles and lines with indicators, and v) process-oriented role play with social scenario.

Criteria 1: "Human Touch" Character Traits for Textbook Characters in Role Play

In ensuring the success of role-plays in ESL classrooms, DiNapoli (2009) tried to unite the social mindfulness instead of social stereotypes with the classic textbook characters to enhance non-fiction and literary appreciation values. Through this way, students were required to analyse the characters feelings, time, place, cultures and underlying meaning of the text, and apply logic and imagination to the scenes. Students had to relate to the characters. Among the list of questions to create such mindfulness included "Who am I? What are the circumstances?" and "What can I do to overcome the obstacles?" This means that students were required to add their own imaginations and humanise the characters from a text.

As predicted, the characters came alive when students could emotionally relate to the characters where the third person personae transformed into the first person singular characters with the use of their own imagination. This made the characters lively as there was less dependence on the

text. The drawback of this role play though, is that the character traits are fixed and students cannot speak freely on the topic.

According to Vives (2016), using task-based learning in role play can prove effective in providing real world meaningful authentic materials. In such a situation, students are provided with respective picture cards depicting emotions (picture card 1) and situations (picture card 2). For example, card 1 is an image of a person showing "guilty" and card 2 is an image of "cheating during a test". Student A will make sentences telling about his or her feelings of guilt and need advice of Student B. Student B plays the advisor role and the play engages both students in deeper cognitive processes. Though the topic is fixed, the students find the lesson to be fun and interactive as they can manipulate it freely.

Criteria 2: Real-Life Scenario Role Play

Liu and Ding (2009) state that the more realistic the characters and scenario, the better the flexibility expected of students in communication. For role plays to be effective, the scenario must provide flexibility to replicate real-life situations in order to engage students to communicate effectively and realistically. This criterion allows students to be able to relate to certain role play situations as there can be associated personal experiences witnessed or encountered by students in a certain role play. With such criteria, students will be able to relate closely as it would possibly mirror a personal experience.

According to Kuśnierek (2015), students only use English language in the class but hardly have any opportunities to practise it outside the classroom. There is no real-life communication in social contexts (language forms and functions) for them to apply proper conversational structures in different situations, with different people in rehearsals. On the other hand, role play provides the opportunity for students to communicate in typical real-life dialogue-based activities and some examples of such scenarios include situations like ordering food in a restaurant, greetings, asking for directions and booking holidays at a travel agent. Walsh (2015) state that role plays with real-life scenarios enable more "real" like emotions to be triggered and therefore, provide a more realistic challenge for students in different roles.

Criteria 3: Support Real-life Scenario Role Play with Inclusiveness: "A Character from All Members in Specific Group"

For Heyward (2010), a structured role play enables inclusiveness among all members as each has a role to play. His form of role play typically involves three to five key organisational groups who have vested interest in a controversial issue relevant to the course of study. Thus, a discussion may ensue on an educational issue where participants can take on different groups. Students could re-enact roles such as representatives for teachers' union, a parent lobby group, government education officials, or even act as university academics. Students are assigned to one of these organisational groups and informed that all members of the group take on the same collective identity. Group roles reduce the anxiety students often have about role play, as they feel supported by their fictional colleagues. The participants regard such drama experiences as meaningful, emotionally engaging, and safe. From the literature review, we can conclude that role play is more appealing to students, when it is related to real life situations, in order to make the scene more logical and pragmatic.

Kamerade (2011) conducted a group role play study (total of seven groups) who replicated a real-life situation in an organisation. One group will play "entrepreneurs" who come up with an idea. The other six groups represent six different organisational behaviours (approaches) that act as "consultants" who will interact with the entrepreneurs by answering questions with advice based on that particular school of thought. During the play, intensive debates see the workability of their advice which can be applied to the organisation to enhance active interaction. In brief, group role play boosts generation and interweaving of ideas into models of practicality and feasibility.

Criteria 4: Fair Distribution of Measurement in Role Play with Indicators

Gómez Vallejo (2016) states that:

> Accuracy and complexity should not be overemphasized as language output, but instead they should be

considered EFL learning goals. Role-playing makes students aware of their own learning, guiding them into more significant involvement in individual and collaborative work, and shaping them as participants in communicative interaction playing diverse roles (p. 85).

