

THE APPLICATION OF ROLE-PLAY IN BUSINESS CULTURE COURSES

Nguyen Hoang Minh Duc⁽¹⁾

(1) Thu Dau Mot University

Corresponding author: ducnhm@tdmu.edu.vn

DOI: 10.37550/tdmu.EJS/2025.01.623

Article Info

Volume: 7

Issue: 1

March: 2025

Received: Dec. 23rd, 2024

Accepted: Feb. 25th, 2025

Page No: 205-219

Abstract

This study examines the use of Role-play in teaching business culture. The participants are 105 senior English majors at Thu Dau Mot University in Vietnam in the first semester of the 2024-2025 school year. This study investigates the perception of senior English majors toward the advantages and disadvantages of Role-play in the business culture courses and collects suggestions to improve this activity. One Questionnaire of Role-play is conducted at the end of the course to record the students' overall perceptions and suggestions towards the application of Role-play during their study. The results of the Questionnaire show that the students are strongly interested in the use of Role-play during their course.

Keywords: advantage, business culture, disadvantage, Role-play

1. Introduction

Business culture in Asia, British and American business culture, Mini-project: British and American work styles are the series of business culture courses in the curriculum for the third-year and fourth-year English-majored students in Institute of Foreign Language Training, Thu Dau Mot University in the 2024-2025 school year. The courses provide students with the knowledge to approach other cultures, helping students to communicate effectively in the age of globalization, especially in the global working environment. The writer is in charge of teaching these subjects.

Presentation was applied as a method to take mid-term results of the business courses in previous semesters. Role-play is the alternative activity for presentation from the 2024-2025 school year. The writer would like to change the activity because, to her, presentation consumes too much time and she has little time for lectures. She hopes the role-play consumes less class time than presentation but achieves more benefits. This is the main reason for this study.

The description of the Role-play activity

The students are required to demonstrate a 5-minute role-play highlighting ONE difference in one BUSINESS aspect between one particular country and Vietnam and explain the difference(s) via the role-play from the third week of the course (2/9-8/9/2024). There are 4-5 students in a group and there are two role-plays in one lesson.

The groups will present their role-play on the assigned dates. However, related to the content of the role-play, they are able to choose the difference that they want to focus on during their role-play. This activity is introduced to the classes in the first week of the course (19/8/2024-25/8/2024).

The main research questions are:

What are the students' opinions about the application of role-play in business culture courses?

What are the students' suggestions to improve this activity?

This study is to discover the students' opinions about the use of role-play in teaching business culture courses at Thu Dau Mot University and to collect their suggestions to improve the effectiveness of the activity. This is to help the writer to improve the teaching effectiveness of this activity in these courses.

2. Literature Review

In this section, the writer briefly describes the definition of role-play, advantages and disadvantages of the activity and also displays the research gap.

2.1 The definition of role-play:

Role-play is a teaching method where participants assume specific roles in simulated scenarios to practice and understand real-life interactions or situations. In educational settings, it allows students to explore various perspectives, develop problem-solving skills, and apply theoretical knowledge in a controlled environment (González et al., 2020; Grande & Abella, 2020). Moreover, role-play is widely used in business education to help students engage with complex concepts like organizational behavior, culture, and communication by experiencing them firsthand in a collaborative and interactive way (Lacanienta, 2020).

2.2 Advantages of role-play:

Role-play in teaching and learning about business culture offers several benefits that enhance both understanding and application. There are five main advantages of using role-play in teaching, as follows:

1. **Enhanced Understanding of Cultural Norms:** Firstly, role-play allows students to actively engage in simulated business environments, which helps them internalize different cultural practices and norms. By acting out scenarios, students experience how cultural differences can influence business interactions (Shank et al., 2011).
2. **Development of Soft Skills:** Secondly, communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills are essential soft skills in business. Role-play encourages students to practice these soft skills in a low-risk environment, improving their ability to navigate real-life cultural challenges in the business world (Bolton & Heathcote, 1999).
3. **Promotion of Empathy and Perspective-Taking:** Thirdly, when students adopt roles from various cultural backgrounds, they gain empathy and understanding from the perspectives of others. This prepares students to work in diverse, multicultural business settings after graduation (Dörnyei, 2011).
4. **Increased Retention and Engagement:** Fourthly, role-play can increase student engagement and retention. By participating in dynamic activities, students are more

likely to remember key concepts about business etiquette and cultural differences compared to traditional lecture-based methods (Brown, 2007).

