

Course
ENG-5101-1
English and Plays

English Language Arts



Introduction

Plays are part of a long-standing oral tradition. In cities, towns and schools across the country, theatre enthusiasts attend productions of musicals, mystery plays, and various comedic, dramatic or experimental works by established and lesser known playwrights. Many amateur theatre companies write their own plays, while improvisational theatre groups appear regularly in popular comedy festivals. Plays, in other words, continue to occupy a prominent role in our everyday life. When we explore the nuanced and aesthetic language characteristic of such texts, we develop our artistic appreciation and our interpretative abilities.

In this 25-hour course, the first of three courses in Secondary V (for which adult learners earn credits in language of instruction), adult learners participate in a variety of learning situations and activities to develop their ability to discuss and analyze plays. Although these texts belong primarily to the Narrative genre, whose social function is to depict human experiences and themes in an imaginative way and to stimulate an interpretive, reflective or affective response, they may contain persuasive, informative, explanatory and argumentative elements as well. (See the explanation on social functions and their corresponding genres in Chapter 1, Section 1.2.)

The course helps adult learners broaden their knowledge of the communication conventions used in plays. By the end of the course, adult learners will be able to apply this knowledge when they interpret plays and when they create and perform play scenes of their own.

Subject-Specific Competencies

Competencies are developed and demonstrated through the mobilization and effective use of various resources. Among these resources are language processes, strategies and textual and linguistic knowledge. The subject-specific competencies targeted in the course *English and Plays* are shaded in the table below.

Competencies	Key Features		
Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn (C1)	Develops resources for communicating orally and for learning	Interacts with others in different contexts	Interprets how speakers shape an oral message to create a relationship with the audience
Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts (C2)	Develops resources to make sense of various written, spoken and media texts	Extends understanding of various written, spoken and media texts	Interprets his/her relationship to the text and the context
Produces texts for personal and social purposes (C3)	Develops resources to produce written and media texts	Follows a process to produce written and media texts	Creates a relationship with his/her audience suitable to the text and context

Although only C1 and C2 are targeted in of this course, C3 is implicit as it complements the learning situations.

For more information on the subject-specific competencies, refer to the following sections:

- *Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn (C1)*, Chapter 3, Section 3.2
- *Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts (C2)*, Chapter 3, Section 3.3
- *Produces texts for personal and social purposes (C3)*, Chapter 3, Section 3.4

Processes and Strategies

Language processes are series of actions or operations that support competency development. In other words, they are important resources that adult learners may use to become more effective speakers, listeners, readers, viewers, writers or producers of texts. In all, there are four language processes (Research, Reading, Writing and Production); the processes suggested for this course are illustrated in the table below.

Processes	Phases
Research	Planning task at hand Mobilizing resources Reflecting on the resources employed to achieve the task
Reading	
Production	

Communication and learning strategies are actions, behaviours, steps and techniques that enable adult learners to overcome obstacles, attain goals and achieve success. They are additional resources that adult learners may use to become more effective speakers, listeners, readers, viewers, writers or producers of texts. The communication and learning strategies suggested for this course are illustrated in the table below.

Strategies	
Communication	Verbal and nonverbal Rhetorical Multimedia/production
Learning	Cognitive Activating prior knowledge Meaning-making Listening Reading/viewing Information-gathering Interpretation
	Socioaffective Feedback Collaborative
	Metacognitive Procedural Feedback Self-evaluation

Additional information on processes and strategies is provided in the following sections:

- Chapter 3, Section 3.5
- Appendix (Inventory of Strategies)

Cross-Curricular Competencies

The cross-curricular competencies are generic skills that can be developed and applied outside the school setting. They are developed in tandem with subject-specific competencies. Given the nature of the course *English and Plays*, the shaded cross-curricular competencies listed horizontally could easily be developed simultaneously with the shaded subject-specific competencies listed vertically. Since teachers have the option of choosing learning situations other than the ones suggested in this program, they may decide to develop cross-curricular competencies other than those shaded in the table below.

Cross-Curricular Competencies →			Exercises critical judgment	Uses creativity	Adopts effective work methods				Communicates appropriately
↓ Subject-Specific Competencies	Uses information	Solves problems				Uses ICT	Cooperates with others	Achieves his/her potential	
Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn			■	■	■				■
Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts			■	■	■				

For more information on the key features and manifestations of the cross-curricular competencies, refer to the Diversified Basic Education Program.

Subject-Specific Content

The subject-specific content includes knowledge and cultural references.

Knowledge

The prescribed textual and linguistic elements, necessary for the development of the competencies targeted in this course, are listed below in alphabetical order.

