

Introduction

In these drama pages, there are two activity types. The first is *Theatre Games*, where a range of different games can be exploited in order to get the students moving and speaking in English. The second is *Mini Dialogues*, where students are encouraged to read and act out simple conversations in English using different acting techniques.

Theatre Games

There are many theatre games that can be adapted for use in the language classroom. Their primary aim is to involve the whole body in the act of communication. By moving, making gestures and using the other senses, students will be better able to remember vocabulary items and grammar structures. Since there are three different learning styles related to the senses – visual, auditory and kinaesthetic (the sense of movement) – the objective of using theatre games in the classroom is one of complementing both visual and auditory learning styles with movement. For some students this will be a new experience and they may need some time to warm up to this way of learning, while for others it may be exactly the kind of experience that helps them to 'incorporate' new language items.

Introducing theatre games into the language classroom for the first time can be a daunting task. Students are used to sitting down and only engaging their brains in the learning process. Many students are also very self-conscious and afraid to make mistakes. The purpose of using theatre games is to show them that it is all right to make mistakes and that learning can be fun if it is approached in the spirit of play. Teachers should encourage students to take risks and have fun and congratulate them for doing so, even when mistakes are made. When students feel that they are in a safe environment where mistakes are allowed and even encouraged, they are often more open to receiving feedback and correction. Overall, teachers should feel confident to occasionally change the routine by introducing fun activities that are less focused on reproducing 'correct' language. It is often these moments when students don't realise that they are learning that they learn the most.

Preparation for a class using Theatre Games

Move desks and chairs to the sides of the room and create an open area with enough space to move about. Since students will be using their bodies, it might be helpful to lead them in a short physical warm-up before playing the games (stretching upward, bending over and touching toes, twisting, etc.). It might also be useful to do a vocal warm-up as well by taking some of the words from the unit they are studying that they find difficult to pronounce and saying them out loud together.

Mini Dialogues

These exercises are adapted from typical rehearsal techniques that actors use to go over their lines. Rapidly repeating dialogue over and over helps actors remember their lines and often brings out different shades of

meaning as they play with intonation, timing and pauses. Adapting this technique for the language classroom will help learners to internalise common language structures and vocabulary. Playing out these short dialogues as a scene helps learners use language in an everyday context. The language used in these dialogues tries to approximate, as closely as possible, natural everyday conversation.

The following instructions should be used for each of the mini dialogue activities for all three photocopiable activity pages (Units 1–3, Units 4–6 and Units 7–9).

Preparation for a class using Mini Dialogues

Like with the theatre games, desks and chairs should be moved to the sides of the room and an open area should be created. Make photocopies of the texts beforehand to be used in the exercises, for each student. If the mini dialogues are used following the theatre games, it won't be necessary to repeat the warm-up since the students will have already been very active. If the mini dialogues are used without the theatre games, it may be useful to use the physical and vocal warm-ups mentioned above.

Directions for Mini Dialogues

The directions for playing with each of the dialogues are:

First reading (Exercise 1)

- 1 Hand out photocopies of the dialogue. Play the recording and then check if the students have any questions about pronunciation or meaning.
- 2 Put students into pairs then ask them to do the activity standing up.
- 3 Ask students to practise the dialogue out loud and when they have finished, they change roles and read again.
- 4 Keep them going like this, repeating the dialogue and changing roles until you give them a cue to stop after a couple of minutes.

Second reading (Exercise 2)

- 1 This time ask students to do the same thing but a bit faster.
- 2 Ask them to look into their partner's eyes once they have begun to remember the lines.
- 3 Encourage them to play with intonation, timing and pauses.

The scene (Exercise 3)

- 1 Ask students to put down their photocopiable dialogue sheets.
- 2 Students play the dialogue as a short scene.
- 3 Invite them to add gestures with their faces or bodies and to move.
- 4 Continue to encourage them to play with intonation, timing and pauses.
- 5 Ask a couple of pairs to perform their scenes for the rest of the class.
- 6 Elicit possible situations and characters for the dialogue.