

Act It Out: Using Drama Techniques to Cultivate Creative EFL Classroom Environments

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What will we do in this workshop?

- You will...
 - Identify the benefits of using drama activities in language classes
 - Participate in a variety of drama activities
 - Discuss how to use the activities in your own classes
 - Learn about further resources for finding drama activities



What is a drama activity?

- Based on techniques used by actors in their training
- Draws upon natural abilities of humans to mimic, gesture, express themselves
- Students are the source material (their lives, their knowledge and experiences)
- Integrates physical expression and emotion with language
- Imaginative and creative

(Maley and Duff, 2005)



What are the benefits of drama activities?

- Here's what my students said:

- *Improves speaking skills*
- *Helps us use language in different contexts*
- *Turns learning into fun*
- *Reduces student's anxiety*
- *Increases self-confidence*
- *Increases students' self-awareness and empathy*
- *Motivates students*
- *Increases social interaction*
- *Develops understanding of social situations*
- *Improves student-teacher relationships*
- *Creates a bonded group*
- *Makes learning active*
- *Improves body language*
- *Makes students more imaginative*
- *Topics become easier to remember*
- *Increases vocab*
- *Can be low-tech and low-resource*



What are the benefits of drama activities?

- Here's what TESOL/EFL/ESL/ELT researchers say:

“a statistically significant **decrease was found in the language anxiety levels** of students who participated in the creative drama programme” (Sağlamel and Kayaoğlu, 2013, p. 377).

“Drama places the learners in situations that seem real. Learners use the target language for specific purposes, **language is more easily internalized** and, therefore, language is remembered” (Gasparro and Falletta, 1994, p. 5).

“[Students reported] more speaking opportunities, **gained confidence**, were more comfortable and therefore found it **easier to speak...**” (p. 37).

“Drama offers ample opportunities to explore nuances of the foreign culture as well as conflict situations and emotions which are seldom encountered in textbook dialogues and material, thus **opening up to the students a world which is often denied to them** in the foreign language classroom” (Cunico, 2005, p. 21).



Types of drama activities

- Non-verbal activities
- Observation activities
- Activities Engaging Imagination
- Working with Text
- Working with Objects
- Working with Visuals
- Miming
- Voicework



This is not a _____, this is a _____. (*Imagination*)

1

1. Stand in a circle with a group of about 8-12 people.
2. The teacher will hand each group an object, such as a piece of paper.
 - Note: The object can be anything, such as: a piece of paper, a paper clip, a ribbon, a bag, a marker, a rubber band, a computer cable.
3. Pass around the object. When you receive the object, say: "This is not a piece of paper, this is a _____."
 - Use your imagination to fill in the blank.
 - Give a gesture to accompany your imagined object.



Let's try it!

1

- Stand in a circle with a small group.
- Pass your piece of paper around the group.
- When you receive the paper, say:
 - “This is not a piece of paper, this is a _____ .”
 - Use your imagination to fill in the blank.
 - Give a gesture to accompany your imagined object.



Evaluation

1

With your small group, talk about:

- Levels
- Language Features
- Variations
- Application to your (future) courses
- Challenges



Back-to-back (*Observation*)

2

1. Work in pairs. Observe your partner for two minutes.
2. After two minutes, stand back-to-back, facing away from each other.
3. Each person takes a turn to describe your partner's appearance.
4. As you are being described, you can ask for more detailed descriptions.
Ex: A: You're wearing a necklace. B: Yes; what is it made of?
5. When each partner takes their turn describing, turn to face each other and evaluate your accuracy.



Source: Science Museum Group Collection

(Maley and Duff, 2005)



Let's try it!

2

- Find a partner.
- You'll have ONE minute to carefully observe each other.
- After one minute, stand back-to-back and take turns describing each other.
- Remember, the person being described can ask for more details!



With your partner or a small group, talk about:

- Levels
- Language Features
- Variations
- Application to your (future) courses
- Challenges



Playing with Text *(Working with Text)*

3

1. Work in groups of about 4-5 people. The teacher provides a short monologue (text from a play) to read out loud.
2. With your groupmates, read the text in the following unique ways:
 - a. Take turns reading sentences.
 - b. Take turns reading sentences. When each person comes to a punctuation mark (. , ! ?) add a movement.
 - c. Take turns speaking alternate words. Try to keep a normal pace.
 - d. Take turns speaking alternate words. Try to speak as fast as you can.

