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USING ROLE-PLAYING METHODS IN TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION NAM CAO'S CHÍ PHÈO TO 11TH-GRADE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on applying the role-playing method as an effective teaching tool to help students gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the literary work. By stepping into the roles of characters such as Chi Pheo, Thi No, and Ba Kien, students not only engage with the storyline but also grasp the humanitarian values, social issues, and internal conflicts presented in the text. Role-playing enables students to express the emotions and thoughts of the characters through dialogue and actions, thereby fostering empathy, critical thinking, and communication skills. Moreover, by creating scenarios and analyzing the psychological development of characters, students are encouraged to develop creative thinking and problem-solving abilities. This method not only enhances lesson comprehension but also provides opportunities for students to cultivate essential life skills.

KEYWORDS: role-playing method, reading comprehension, Chi Pheo, students, grade 11

1. INTRODUCTION

The Resolution of the 8th Convention of the 11th Central Committee of Communist Party of Vietnam on fundamental and comprehensive innovation in education and training states: “Continue to strongly innovate teaching and learning methods towards modernization; promote the positivity, proactivity, creativity, and application of knowledge and skills by learners; overcome the one-sided, imposing, and rote memorization teaching style. Focus on teaching how to learn and think, encourage self-learning, and establish a foundation for learners to continuously update and renew their knowledge and skills, developing their competencies. Shift from classroom-focused learning to organizing diverse learning formats, with attention to social activities, extracurricular programs, and scientific research...” [2].

Among active teaching methods, role-playing is a suitable approach for the specific teaching and learning characteristics of Literature. This method allows students to practice expressing thoughts, feelings, and behaviors through assumed roles, helping them deeply reflect on an issue by viewing it from the perspective of someone involved and focusing on specific events observed from their roles.

The role-playing method is applied flexibly and diversely in reading comprehension lessons, especially with narrative texts in the Literature curriculum in general and the Grade 11 Literature program in particular. Various role-playing formats include: adopting the role of a character to retell a studied story, adapting a literary text into a stage script, handling hypothetical communication scenarios, and presenting issues or opinions from different perspectives.

This article is based on theoretical issues related to teaching Grade 11 Literature, active teaching methods, and the role-playing method to propose steps for teaching reading comprehension of the text “Chi Pheo” (excerpt - Nam Cao). These steps aim to help students gain a deeper understanding of the content, appreciate the psychological aspects and humanitarian values in the work, and develop critical thinking and communication skills.

2. The History of the Issue

The use of role-playing methods in teaching has garnered significant attention from educators and researchers. Notable works and authors in this field include:

Bhure, M., Welu, F., See, S., and Ota, M. K., in their study "The effort to enhance pupils' cognitive learning achievement using contextual teaching and learning approach", argued that the contextual teaching and learning (CTL) method can enhance students' cognitive learning achievement (CLA). This research was conducted with ten 4th-grade students at SDK Doreng. Quantitative data analysis was employed, using an 85% completion rate and a score of 65 as success criteria. Results revealed a significant improvement in both student and teacher activity from the first to the second cycle, with a 100% class completion rate achieved in the second cycle. The study recommends further application of CTL to improve CLA in the future [3, pp. 13–22].

Other studies exploring similar approaches include:

- Alabsi, T. A. (2016), "The effectiveness of role play strategy in teaching vocabulary," published in *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* [1, pp. 227–234].
- Khafidin, K. (2013), "Improving students' participation in speaking class through role play 80" (The case at grade XI of State Senior High School 1 Pemalang in the academic year of 2012/2013) [9, pp. 94–100].

In Vietnam, the issue of teaching reading comprehension of literary texts based on genre characteristics has been discussed extensively in numerous monographs on teaching methods by esteemed educators such as Dang Thai Mai, Phan Trong Luan, Tran Thanh Dam, Nguyen Thanh Hung, Truong Dinh, Tran Dinh Su, La Nham Thin, Nguyen Quang Ninh, among others. The monograph "Issues in Teaching Literary Works by Genre" by a group of authors including Tran Thanh Dam, Huynh Li, Hoang Nhu Mai, Phan Sy Tan, and Dam Gia Can directly addresses and identifies the importance of genre in teaching literature in high schools.

In the article "Reading Skills. Reading Comprehension as a Breakthrough in Literature Teaching Methods Today", Professor Tran Dinh Su wrote: "Reading comprehension is the most crucial stage because, through reading texts, we cultivate the ability to read and appreciate literature, nurturing noble thoughts, emotions, and character" [10]. This holds particular significance for teaching the comprehension of narrative texts in the current Grade 11 Literature curriculum.