5. Practical Application of Theoretical Knowledge: Last but not least, role-play helps bridge the gap between theory and practice. Students apply their knowledge of business culture in realistic scenarios, which reinforces learning and provides valuable experience that can be transferred to actual business settings (Ladousse, 2004).

2.3 Challenges and disadvantages of Role-play:

Role-play in teaching and learning about business culture, while beneficial, also presents several challenges and disadvantages. These include:

1. Risk of Oversimplification: Role-play scenarios may oversimplify complex cultural dynamics. Business cultures are nuanced and involve deep-rooted beliefs, practices, and social systems that may not be fully captured in a brief exercise (Tompkins, 1998). This can lead to a superficial understanding of important cultural aspects.
2. Potential for Stereotyping: There is a risk that role-play can inadvertently reinforce cultural stereotypes if not carefully designed. Students may oversimplify cultural behaviors or reinforce misconceptions, leading to an inaccurate or biased view of a particular business culture (Hofstede, 2001).
3. Student Discomfort or Resistance: Some students may feel uncomfortable participating in role-play due to shyness, lack of confidence, or anxiety about making mistakes. This discomfort can hinder the learning process, as students may not fully engage or may focus more on their performance than on understanding the cultural content (Livingstone, 1983).
4. Time-Consuming: Developing and executing role-play activities can be time-consuming for both teachers and students. Planning realistic scenarios, preparing students, and facilitating discussions afterward require significant effort and time, which might detract from other important learning objectives (Davies, 1990).
5. Difficulty in Assessing Learning Outcomes: Assessing the effectiveness of role-playing activities can be challenging. It is often difficult to measure whether students have developed a deep understanding of business culture or whether they are merely performing within a role (Schwartzman, 2006). This makes it hard to evaluate the actual learning outcomes.

2.4 Previous studies:

Several studies from 2020 to 2024 highlight the effectiveness of using role-play in teaching business culture, focusing on experiential and interactive learning methods.

2.4.1 In the world:

Firstly, a study on Live Action Role-Play (LARP) (Lacanienta, 2020) was conducted with 40 university students in a business education setting. The study took place in the UK and employed a qualitative research method, where students participated in role-playing scenarios simulating real-world business challenges. The method aimed to assess the effectiveness of LARP in improving communication, decision-making, and understanding of business culture. The results showed that LARP significantly enhanced participants' critical thinking, teamwork, and cultural awareness, making it a valuable tool for teaching business concepts in an engaging, experiential manner.

Secondly, the 2020 study by González et al. involved 60 undergraduate business students in Spain. The researchers used a task-based role-play method where participants engaged in simulated business negotiations and cross-cultural communication scenarios. The method aimed to replicate real-world business interactions, focusing on cultural nuances and effective communication strategies. The data was collected through observations and post-activity reflections. The results indicated that task-based role-play significantly improved students' ability to understand business culture, negotiate effectively, and adapt to diverse cultural contexts in professional settings (González et al., 2020).

Lastly, the 2020 study by Grande and Abella involved 45 business management students in a Spanish university. The researchers used role-play to simulate organizational behavior and culture, where participants assumed roles such as managers and employees within a company. The study employed a qualitative approach, gathering data from participant reflections and instructor observations. The results demonstrated that role-play effectively enhanced students' understanding of organizational culture, leadership dynamics, and decision-making processes. Students gained practical insights into how culture influences behavior in business settings, improving their readiness for real-world corporate environments.

2.4.2 In Vietnam:

Recent studies in Vietnam have explored the effectiveness of role-play in enhancing communication skills among students.

Truong and Le (2022) conducted research at Nguyen Trai High School, Hanoi, Vietnam, focusing on 11th graders' perspectives on using role-play to improve speaking skills. The researchers employed a mixed-method approach, including classroom observations, role-play sessions, and pre- and post-tests on speaking skills. A survey was also administered to gather students' perspectives on role-play activities. Students showed significant improvement in speaking competence, particularly in fluency and confidence.

Dao (2024) also examined the impact of role-play activities on pragmatic competence among 100 English as a Second Language (ESL) learners at the University of Languages and International Studies, Hanoi, Vietnam. The study used a pre- and post-intervention design with role-play sessions integrated into the curriculum. The data was collected via surveys, role-play performance evaluations, and interviews. Students improved in pragmatic competence, such as understanding cultural norms and using polite forms of communication.