Because of its condensed proportions and the compact forms Trola space is essential. But different reading modes (continuous, fragmented, variable speed, in movement, etc.) require typefaces with specific characteristics. The letterforms should be adjusted to the different optical sizes, not just in their form, but also in the spacing. It is because of this need that Trola Text is created. Trola Text's specific adjustments for small sizes complement the range of uses of the Trola family, but still it is a font with enough personality to be used independently in text for continued reading.

Trola Text characteristics result in a somewhat crisp texture, with an increased contrast, and a high level of legibility. Proportions in Trola Text are noticeably wider, particularly in the upper case, but also the serifs have been simplified, their construction is more robust, and the shapes are totally straight. White space becomes more prominent through a generous spacing and letter forms with larger aperture. A little increase in the curves tension in every character and a slight flare in the strokes, particularly evident in the diagonal shapes, add a pinch of warmth. Additionally, the lowercase had some inclination to the right, increasing the speed of reading in continuous readings.

Jordi Embodas
<https://www.behance.net/gallery/19994459/Trola-Text-Type-Family>

Adapted from Maley and Duff (2005)



Let's try it!

- Form a group of 4 or 5.
- Take turns reading the text in the following ways:
 - a. Take turns reading sentences “popcorn” style.
 - b. Take turns reading sentences. When each person comes to a punctuation mark (. , ! ?) add a movement.
 - c. Take turns speaking alternate words. Try to keep a normal pace.
 - d. Take turns speaking alternate words. Try to speak as fast as you can.
- Pick your favorite to demonstrate for the larger group.



Let's try it!

3

Monologue (from *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller)

I was fast asleep, and... Remember the way he used to fly low past the house when he was in training? When we used to see his face in the cockpit going by? That's the way I saw him. Only high up. Way, way up, where the clouds are. He was so read I could reach out and touch him. And suddenly he started to fall. And crying, cryin to me ... Mom, Mom! I could hear him like he was in the room. Mom! ... It was his voice! If I could touch him I knew I could stop him, if I could only...I woke up and it was so funny – The wind... It was like the roaring of his engine. I came out here... I must've been half asleep.

Techniques to Try:

- a. Take turns reading sentences "popcorn" style.
- b. Take turns reading sentences. When each person comes to a punctuation mark (. , ! ?) add a movement.
- c. Take turns speaking alternate words. Try to keep a normal pace.
- d. Take turns speaking alternate words. Try to speak as fast as you can.



With your small group, talk about:

- Levels
- Language Features
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Color/Advance (*Imagination*)

4

1. Work in pairs. One person is A and the other person is B.
2. Person A will tell a story. At anytime during Person A's storytelling, Person B can say 'color' or 'advance.'
 - 'Color' indicates Person A to add details to the story (description, adjectives).
 - 'Advance' indicates Person A to further the plot of the story.
3. Person B alternates between saying 'color' and 'advance.' Person A must continue adding more details until person B says 'advance.' Likewise, they must continue advancing the plot until B says 'color.'



Let's try it!

4

- Find a partner. The taller partner is Person A.
- Person A, tell a story based on this theme: the Black Sea (the story can be real or made up or a mix of both!)
- Person B, alternate between saying 'color' (add more details) and 'advance' (further the plot).



With your small group, talk about:

- Levels
- Language Features
- Variations
- Application to your (future) courses
- Challenges



Resources for Drama Activities

- Books:

Burke, A. F., & O'Sullivan, J. (2002). *Stage by stage: A handbook for using drama in the second language classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Maley, A., & Duff, A. (2005). *Drama techniques: A resource book of communication activities for language teachers*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

- Websites:

“Drama Resource: Drama Games” <https://dramaresource.com/drama-games/>

“English Language Teaching and Drama” by Richard Silberg <https://richardsilberg.com>

- For more resources about teaching and learning English: americanenglish.state.gov





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Thank you!

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For more resources about teaching and learning English: americanenglish.state.gov



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