The results show compliance with "Time-Out" role play where participants are encouraged to speak and interact without further emphasis on fluency and complexity of language component.

Criteria 5: Process-Oriented Role Play with Social Scenario

Hsu (2009) analysed the reason why most teachers complain about the inconsistency between theory and the practice. The theory defines play as child-initiated activities based on children's interest and needs, nevertheless, teachers limit children's choices and freedom in the play. Broström (1996) created "frame play" where the teacher and learners get together to set the theme of the play, plot, setting and the content fields. This is to inspire the participants to be actively engaged to the play as they take up various job titles such as director, script writer and producer besides enacting the characters (Isenberg & Jalongo, 1997). Broström (1996) defined such social scenario role plays as one associated to "process-like play", the goal is to cultivate learners' initiatives in the activities. In brief, the process is more important than the outcomes. In this context, "Time-Out" is a free expression role play which promotes learning socially and intelligently as the participants can mingle in the conversation with creative ideas by refining the points produced by the previous participants, an added value to the preceding experience.

Critical Thinking Skills and HOTs (Higher Order Thinking Skills)

Dorothy, Alias and Siraj (2016) investigated the reasons why Malaysian students lack problem solving and higher order thinking skills. The findings revealed that teachers prefer teaching facts, and asking students to listen to teachers' explanation. The only problem-solving strategy teachers use is making analogies to similar problems. This is proven when students struggle to answer HOTs questions and are not exposed to thinking-based activities in Malaysian classrooms (Umar Baki, Rafik-Galea, & Nimehchisalem, 2016). Additionally, Zabidi and Rahman (2012) identified factors which influence the development of critical thinking skills in secondary school classrooms; are stimulus (the main theme), teacher's encouragement, motivation and student willingness to think critically.

Paideia (2015) defines critical thinking skills as people's ability to develop and express ideas that are: (a) clear: students learn to articulate ideas so that a listener or reader can readily understand what they mean. (b) coherent: students learn to make points that logically support each other. (c) sophisticated: students learn to acknowledge their own biases, consider other points of view, and synthesise multiple

perspectives as they develop their ideas. "Time-Out" role play is a tool to provide a communicative scenario to articulate ideas, hence developing critical thinking skills, apart from listening to other viewpoints.

Oral Proficiency in English for Secondary Schools (OPS-English) Programme

In line with in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2025), the Ministry of Education (MOE)'s English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC) implemented the OPS-English programme in 2013. ELTC published three teaching and learning materials namely, Teacher's Companion, Student's Handbook and Audio-Video CD (Hamzah & Cheang, 2016). The suggested teaching and learning activities were task-based whereas the content of the materials was theme-based, specifically related to students' everyday life. Hamzah and Cheang (2016) elaborated on some obstacles in OPS: (a) limited words and colorful pictures to stimulate students' cognitive ability to produce more spoken texts were incompatible for students with low English proficiency, (b) there were unpublished pilot studies in test-run of Ops by the Ministry of Education in 2012, (c) there was limited media room for the audio-video CD teaching activities, (d) students' familiarity with role play activities was based on the pictures rather than about their impressions on the pictures, and (e) there was limited teaching materials for Form One students whose level of proficiency equated that of preschoolers. Thus, the

two main problems faced were student's receptivity to pictures and video-tapes, and teachers who were unable to achieve their teaching objectives when students did not understand the lesson taught. However, Kaur Rajendra Singh, Kaur and Eng (2015) reported that OPS-English is able to improve students' vocabulary and enhance students' speaking ability through group discussions. In addition, Abdul Ghani and Nawi (2014) also propose drama techniques to be applied in the implementation of OPS-English.

The Benefits of Role Play in OPS-English and HOTs

The affective and cognitive domains of Bloom's Taxonomy higher-order thinking skills (HOTs) like analysis, prediction, comparison, and synthesis are shown in role play activities. According to Grose-Fifer (2017), role-play participants receive information, respond and evaluate judgements in affective domain, recall and understand information from peers, as well as analyse and create the role in cognitive domain.