Additionally, Nguyen, H.M.P. (2023) investigated the use of role-play to enhance oral communication performance among 80 English-majored freshmen at Van Lang University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. A combination of role-play activities, oral tests, and a post-activity questionnaire was used to assess oral communication performance and gather student feedback. Students demonstrated notable improvements in oral communication performance, including pronunciation, clarity, and the ability to hold a structured conversation.

The studies above are mainly on oral communication or speaking skills, not focusing on business cultures.

2.5 Research gap:

These previous studies underscore that role-playing, when well-integrated into business education, is a dynamic and interactive way to help students grasp complex cultural and organizational concepts in a hands-on manner. However, there have been few studies of the application of role-play in business culture courses in Vietnam, especially in Thu Dau Mot University, in the last five years. This is the reason why the writer would like to do a small research on this topic.

3. Research Methodology

In this section, the writer briefly describes the research method, the participants, the research instrument, the data collection process and the data analysis method.

Research Method

The study employed a mixed approach to assure the validity and reliability of the research results. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used, based on the closed and open-ended questions in the questionnaire.

Participants

336 students who were following 8 business courses were the population of the study. 105 students out of 336 students gave responses.

Research Instrument

There are 15 questions in the questionnaire: 11 closed questions, which are about Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Role-Play, and 4 Open-Ended questions, which are about the experience and suggestions to improve the activity.

Data Collection

A questionnaire under Google Form was sent to the participants in the last lesson of the course (21/10-27/10/2024) to ask for their perceptions towards the Role-play activity. It took participants around 5-10 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Data Analysis Method

The writer uses Microsoft Excel to calculate the percentage and the mean of the collected data.

4. Results and Discussion

The writer received 105 responses in the last lesson of the course (21/10-27/10/2024). Only the students who were interested in the survey spent time thinking and answering the questions. This helped the survey get informative responses.

4.1 Research results:

4.1.1. Quantitative data

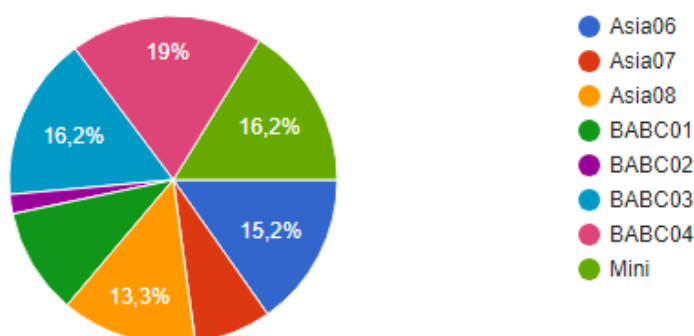
The writer received 105 responses from 8 different classes. Only the students who were really interested in the survey spent time thinking and answering the questionnaire. This helped the survey get the informative responses.

4.1.1.1 Background profile

Chart 1. Students' background profile

Class

105 câu trả lời



The above chart shows that the participants came from a variety of classes, in which the majority came from BABC04 (19%), followed by BABC01 and BABC03 (16.2%) and then Asia06 (15.2%)

4.1.1.2 Perceived Advantages of Role-Play

TABLE 1. Perceived Advantages of Role-Play

Questions	Options				Mean
Q02. Role-playing promotes understanding cultural norms and behaviors in business	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
	7.6%	1.0%	4.8%	51.4%	35.2%
Q03. Role-playing enhances the development of soft skills (e.g., communication, negotiation).	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
	7.6%	0.0%	9.5%	46.7%	36.2%
Q04. Role-playing increases your engagement and retention of cultural content.	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
	6.7%	1.0%	8.6%	47.6%	36.2%
Q05. Role-playing promotes empathy by allowing you to experience different perspectives.	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
	7.6%	0.0%	8.6%	47.6%	36.2%
Q06. How useful do you find role-playing in applying theoretical knowledge to real-world business scenarios	Not Useful at All	Not Very Useful	Neutral	Useful	Very Useful
	0%	0%	7.6%	57.1%	35.2%

Question 2: 37 out of 105 participants (35.2%) totally agreed and 54 out of 105 participants (51.4%) agreed, respectively, that Role-playing promotes understanding cultural norms and behaviors in business. The total mean of this item is 4.06, which is

slightly above 4 (Agree), indicating that, on average, respondents agree that role-playing helps them understand cultural norms and behaviors in a business context.