<p>Textual Elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ audience and communication context ✓ coherence and cohesion ✓ emotional/aesthetic/intellectual appeal of text ✓ literary elements (characterization; climax; conflict and resolution; dialogue; narrative point of view; plot; protagonist and antagonist; setting, symbolism, theme) ✓ main and supporting ideas ✓ methods of organization (e.g. analogy, cause/effect, chronological order, comparison/contrast, example, explanation, listing of ideas) ✓ social function(s) of text ✓ story development (clear beginning, middle and end; action propelled by a central conflict) ✓ sufficient vs. insufficient development of main ideas ✓ textual features of play scripts: title of play and author; cast of characters; italicized and/or bracketed stage directions; name of speaker preceding dialogue; acts and/or scenes ✓ theatrical elements (e.g. costumes, lighting, music, props, set design, sound effects)
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Linguistic Elements

- ✓ agreement (of person, subject and verb, verb tenses, pronoun and antecedent)
- ✓ body language (gestures/movements/facial expressions/eye contact)
- ✓ coordinators and subordinators
- ✓ language (connotative, neutral, aesthetic, figurative, colloquial)
- ✓ language devices (e.g. alliteration, assonance, irony, innuendo, metaphor, simile, oxymoron, paradox, repetition, hyperbole, understatement)
- ✓ language functions (contextualizing)
- ✓ language tone and register (style/level of language suitable to the context)
- ✓ oral communication features (voice tone, speed, volume, expression, emphasis, enunciation, pronunciation)
- ✓ syntax
- ✓ transition expression including time and sequence markers

Cultural References

In this course, teachers may decide to have adult learners explore the aesthetic aspect of culture by having them focus on the theatrical elements and dramatic devices common to staged plays. In this way, adult learners discover that elements and devices are designed to enhance the beauty or the artistic quality of a play.

For example, skilful playwrights and directors may intensify the aesthetic appeal of a play through the use of a visually striking set. They may add to the play's appeal by having actors use mime or dance movements or freeze like statues; alternatively, they may have the actors enter the theatre from behind the audience or have them sit in the audience and rise at a pivotal moment. Directors may also add to the symbolic dimension of a play or heighten the impact of a scene by projecting images on large screens above the stage. Lighting and music are also particularly effective in creating aesthetic effects, as are off-stage sounds such as drumbeats, gunshots, whispering, whistling, and so on. An echoing scream, a graceful sweep of the hand, an accusing finger, a falling feather—these are but a few of the countless dramatic devices used in plays.

By considering the rich variety of devices conventionally used in the world of theatre, adult learners become more aware of how these devices enhance the aesthetic, emotional or intellectual impact of a play. They also become more aware of the important social role that plays may serve. They discover that through the vehicles of art and beauty, plays can create a deep and lasting impression on an audience, one which may “dramatically” alter their thinking about the situation presented and even, in some cases, inspire them to take social action.

Alternatively, teachers may decide to focus on the sociological or the sociolinguistic aspect of culture. (See Chapter 4 for additional information on the three cultural aspects.)

Families of Learning Situations

The term “families of learning situations” refers to groupings of learning situations that vary in style and complexity but share some common characteristics. The family of learning situations targeted in this course is shaded in the table below.

Family of Learning Situations	
▶	Exploring and creating literary diversity
	Seeking and imparting information
	Developing and supporting a stance

Exploring is associated with the communication purposes of examining, discussing and sharing impressions and interpretations of plays that are read, viewed or listened to. **Creating** is associated with the communication purposes of writing/revising/adapting and presenting play scenes that re-enact actual or fictional events in aesthetic and imaginative ways.

Broad Areas of Learning

The table below illustrates the broad areas of learning. These five areas are selected on the basis of their importance to society. Each comprises an educational aim and focuses of development that help teachers delineate the knowledge that can be explored in specific learning situations.

Broad Areas of Learning →	Health and Well-Being	Career Planning and Entrepreneurship	Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities	Media Literacy	Citizenship and Community Life
Subject-Specific Competencies ↓					
Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn				■	
Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts				■	

As demonstrated in the chart above and the example of a learning situation below, Media Literacy is a broad area of learning well suited to this course.

When adult learners focus on Media Literacy, they may develop:

- an understanding of media representations of reality (e.g. an understanding of the elements of media language, an assessment of the aesthetic qualities of media productions)

Other broad areas of learning could also be selected to create different learning situations.

For more information on the broad areas of learning, their educational aim and focuses of development, refer to the Diversified Basic Education Program.

Example of a Learning Situation

Theatre Night at the Resort

In this learning situation, adult learners are presented with the following scenario:

You are vacationing at a resort. Usually after supper, the hotel entertainment staff puts on a music/dance/magic show for the guests. However, today as you are having breakfast in the dining area, you see an announcement that tonight's show will be a collaborative theatrical production organized by the guests at the resort. The staff has divided the guests into teams and posted the list of teams next to the announcement. Since the object of the activity is to help hotel guests become better acquainted, the members of each team do not know each other.

According to the instructions given by the hotel staff, at tonight's show, each team must present a short dramatic scene (no longer than 5 minutes) based on a children's story, a fairy tale, a classic tale or a scene from a famous play or film. The hotel staff has also offered to help the teams by supplying props and costumes for their scenes. You meet your team and prepare for the evening show.

End-of-Course Outcomes

By the end of the course, adult learners will be able to:

Discuss and analyze

- **a play script**
- **a live/filmed and an audio play**

When adult learners discuss and analyze a play script, they focus on its social function(s), target audience(s) and communication conventions and adopt a suitable reading stance. They identify textual features such as the presentation of the play's title, author, cast of characters, dialogue (and possibly production notes from the playwright), as well as the division of the play into acts/scenes.