Furthermore, role play, when integrated into social and emotional learning (SEL) will develop HOTs as the students need to process new information, deepen their understanding, and synthesise complex ideas quickly (Valdes, 2017). OPS-English allows students to build the students' vocabulary, provide non-threatening environment for speaking, create a supportive learning community and give every opportunity for students to speak the language. These components correspond to Valdes (2017)

view which states that role-plays must engage everyone in the class in all types of kinesthetic, auditory, visual, and tactile learning modalities.

Qual + qual Research Design

Janice M. Morse (2017, p. 6) writes, "Qual, the core findings usually provide the theoretical foundation of the results, with the supplementary findings (qual) providing complementary information". In such studies, the core project may be grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology, participant observation, or even semi-structured interviews and the supplemental component (qual) may be required to expand the perspective of the core component (Morse & Niehaus, 2009). This design is used when there is a need to obtain two different perspectives on the same phenomenon and when there are different levels of analyses with different research tools such as microanalysis from video tapes and observation field notes.

The reasons for using Qual + qual in this study are that grounded theory is masterful at describing change and emotions but phenomenology does it poorly, and that each method works at a particular level of analysis (Morse & Niehaus, 2009). In addition, thematic analysis is used most frequently in grounded theory studies which tries to explain the 'story' of each pattern, code and theme from all perspectives (Chapman, Hadfield, & Chapman, 2015). The qualitative content focuses on extracting categories from the data (Cho & Lee, 2014).

In this context, the researchers try to learn what occurs in the research setting (the classroom during the role play sessions) among research participants' on what learning is like (Sengstock, 2008). A deep explanation on how the role play enhances students' communication, with further investigation on "Time Out" role play which acts as a substantive theory, requires more detailed probing. The findings emerge from the action learning sessions.

The study was more inclined to grounded theory based on the assumptions that it fulfilled five criteria of the grounded theory: a) natural setting, b) absence of a theoretical framework, c) developing area of interest, d) study on social interactions and behaviour and, e) concept and data categorisation (Glaser, 1978; Goulding, 2002; Hoda, Noble, & Marshall, 2011; Tan, 2010)

In this study, the mix method research design comprises qualitative data for both the main and complementary data findings (Creswell, 2015). The dominant (big "Q") is observation and interview. The supplement (small "q") is the grounded theory initial/open coding. Data from the core and supplementary component are pooled to develop themes or key points. The researchers opt not to use the quantitative method as the qualitative findings are based on the respondents' behaviour and feelings at real time (Bazeley, 2012).

Priest, Roberts, and Woods (2002) state that grounded theory open coding involves breaking apart the data (a sentence or paragraph of speech and series of

questioning that leads to new discoveries in the data). In addition, Charmaz (2006) states the importance of analysing fragments of data-words, lines, segments, and incidents closely during the initial or open coding and the need to "adopt participants' feedback as in vivo codes" (p. 46). In view of the said learning activity, the researchers adopted the said research design to derive findings via open coding with in vivo data analysis approach, as words or phrases from the participants' own language act as codes for the study (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

METHODS

The respondents of this study comprised 94 students selected from Form Four and Form Five classes. There were two Form Five classes and one Form Four class. Students were from the Science, Technical and Vocational stream. The students were from three different classes, namely Form 5 Science 1 (5S1), Form 5 Vocational Technical (5VT) and Form 4 Science 2 (4S2).

Table 1
Demographic of class respondents

Class	Male	Female
5 S 1	14	19
5 V T	15	16
4 S 2	17	13
Max	1.29	1.32
Min	-0.32	-0.67

The two Form Five classes represent students who have been streamed as advance and intermediate level while the Form Four class is also an advance level class. The students had scored well in school examinations but rarely spoke English outside the classrooms. This is consistent with Swaran Singh, Samad, Hussin and Tajularipin (2015) study on Malaysian ESL teachers who found students to barely use English and only practised it during English class. This concurs with Yunus, Sulaiman, Kamarulzaman and Ishak (2013) who examined Malaysian gifted students' difficulties in English language learning, where speaking skill is deemed as the most difficult skill to learn.

In a 60-minute class, students would enact the said role plays in the first 40 minutes and the last 20 minutes would be used for students to answer an open-ended questionnaire. The experiment would take three 60-minute classes.