Question 3: The responses in the totally agree and agree sections accounted for 38 (36.2%) and 49 (46.7%), respectively, of the statement that Role-playing enhances the development of soft skills (e.g., communication, negotiation). The mean is 4.04, which is just above 4 (Agree), indicating that, on average, respondents agree that role-playing enhances the development of soft skills such as communication and negotiation.

Question 4: In terms of engagement and retention of cultural content, the percentages of respondents who totally agreed and agreed with the statement were 38 (36.2%) and 50 (47.6%) in that sequence. The mean of this item is 4.06, which is the same as item No. 02 (Role-playing promotes understanding cultural norms and behaviors in business). This suggests that the majority of participants believe that role-playing is an effective method for improving their understanding and memory of cultural content.

Question 5: In the statement that Role-playing promotes empathy, 38 students (36.2%) totally agreed and 50 students (47.6%) agreed while 7.6% totally disagreed and 0% disagreed, respectively. The mean value is 4.05. This suggests that, on average, most respondents agree that role-playing promotes empathy.

Question 6: Regarding the domain of applying theoretical knowledge to real-world business scenarios, the most remarkable statistic in the useful section is 57.1%. The mean of this item is 4.28, which accounted for the highest one in the domain of students' perceived advantages of Role-play. This suggests that, on average, most respondents find role-playing to be very useful for applying theoretical knowledge to real-world business scenarios.

In summary, the highest mean (4.28) proves that the majority of the participants think that role-play is useful. The other advantages have nearly the same mean, ranging from 4.04 to 4.06, which proves that most students agree with the suggested advantages.

4.1.1.3 Perceived Disadvantages of Role-Play

TABLE 2. Perceived Disadvantages of Role-Play

Questions	Options					Mean
Q07. Role-playing oversimplifies complex cultural dynamics	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree	
	8.6%	11.4%	36.2%	32.4%	11.4%	3.27
Q08. Role-playing can reinforce cultural stereotypes	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree	
	8.6%	5.7%	32.4%	38.1%	15.2%	3.46
Q09. Role-playing activities take up too much time in business culture courses.	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree	
	15.2%	20.0%	23.8%	30.5%	10.5%	3.15
Q10. Have you or others experienced discomfort or anxiety participating in role-play exercises?	No, never	Yes, sometimes	Yes, frequently			
	28.6%	54.3%	17.1%			1.89
Q11. How difficult do you find it to measure the learning outcomes from role-play activities?	Very Difficult	Difficult	Neutral	Easy	Very Easy	
	1.0%	13.3%	59.0%	21.9%	4.8%	2.84

Question 7: 38 students (36.2%) chose “neutral”, which is the highest percentage. The mean of this item is 3.27, which ranked the second highest in the domain of perceived disadvantages of Role-play. This suggests that, on average, respondents are somewhat neutral but slightly tend to agree that role-playing oversimplifies complex cultural dynamics.

Question 8: Around half of the respondents are on the positive side. 40 students (38.1%) agreed and 15.2% totally agreed that Role-playing can reinforce cultural stereotypes, followed by those who chose “neutral” (32.4%). The total mean is 3.46, which is between Neutral (3) and Agree (4), slightly leaning toward Agree, is the highest one in the domain of perceived disadvantages of Role-play.

Question 9: Regarding the statement that Role-playing activities take up too much time in business culture courses, 11 students (10.5%) totally agreed and 32 out of 105 students (30.5%) agreed whereas 15.2% totally disagreed and 20% disagreed. The mean of 3.15. The value being slightly above 3 indicates that, on average, respondents tend to agree that role-playing activities take up too much time in business culture courses.

Question 10: 57 students (54.3%) chose “Yes, sometimes” and 17.1% chose “Yes, frequently”. The mean of this item is 1.89. This is quite close to 2 (Yes, sometimes), indicating that some respondents experienced discomfort.

Question 11: The majority of the students (59%) chose “neutral”. The mean is 2.84 is close to Neutral (3) but slightly leaning towards “Easy”. This suggests that, on average, respondents find it neither particularly difficult nor particularly easy to measure the learning outcomes from role-play activities.

In summary, most items get the mean fluctuating around 3 (neutral), ranging from 2.84 to 3.27, showing that the students are unsure about the disadvantages of the role-play.