They examine the italicized and/or bracketed stage directions and the information provided on the setting, set design, stage props, lighting, music, sound effects and the actors' appearance, movements, gestures, emotions or expressions. They discuss how the stage directions help readers

contextualize and follow the action of the play. They also discuss the fact that reading a play requires imagination because readers can neither see the setting/actors nor hear the actors' voices. (Ideally, to enrich their discussions, adult learners read the scenes in the script aloud after reading them silently.)

When adult learners discuss and analyze a live/filmed and an audio play, they focus on each play's social function(s), target audience(s) and communication conventions. In the case of a live/filmed play, adult learners discuss the impact of dramatic techniques such as the actors' gestures, movements and voice tones, as well as theatrical elements such as costumes, lighting, music, props, set design and sound effects. In the case of an audio play, adult learners discuss the need to distinguish between the voices and speaking styles of the actors, since the setting and actors are not visible. Adult learners identify the sound effects used in the audio play and analyze how these intensify the action and compensate for the lack of visual clues.

In addition, for each of the play texts selected, adult learners do any necessary research on the setting or social/historical context. They discuss how the research information affects their understanding of the play's characters and events. They analyze the play's literary elements: the antagonist and protagonist; central plot and climax; characterization: descriptions/roles/relationships/reactions/traits of main and minor characters; dialogue; internal/external conflicts and their resolution; main/minor themes; setting and symbols. Adult learners construct interpretations of the main characters, events, themes and symbols by reading between the lines, analyzing language choices, making links between key passages, drawing conclusions and drawing upon their personal observations and experiences. They also base their interpretations on the action in the play, the various theatrical elements used, and the actors' voice tones, gestures, etc. They provide relevant and sufficiently detailed supporting evidence for their interpretations. They also discuss the language style of the characters and identify some examples of aesthetic and possibly colloquial language, as well as examples of language devices such as humour, hyperbole, irony, innuendo, metaphor and sarcasm.

Adult learners analyze the possible impact of the play's language/language devices on the emotions, imagination and intellect of the audience. Lastly, if a narrator is included, they discuss his/her role in helping the audience better understand the play. They evaluate some persuasive, argumentative, explanatory or informative elements in each play examined.

Produce

- **a script for a play scene**

When adult learners produce a script for a play scene, they may do so individually or collaboratively. This means they may produce a script for a dramatic monologue or for a two-to-four person scene. They base their scene on the characters and events in one of the plays discussed in class and, to achieve continuity and credibility, they include relevant material from the play's earlier scenes or acts. Basically, adult learners write a new ending or final scene for the selected play and new dialogue for the characters. This final scene is propelled by some sort of conflict and therefore

exhibits dramatic tension or rising and falling action. Adult learners present their script in a suitable form, i.e. they include the title of the play, the number of the act/scene and the names of the cast members and corresponding characters. They also include stage directions detailing the setting, lighting, props, and actors' appearance/movements/gestures/emotions, and so on.

The writing in the script is not formally evaluated; it simply serves as preparation for the oral presentation of the play scene, which is explained below.

Present orally

- **a live/recorded play scene**

Adult learners present a scene based on the script they have written for a dramatic monologue or a two-to-four person scene. If they present a live or filmed performance of their play scene, they use theatrical elements such as costumes, props, set design, lighting, music, as well as dramatic techniques such as movements, gestures and facial expressions. If adult learners produce an audio play (scene), they incorporate some sound effects. In live, filmed and audio play scenes alike, adult learners use various oral communication devices such as varied voice tone, speed, volume, expression, emphasis; clear enunciation; and silences. They deliver their play scene as a performance text and not as a reading. At the end of their scene, they answer questions from the audience about the characters, action and dialogue in their scene, as well as various production decisions they made.

Adult learners are evaluated on the effectiveness of their oral communication, the credibility of their dramatic scene and the quality of its content and presentation. They are not evaluated on the technical or production aspects of their scene.

Text length: 3-5 minutes for dramatic monologues; **6-8 minutes** for groups of two to four

Communication context: familiar or unfamiliar audience; informal or formal tone and register suitable to the text type and target audience

Teachers need to ensure that adult learners use planning tools, such as brainstorming, lists, outlines, storyboards, discussions and rehearsing as they begin creating their texts. Teachers also need to ensure that adult learners actively reflect on how successfully they communicated their intended message in the texts they created. For example, adult learners may use self-evaluation checklists or participate in feedback discussions to appraise how clearly they conveyed their dramatic interpretation of a play in the scenes they produced, as well as to appraise how effectively they used various learning and communication strategies. Learners may use the same type of evaluation tools to reflect on what they learned as a result of discussing and creating these texts.

Evaluation Criteria for the Competencies Targeted by the Course

Competencies	Evaluation Criteria
Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn (C1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication of ideas • Effective communication for learning • Appropriate use of language conventions
Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts (C2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coherent construction of meaning from texts • Demonstration of understanding contextual connections • Thorough comprehension of structures and features of texts • Critical interpretation of texts