A "Time Out" Role Play Floor Plan

In this scenario, three roles enacted included characters such as the Diner, Manager and Waiter. The topic was "A Customer's Complaint in the Restaurant". The first three students from each group took part in the role play. They were speaking freely and were script free. When a character (for example, the Manager) floundered, and would like to opt to stop the role play, he or she would make a "Time Out" gesture.

This is when the following member from his or her group would 'jump in' and continue the role play. The flow of conversation was observed by the audience who were always ready to replace their team members anytime. The students had to be alert and attentive as they were required to adapt and adjust to the conversation in real-time. If the students lacked the right vocabulary, they would be assisted with relevant words or phrases. The floor plan is illustrated in Figure 1 as below.
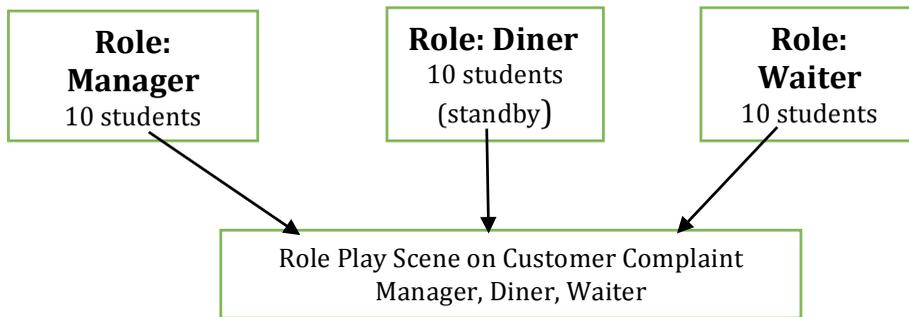

Figure 1. Floor plan of role play on customer complaint

Open-Ended Questions

After the role play, the participants were required to answer three open-ended questions as indicated in Table 2, in accordance with the research questions.

Table 2

Table 2
Open-ended questions according to research questions

Research question	Open-ended question
1) How do ESL students perceive the use of "Time Out" role play tasks in the classroom?	1) How do you feel about "Time Out" role play?
2) In what ways do ESL students believe that "Time Out" role play facilitates real-life interaction outside the classroom?	2) Do you think "Time Out" role play helps you to deal with the problems in real-life situation? If "yes", how? If "no", why?
3) How does "Time Out" role play improve English communication skills?	3) Do you think "Time Out" role play helps you in English communication? If "yes", how? If "no", why?

Observation

The observation in this study refers to drawing upon the natural behaviour, direct responses, collaboration within the group as well as the tone of the participants in role play. The researchers observed that the students were very responsive in giving suggestions to members from their group

and answered back or responded creatively. There were encouraging responses from members of the group.

Some students would provide spontaneous and witty responses. Some even sneaked from behind and switched to different groups to play the characters. This was an unexpected observation. Some students turned to be playfully imposing when they could not stand the provocation and reprimand. The researchers would intervene when the students were off-topic. On one occasion, the diner insisted to meet the chef. This character was not planned. The researchers asked for volunteers to play the chef's role. Thus, enacting real-life like role play situations created the opportunity for students' creativity as they could relate to real-life experiences.

Semi-Structured Interview

After conducting open coding from the data pool obtained from the questionnaire, the researchers carried out a semi-structured interview with five selected students who had participated in the role play to gain further insights into the students' perceptions.

Open Coding

Glaser (1978) refers to two types of substantive codes mainly in vivo and analytic coding. He describes in vivo codes as capturing exactly what is going on in the incident (maintaining composure) and analytic codes as explaining theoretically what is happening (identifying maintenance). In-vivo code means that a code is directly mentioned by the participant which implies to only 'what is going on there' while grounded theory would seek to understand 'what is going on there and how' as it conceptualises the relationships among the generated concepts and categories (Tan, 2010).

Table 3
An example of open codes in time-out role play study

Quotations	Open codes	Categories	Code types
"I listen and add my own ideas."	generate ideas	Facilitate real-time interaction	in-vivo code

Adapted from Tan (2010, p. 104)

Findings and Discussion

The findings indicate that 52 students found the activity to be interesting. About 40 students felt that it was fun, and a total of 56 students revealed that it boosted their confidence and encouraged them to be brave to speak in public. Key points (repeated phrases) were derived from

each questionnaire. These key points were identified and marked for analysis and coding. In this context, the researchers renamed these key points as themes (refer to Table 4 and Table 5 for further details).