4.1.2. Qualitative data

4.1.2.1 Perceived Advantages of Role-Play

Question No.12: What do you find most beneficial about role-playing in business culture courses?

Based on the frequency count and thematic analysis, the most frequently mentioned benefits of role-playing in business culture courses are:

Cultural Awareness (Mentioned 20 times) and **Confidence and Practical Experience** (Mentioned 18 times) are the most frequently cited benefits, suggesting that learners value the opportunity to explore cultural differences in a practical, hands-on way. For example: *"It helps us understand better about different countries' culture and...", "Role-playing helps me apply what I learn practically, improving communication and problem-solving."*

Communication Skills (Mentioned 15 times) are also a significant benefit, highlighting the role of role-playing in enhancing real-world communication abilities such as *"Role-playing in business culture courses is highly beneficial for understanding American work styles. By acting out real-life scenarios, participants can explore typical communication methods...", "improves my speaking skill and helps me engage with real-life situations."*

Feedback and Reflection (Mentioned 5 times) might be less frequently mentioned but could still be crucial for learning and growth in the course, e.g. *"Role-play strengthens team dynamics by encouraging collaboration and trust."*

In summary, Cultural awareness and communication skills are seen as the primary benefits of role-playing in business culture courses, enabling students to experience diverse perspectives and improve their ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural settings. What is more, role-playing fosters teamwork, builds confidence, and provides a practical application of theory, making learning more engaging and memorable.

4.1.2.2 Perceived Disadvantages of Role-Play

Question No.13: What challenges or disadvantages have you encountered while participating in role-playing activities?

The data analysis of challenges or disadvantages encountered during role-playing activities reveals a variety of responses, grouped into common themes:

- 1. No Difficulties:** Several participants expressed that they did not face any difficulties or disadvantages in role-playing. These responses suggest that role-play is a positive and engaging method for many individuals. For example: "I did not meet any challenges while doing this", "There is no disadvantage", "No, I don't have challenges or disadvantages. Even that I think it is interesting and makes me focus on the lesson"
- 2. Anxiety and Nervousness:** A common challenge highlighted is anxiety or nervousness, especially when performing in front of others. This emotional reaction can hinder participation and affect the quality of the role-play experience. Participants mentioned feeling self-conscious, awkward, and afraid of judgment. For example, "I'm afraid to act in front of everyone", "We had to be a different person, it can be difficult when we change our thoughts to suit a role", "I struggled with shyness during the role-play. I found it difficult to project confidence or act naturally because I was so focused on how others and teachers might perceive me."
- 3. Memorization and Preparation:** Some participants noted that role-playing required significant preparation, including memorizing lines and acting out emotions. This can be overwhelming for those less comfortable with performance-based tasks. "It is difficult to do well when I am in a play", "I'm just afraid that I can't embody the character well", "I have to discover gestures or posture in other countries' culture. It's so difficult to remember. So I have to practice so much and learn by heart.", "I have to spend lots of time in writing script (including actions, saying, suitable background) and in practicing fluency.", "The only challenge I have faced is preparing for the situation", "I forgot the script", "The challenges may be in the setting of a story, it may cause a lot of time to design."
- 4. Unrealistic Scenarios:** A few participants mentioned that the scenarios felt artificial or staged, making it difficult to immerse themselves in the role and reduce the authenticity of the experience. "Personally, I think that Role-playing can sometimes feel artificial, hindering authentic learning experiences."
- 5. Group Dynamics:** Challenges such as unequal participation, dominant individuals, and group conflicts were common concerns. These issues can limit engagement and the overall effectiveness of the activity. "Different people have different ideas of setting up the role-play", "Conflict when teamwork", "Everyone's ability is not same as each other, so the team's score may cause bad results for people who work hard.", "Teamwork, especially when acting together", "Another challenge was that some of the students were irresponsible. They didn't fully prepare or take the task seriously, which made it harder for the rest of us to stay on track. Their lack of effort disrupted the flow of the role-play and forced the rest of the group to compensate for their lack of engagement."