Professor Nguyen Thanh Hung has conducted numerous studies and written various articles delving into reading comprehension, laying the foundation for research in this area. At the scientific conference on the pilot curriculum and textbooks held in September 2001 in Hanoi, his paper "Teaching Reading Comprehension: Building Cultural Foundations for Readers" emphasized: "Reading literature contributes to the education of cultured individuals. Reading literature not only enriches artistic experiences but also enhances scientific understanding. Reading comprehension is the process of mastering and developing linguistic capabilities and the meanings associated with human development and personality improvement"[8].

The significance of reading was further reinforced by Professor Nguyen Thanh Hung, who asserted: "Reading is regarded as a cultural competency that plays a fundamental role in personality development, as much of modern knowledge is imparted through student reading" [8].

In the 2018 training materials for secondary school management and teaching staff (Phase 2 of the Education Development Program) issued by the Ministry of Education and Training, guidance on the role-playing method is provided. This method includes: adopting the role of a character to retell a studied story; adapting a literary text into a stage script; handling a hypothetical communication scenario; and presenting an issue or opinion from different perspectives.

Role-playing helps students practice essential communication and behavioral skills in a safe environment before applying them in real-life situations. It fosters interest and engagement, allowing students to express emotions and develop communication skills. Furthermore, it encourages creativity, providing opportunities for students to showcase their imaginative thinking. The method also promotes positive behavioral and attitudinal changes in students.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The article employs theoretical research methods, observation, and an analysis of the use of role-playing in teaching the reading comprehension of the literary text "Chi Pheo" (Nam Cao) to Grade 11 students. It also proposes solutions for applying the role-playing method in teaching the comprehension of narrative texts.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Some Theoretical Issues about Teaching the Role-Playing Teaching Method in Reading Comprehension of Narrative Text

4.1.1. Definition

According to the Vietnamese Dictionary, role-playing is defined as “portraying a character in a script on stage or screen through realistic actions and speech”. In teaching, role-playing refers to an interactive method involving teachers, students, and the learning environment. It enables students to assume roles to address real-world situations. This method requires teachers to create scripts, assign roles, and guide students in performing, aiming to develop their cognition, attitudes, and life skills.

Various perspectives on role-playing agree that it is a teaching method combining dramatization with immersion, allowing students to experience and derive lessons. However, role-playing is not merely acting; it also includes post-performance discussions to deepen understanding and insights.

Notably, role-playing is not confined to dialogues; it can also include monologues or non-verbal actions. This method is particularly suitable for social sciences, helping students develop empathy, communication, and problem-solving skills. It fosters flexible and creative thinking, bridging knowledge with real-life applications.

4.1.2. Objectives of Using the Role-Playing Method in Teaching Comprehension of Narrative Text

The purposes of employing role-playing in teaching comprehension of narrative text include:

- Enhancing active participation of students.
- Developing reading comprehension skills.
- Improving language and communication skills.
- Encouraging creativity and imagination.
- Building social and teamwork skills.
- Boosting self-confidence.
- Gaining deeper understanding of the text.

4.1.3. Classification of Role-Playing Methods

Role-playing methods can be categorized into various types and forms of instructional organization.

The classification is based on the following criteria and approaches:

- Based on the criteria of preparation time, there are direct role-playing in the same lesson and role-playing with preparation at home.
- Based on the requirement to grasp knowledge and learning objectives, there are the following types: reenactment and memorization role-playing; inferential and developmental role-playing; and connection and application role-playing.
- Based on the criteria of interaction between students and students, students and teachers during the implementation process, there are the following forms: Independent role-playing; Group role-playing.
- Based on the content of the lesson, there are the following forms of role-playing: Role-playing with the same topic, subject; Role-playing with different topics, subjects.

4.1.4. Advantages and Limitations of the Role-Playing Method

+ Advantages: 1/ Enables students to practice communication skills and express their attitudes in a safe environment before applying them in real-world scenarios; 2/ Captures students' attention, stimulates interest, and encourages active exploration of knowledge, thereby improving learning outcomes; 3/ Promotes positive changes in attitudes and behaviors, enhances problem-solving skills, and fosters creative handling of situations; 4/ Reflects the impact of words and actions through roles, allowing observers to evaluate and recognize appropriateness or inappropriateness. 5/ Develops creative thinking, providing opportunities for students to showcase their abilities and talents in front of peers. 6/ Helps students overcome shyness, build confidence, and mature in communication and life skills.

+ Limitations: 1/ Students who do not fully understand their roles may produce undesirable results, potentially counterproductive; 2/ The absence of costumes or props may reduce the effectiveness and engagement of the lesson; 3/ Class discipline can be challenging to maintain if students are not well-managed during role-playing activities; 4/ After role-playing, it may be difficult to restore order in the classroom and refocus on subsequent teaching activities.