In Table 4, characters-in-play's observation notes are shown, pointing out how students worked with ESL lexical items and applied creative ideas to form hilarious dialogues during the communicative process.

Table 4
Students' role play communicative responses

No.	Theme	Responses of the role play characters (Manager, Diner, Waiter)	Notes
1	Interesting	1. Diner: My mother fell because your floor oily. 2. Manager: The air-conditioner was ok just now. 3. Manager: It is not our fault but TNB. 4. Diner: See you in court if no give refund. 5. Diner: Your food is too oily. I am old people cannot take oily food. 6. Diner: Your food made me want to vomit.	Drawing on evidence Use imagination to be a real nuisance Actively experimenting with the social and emotional roles of life
2	Funny/Knowing My Rights	1. Manager: Only you complain, no people complain. You see my restaurant got 36 tables. There are so many tables, why you sit here? 2. Waiter: You ordered half cooked steak. 3. Diner: I cut my steak. You see my plate all blood. 4. Diner: Do you know who I am? I am a lawyer? 5. Diner: Your waiter not answering. I called him many times	Hostile attitude Emotionally involved Provocation and talk back The experience of walking in someone else's shoes, which helps to teach moral and empathy for the society.
3	Quick response/ Real-life Experiences	1. Diner: Post your restaurant photo to Facebook and social media. 2. Diner: I want to see the chef. 3. Manager: I give you vouchers. 4. Waiter: I give you free desserts. 5. Waiter: I give you free fruits. 6. Manager: I give you 5 % discount but you must pay the GST.	Indicates potential consequences Demonstrates knowledge of reality The world of the classroom is broadened to include the outside world

In Table 5, an analysis is presented after grounded theory initial coding. It helped the researchers to come up with certain themes with in vivo coding method.

Table 5
Findings and coding analysis of "Time-Out" role play

	Coding category	Themes	Number of responses	Core ideas
1.	Use of "Time Out" role play	Interesting	52	Expressed thoughts using the English language
		Funny	40	Used as an approach in teaching real-time communication
		Enjoy, happy, fun	33	
		Training quick response	20	
		Exciting	13	
		Fresh and new	9	
		Nervous	3	
2.	Facilitate real-life interaction	Matching real-life experience	31	Developed communicative competence by expressing ideas
		Get ideas for quick response	41	
		Think faster	7	
		Know my rights	11	
		More prepared/get experience	40	
		Confident	37	
3.	Benefits of role play in improving students' communicative competence	Forced to speak English	35	Helped develop and improve speaking skills and self-confidence
		Brave to speak in public	19	
		Learn new vocabulary and sentences	34	
		Speak more fluently	46	

The students were more engaged in "Time Out" role play compared to conventional role play in groups, either with or without a script. On the other hand, they were more relaxed and uninhibited to express what they would like to. They were exposed to the social environment and knew their rights as a consumer. This is what adds on to English communication skills.

Role play boosted the self-confidence of participants, and was helpful for them to express their ideas. They were given the opportunity to talk in class and practise using the English language in some situations while observing proper use of grammar (Ampatuan & Jose, 2016). Thus, some of the responses provided by the characters on students' communicative responses via role play are indicated in Table 4.

Experiential Learning

The responses provided by the students indicated their knowledge to real-life situations as well as their possible real-life experiences. Most of them agreed that they had different and creative ideas while they observed and listened to their friends. This was a very active and lively brainstorming session which was limited to a meeting table.

Overcoming Anxiety

In traditional role play, students are quite nervous since they are required to be conscious of their body language, facial expression and speaking tone. Students tend to be passive and reject opportunities to perform in public. However, the role play situation permitted the shy and introvert students to change their attitude and behaviour towards communicating orally in English language. The students demonstrated very supportive involvement in this role play session.

Enhancing Creativity and Higher Order Thinking

Some students were creative in giving ideas. They related to the use of social media. The students told the manager that they would like to post their discontent on Facebook if they could not get a refund. One of them expressed that this was an experience similar to to a career in real life. Another student revealed that he was prepared and would be able to opt for a "win-win" situation in real life. One admitted that there was fear in creating an error but it was good to overcome fear and be brave and confident in expressing the intended idea. Five students learnt more ways to answer difficult questions to satisfy customers.