6. Time Constraints: Several participants found time management to be an issue, both in terms of preparation and coordinating schedules with group members. This limited their ability to explore scenarios fully or practice effectively. For example: “A little bit difficult with time and schedule to make a role-play (managing time has a little problem)”, “Free time of all members in the group”, “it takes a lot of time to prepare”, “All team members have difficulty choosing a free time to practise a role play”

7. Cultural and Communication Barriers: Some participants found it difficult to adapt to new customs or cultures being portrayed, especially in international or business contexts. Language barriers and unfamiliar cultural nuances were highlighted as obstacles.” I’m not good at speaking E, so I think role play is a big challenge for me. Not only speak English, but also understand the business culture of that country.” “Meet difficulty in clarifying clearly between 2 cultures”

8. Reliability of Information: A few participants expressed concerns about the abundance of information available online and the difficulty in determining reliable sources, which affected the quality of their role-play preparation. For instance, “The information source on the website is abundant, which makes me feel confused about which one is reliable”

Overall, while many participants find role-playing to be engaging and effective, others face challenges like Anxiety and Nervousness, Memorization and Preparation, Unrealistic Scenarios, Group Dynamics, Time Constraints, Cultural and Communication Barriers, Reliability of Information that can hinder the learning experience. These issues highlight the need for careful facilitation, realistic scenarios, and supportive environments to maximize the benefits of role-play activities.

4.1.2.3 Suggestions to improve the Role-Play activity

Question No.14: How do you think role-playing could be improved to enhance its effectiveness in teaching business culture?

The responses focus on several common themes:

1. Realistic Scenarios: A significant number of responses advocate for scenarios that closely reflect actual business situations. This would make the role-play more relevant and practical, allowing participants to better connect the lessons to real-world experiences. Realistic scenarios also enhance engagement by making the activities feel more authentic.” These are some typical responses: “To improve role-playing in teaching business culture, scenarios should be realistic and relevant, with diverse roles to enhance empathy. Pre-activity preparation”, “Role-playing can be improved by creating structured scenarios that reflect real business situations, providing training for facilitators, incorporating diverse roles, and including debrief sessions for reflection.” “Incorporate real-world scenarios, provide clear objectives, and include feedback sessions to enhance learning and engagement.”, “To improve role-playing activities in teaching business culture, it is possible to create more realistic situations, encourage active participation, provide detailed feedback after each activity, and diversify roles to help employees understand different perspectives.”

2. Structured Feedback and Debriefing: Many participants emphasize the importance of immediate, constructive feedback following the role-play such as “After the role-playing activity, facilitate a debriefing session where students can discuss their experiences, share insights, and reflect on the key learning points”, “feedback for students

should be more detailed to help learners know the limitations of their role-play”, “Feedback: Provide immediate and constructive feedback during and after the role-play.”

3. Facilitator Training and Clear Guidance: Some participants suggest that better training for facilitators would improve the effectiveness of role-playing. Facilitators need to provide clear instructions, set objectives, and ensure that all participants understand their roles. This would help reduce anxiety and improve the overall quality of the role-play experience. For example, “The lecture should let students know exactly the requirement”, “Teachers should give students detailed instructions (including kind of business culture, posture and gesture, tone of voice)”, “Teachers should establish stricter and more precise guidelines from the start. For instance, they should have the authority to ask students for supplementary materials like PowerPoint presentations or specific dress codes. By setting more rigorous expectations for activities such as role-plays, students will be motivated to put in more effort. This approach will help students better understand what is required, ultimately leading to higher-quality work being produced for the teachers.”

4. Technological Integration: Some participants suggest using technology to create more immersive role-play experiences such as “I think it would be nice if the teacher mentioned that students could use PowerPoint as background when role-playing at the beginning of the class.”, “Maybe they could use music in the role-play.”

5. Participant Engagement and Motivation: To increase motivation, suggestions include making the role-play more fun and interactive, using quizzes to reinforce learning, and providing more opportunities for active participation such as “I think that after role-playing, the group should give the audience quiz to review and make sure that audience pay attention”.

6. Classroom Facilities: 2 participants mentioned the classroom facilities, as follows: “It would be great if school facilities can provide us more wireless microphones. (3 microphones each classroom)”, “I think the school provides 3 microphones in every class”.

7. Collaboration: one participant mentioned the collaboration between the institute and the other organization such as “Collaborate with schools or organizations in other countries to create opportunities for students to engage in cross-cultural role-playing activities.”

In summary, the data indicates that role-playing can be improved through realistic scenarios, feedback mechanisms, facilitator training, the use of technology, follow-up quizzes, classroom facilities and collaboration. These improvements would make role-playing a more effective tool for teaching business culture.

Question No.15: Do you think role-play should be a core part of business culture courses? Why or why not?