4.2. Some Solutions for Using the Role-Playing Method in Teaching Reading Comprehension of the “Chi Phèo” by Nam Cao.

4.2.1. Creating Hypothetical Situations from the Text

Teachers can construct scenarios to deepen students' understanding of the story and its characters. Key scenes, such as the encounter between Chi Pheo and Thi No or Chi Pheo's demand for redemption at Bá Kiến's house, can be dramatized. Students acting out these moments not only portray the characters' actions and dialogue but also explore their emotions. Teachers may also introduce creative variations, such as having students imagine Chi Pheo's life post-rejection or Thi No's inner conflict. These activities encourage critical thinking, empathy, and problem-solving skills.

4.2.2. Analyzing Characters through Performance

By assigning roles such as Chi Pheo, Ba Kien, and Thi No, students depict the characters' traits through dialogue and actions. Post-performance discussions help the class analyze these characters within the oppressive societal context. Such activities foster deeper comprehension of human suffering, humanitarian values, and critical thinking.

4.2.3. Creating Dialogues and Expanding Narratives

Students can write new dialogues or imagine alternative storylines. For instance, envisioning Thi No deciding to leave the village with Chi Pheo allows students to craft conversations reflecting the characters' aspirations. Performing these extensions enhances language skills, creativity, and appreciation of the narrative's moral themes.

4.2.4. Post-Performance Discussions

Teachers guide students to evaluate characters' actions and words after the performance, drawing lessons about humanity, tragedy, and the story's moral essence. Linking these insights to contemporary issues like social alienation and personal redemption fosters meaningful connections between literature and life.

4.2.5. Incorporating Costumes and Props

Simple props and costumes—like torn hats or rustic outfits—bring the village of Vu Dai to life and help students embody the characters more effectively. These elements enhance engagement, making lessons memorable while offering deeper insights into the story's setting and its societal issues.

4.2.6. Exploring Emotions through Characters

Role-playing allows students to express and explore the emotional landscapes of characters like Chi Pheo or Thi No. These performances facilitate a profound understanding of inner conflicts, aspirations, and despair, nurturing empathy and critical thinking while illuminating the story's humanitarian values.

4.3. Process of Applying the Role-Playing Method in Teaching Literature

4.3.1. Step 1: Assigning Tasks for Preparing the New Lesson

- The teacher divides the class into groups and suggests some topics/themes for role-playing. The preparation time and role-playing time for each group are clearly specified. The teacher can divide the groups based on the students' abilities and interests.
- The groups will discuss and prepare for the role-playing: assigning roles, setting the scene, learning the dialogue, how to portray the characters, rehearsing, etc.

Example: Reading "Chí Phèo" (excerpt – Nam Cao)

- The class is divided into 5 groups, and each group prepares a segment of the reading from "Chí Phèo" as follows:
 - + Group 1: Perform the scene where Chi Pheo appears, walking while shouting and frightening the villagers of Vu Dai.
 - + Group 2: Perform the scene where Chi Pheo causes trouble at Ba Kien's house.
 - + Group 3: Perform the scene the morning after Chi Pheo spends the night with Thi No.
 - + Group 4: Perform the scene where Thi No's aunt scolds her for associating with Chi Pheo.
 - + Group 5: Perform the scene where Chi Pheo goes to Ba Kien's house demanding "human decency".
- Preparation time: 10 days.
- Note for students: Students are free to be creative but must ensure the content aligns with the main plot.

4.3.2. Step 2: Student Presentation of Products – Discussion

- Students present their group products.
- The teacher guides the students to discuss the main content of the lesson raised from the products.

- Students discuss, comment, and evaluate.

Example: Reading "Chí Phèo" (excerpt – Nam Cao)

After the groups present their products, the teacher guides the students to discuss several issues:

- Do you agree with the ending of the story? Present your own opinion and justify your choice.
- Summarize some narrative perspectives in the performance scenes:
 - + Analyze the emotional development of Chi Pheo in each scene.
 - + How is the attitude towards Chi Pheo and Thi No reflected through the narrative perspective and the narrator's voice?
 - + How do the people of Vu Dai react to Chi Pheo's death?
 - + What is the significance of Chi Pheo's death?

4.3.3. Step 3: Consolidating Knowledge

The teacher consolidates the knowledge, guiding the students to summarize and synthesize the main issues of the lesson.

5. CONCLUSION

The role-playing method in teaching the reading comprehension of *Chí Phèo* by Nam Cao offers numerous benefits for 11th-grade students. By embodying the characters, students not only grasp the story's plot and events but also gain a profound understanding of the human values and social realities reflected in the text. This method particularly helps students develop empathy, critical thinking, and communication skills, as they practice expressing the emotions and thoughts of the characters through dialogue and actions. Furthermore, creating hypothetical scenarios and analyzing the psychological developments of the characters encourages students to nurture their creativity and problem-solving abilities. As a result, role-playing not only makes the lesson more vivid and engaging but also provides an opportunity for students to learn valuable lessons about humanity, the desire for goodness, and the struggles of life.

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