One student expressed that he was offended during the role play because the diner was quite loud and aggressive in the responses. Upon interviewing the student, feedback was provided on the function of a role play. The said student was not able to handle customer complaint and said that it was difficult to handle and tolerate people talking rudely as the character involved was a close friend.

Interview Findings

Based on the interview with selected students, the opinions expressed indicated that students were able to overcome their shyness in communicating, gained confidence in communicating effectively and were able to relate to real-life examples in such communicative situations.

The interview questions were:

1. What are the challenges you faced during the play? How do you overcome the problems?

2. What knowledge have you gained during the play and after the play?

3. How do you improve yourself so that you can perform better in the play?

Overcoming Shyness

According to Student A, the role play helped overcome shyness as one was required to express to the said situation. Student A stated, "I feel embarrassed to perform in the role play. I have no confidence to speak in English. However, after the role play, I gained experience, I will put in effort and invest time to learn how to speak English." For Student B, the task was engaging. Student B said, "I feel nervous when my friend asked some questions which was difficult to answer. After I got used to it, I think it is fun because I can communicate well in English with the other characters." This view is supported by Al-Mahrooqi and

Tabakow (2013) who believe that drama workshops are effective in overcoming shyness among ESL learners. Besides encouraging communication, such activities enable learners to become more outgoing and confident in using English language.

Gaining Confidence for Effective Communication

For Student C, the struggle to communicate was still apparent as there was a need for knowledge on the language system. Student C expressed, "I feel the role play is challenging as I have to link the ideas and words into proper sentences." As mentioned by Kuimova, Uzunboylu, Startseva, and Devyatova (2016) role play curbs common ESL problems such as low proficiency and foreign language learning anxiety. Role play clearly increases students' motivation and self-esteem as well as enhancing foreign language skills.

Associating to Real-Life Situations

Role plays enable students to associate to real-life situations. This is apparent for Student D, as the role-play reflected real life situations with real-life lessons like teamwork and team spirit when solving an issue. Student D stated, "It was a useful experience to me to play the role of manager. It feels like that of being a manager. I learn how to think of a win-win situation." On a similar note, role play enabled learners to develop their ability to enact situations which propelled their communicative skills (Kuśnierek, 2015).

Increase in Creativity in Expressions

In the case of Student E, role plays led to a surge of ideas through such a task. Student E said, "the role play activity gave me many ideas." Based on the responses of the activity, the students learnt how to handle critical situations by communicating the need for taking immediate action. The task allowed students to be engaged in meaningful and realistic communication. There was reference to the use of social media as a means of ensuring good service. Various creative ideas were expressed which reflected the effectiveness of real-time communicative event. The responses also indicated the benefits of such role play tasks in enhancing communicative competence in an otherwise relatively traditional classroom setting. Three viewed the task of role play as something new and challenged them to be more creative. As a type of communicative activity, role play is vital in helping the students to have meaningful and comprehensive interaction and provide an opportunity to practise fluency and accuracy while using the English language. Three students wished to have more activities on "Time Out" role play. To Fariselli, Ghini, and Freedman (2008), emotional intelligence is a developing ability and is likely that accumulated life experiences contribute to one's emotional quotient (EQ). "Time Out" role play enabled students to develop their EQ through the real-life experience.

CONCLUSION

The study has provided the opportunity to learn about the nature of L2 oral fluency and examine role play as one of the successful strategies for obtaining real-time responses with students. The role play permitted students to a) learn the ideas from friends and explore insightful knowledge to solve problems in the future, b) use a variety of new words and make less mistakes as the role play continues. This is because they learnt from other people's mistakes and received guidance from peers or teacher, and c) use their own experiences and peers' experiences to develop thinking skills in quick response. Role play helped build students' confidence to speak English through fun and innovative methods in learning English (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013b). The strategies generated higher order thinking skills (HOTs) as required in the National Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013a). Time-Out role play created a stress-free environment which allowed participants to value real-life experiences and be motivated to speak. Students learnt English in a fun way and practised real-time social interaction. Future research can investigate and validate the theory with different sample groups for verification and validation.

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