1. Positive Responses Supporting Role-Play as Core to Business Culture Courses

Out of the total 105 responses provided, 88 respondents (86.27%) expressed that role-playing should be a core part of business culture courses. Several themes emerged from their reasoning:

Experiential Learning (33 mentions): Respondents argued that role-play provides hands-on, practical experience, which helps learners apply theoretical knowledge in real-world scenarios. Examples include:

- “Yes, role-play should be core in business culture courses as it provides practical experience, improving communication and cultural understanding through real-life scenarios.”
- “Maybe yes, because students can access new situations almost like reality, so they can understand many business cultures”
- “Yes, role-playing should be a core part of business culture courses. Role-playing offers a hands-on approach to learning, allowing students to experience different cultural”
- “Yes. Because it's better for students to research to role-play, it's very practical”

Skill Development (28 mentions): Many believed that role-play fosters the development of critical business skills, including teamwork, communication, empathy, and problem-solving. Examples:

- "Role-play enhances the teamwork skill and helps practice business etiquette in real life."
- "It fosters essential skills like communication, empathy, and problem-solving by simulating real-world scenarios."
- “Yes, role-play should be core as it fosters practical skills, enhances understanding of cultural nuances, and encourages active participation.”
- “Yes, it enhances the teamwork skill and practice business etiquette in real life”

Engagement and Motivation (17 mentions): Respondents mentioned that role-play makes learning more engaging and enjoyable, keeping students motivated. Examples:

"It's more interesting and attractive than presentations, making lessons more engaging."

- Yes, role-playing should be a core part of business culture courses. Role-playing offers a hands-on approach to learning, allowing students to experience different cultures”
- “yes because it makes this course more interesting”
- “Yes, I think role play really should be a core part. Because it attracts the audience, makes the actor get into character, this subject is difficult so there needs to be good solutions to help students understand the lesson easily and role play is a very good idea. I even find it more interesting than traditional presentations.”
- “I think I should. Because Role -playing helps students to create situations, causing laughter in the audience. This makes the class happier and not boring. Students must work”

Cultural Understanding and Adaptability (15 mentions): Role-play was seen as a way to help students understand and navigate cultural differences in business contexts. Examples:

- "It fosters cultural sensitivity by allowing participants to experience different perspectives."
- “I think role-play is important because it brings a lot of cultural values that help students enhance their knowledge”
- “Yes, because it helps us to know more and clearer about the differences among the cultures”.

2. Negative Responses

While the majority supported role-play, 8 respondents (7.84%) disagreed with its core role in business culture courses. Some reasons included:

Time Consumption (3 mentions): Some students felt that role-play took up too much class time, which could be used for other activities.

- Example: "Maybe not, because it takes too much time."

Limitations in Scope (2 mentions): There was a concern that role-play could only cover a part of the business culture, leaving other important aspects unaddressed. Example:

- "It should not be the core. Theories are much more important."
- "No, because we just can role-play a part of business culture. Besides, there are some factors that make the audiences not have a deep understanding about what the group is role-playing about."

Challenges for Students (3 mentions): A few responses mentioned that role-playing could be difficult for introverted students or those not comfortable with acting.

- Example: "There are students who might be introverted or not good at acting, making it difficult to evaluate."

3. Neutral Responses

A small number of respondents (6%) expressed a neutral stance, noting that while role-play has its benefits, it should be balanced with other teaching methods.

Example: "It should be balanced with other approaches to maximize effectiveness."

In summary, most respondents support role-play as a valuable tool in business culture courses due to its hands-on approach, engagement, skill development, cultural understanding and adaptability benefits. However, some feel that it should not dominate the curriculum due to time constraints, scope limitations and challenges for certain learners.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 The students' opinions about the application of role-play in business culture courses:

From the collected data in Tables 1 and 2, the writer discovered that students had favorable views about the Role-play and they were unsure about the disadvantages of the role-play.

As to the advantages: (1) students generally agree that role-playing promotes understanding of cultural norms and behaviors in business; (2) students agree that role-playing enhances the development of soft skills such as communication and negotiation; (3) the majority of students believe that role-playing is an effective method for improving their understanding and memory of cultural material ; (4) most students agree that role-playing is an effective tool for promoting empathy; (5) most students find role-playing to be very useful for applying theoretical knowledge to real-world business scenarios. This is consistent with the findings of other earlier investigations, including Lacanienta, 2020; González et al., 2020; Grande and Abella (2020); Truong and Le (2022); Dao (2024).

Related to the disadvantages in Table 2, the writer has these following interpretations: (1) students are somewhat neutral but slightly tend to agree that role-playing oversimplifies complex cultural dynamics; (2) students are somewhat concerned that role-playing may reinforce cultural stereotypes, but the opinion isn't overwhelmingly strong; (3) some students experienced discomfort or anxiety during role-play exercises; (4) students tend to agree that role-playing activities take up too much time in business culture courses; (5) students find it neither particularly difficult nor particularly easy to measure the learning outcomes from role-play activities. These disadvantages may need further studies.

4.2.2 The students' suggestions to improve this activity:

To improve the Role-play activity, the students suggested the writer (1) provide realistic Scenarios, (2) give Structured Feedback and Debriefing after the role-play, (3) give Clear Guidance before the role-play, (4) require students to apply Technology in their role-play, (5) require role-players to prepare quiz for audience, (6) ask the Institute to improve Classroom Facilities, (7) ask the Institute to boost Collaboration with other organizations. Specifically, the writer, as a teacher, paid much attention to these suggestions:

- * Feedback for students should be more detailed to help learners know the limitations of their role-play.
- * Teachers should establish stricter and more precise guidelines from the start, e.g. PowerPoint presentations or specific dress codes
- * The group could use music in the role-play.
- * After role-playing, the group should give the audience a quiz to review and make sure that the audience pays attention.

5. Conclusion

Regarding perceived advantages of the role-play activity, role-playing is effective in promoting understanding of cultural norms and behaviors in business, enhancing the development of soft skills, such as communication and negotiation, effectively increasing engagement and retention of cultural content, and promoting empathy. It is also an effective method for applying theoretical knowledge to real-world business scenarios. Moreover, role-playing is seen as a worthwhile and manageable activity in terms of time investment. What is more, role-playing fosters teamwork, builds confidence, and provides a practical application of theory, making learning more engaging and memorable.

As to perceived disadvantages of the role-play activity, while many participants find role-playing to be engaging and effective, others face emotional, logistical, and group-related challenges that can hinder the learning experience. Therefore, role-playing can be improved through more realistic scenarios, clearer guidance, better feedback mechanisms, technological support, facilitator training, follow-up quizzes, better facilities, and outsource collaboration to enhance engagement. These improvements would make role-playing a more effective tool for teaching business culture.

References

- Bolton, G., & Heathcote, D. (1999). *So You Want to Use Role Play?* Trentham Books.
- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (5th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Dao, P. T. (2024). Enhancing pragmatic competence through role-play activities: A study with Vietnamese undergraduate ESL learners. *Proceedings of VietTESOL International Conference 2024*, 125-139.
- Davies, P. (1990). The use of role play in language teaching. *ELT Journal*, 44(4), 298-303.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2011). *Researching Complex Dynamic Systems in Applied Linguistics*. Cambridge University Press.
- González, C., Soloviera, Y., & Quintanar, L. (2020). Thematic role-playing games: Contributions to preschool development. *Advances in Latin American Psychology*, 32(2), 287-308. <https://doi.org/10.12804/apl32.2.2014.08>.
- Grande, M., & Abella, V. (2020). Role-play games in the classroom: Theory and practice in business education. *Theory of Education and Culture in the Information Society*, 11(3), 56-84. <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=201021093004>.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Lacanieta, A. (2020). Live action role-play as pedagogy for experiential learning. *SCHOLE: A Journal of Leisure Studies and Recreation Education*, 37(1,2), 70-76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1937156X.2020.1718035>.
- Ladousse, G. P. (2004). *Role Play*. Oxford University Press.
- Livingstone, C. (1983). *Role-play in Language Learning*. Longman.
- Nguyen, H. M. P. (2023). The use of drama role-playing in teaching English literature for English-majored students: An action research at Van Lang University. *Journal of Language Education and Research*, 20(2), 72-85.
- Schwartzman, H. B. (2006). Role play and simulation. *SAGE Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods*.
- Shank, R. C., Berman, T. R., & Macpherson, K. A. (2011). *Learning by Doing*. Addison-Wesley.
- Tompkins, P. K. (1998). Role playing/simulation. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 4(8).
- Truong, T., & Le, H. (2022). The impact of role-play on speaking skills among 11th-grade students: A case study at Nguyen Trai High School. *Journal of Educational Innovations*, 15(3), 45-59.