

## Introduction

This is the third edition of *Drama Techniques in Language Teaching*. The second edition has been going strong for over 20 years. We are confident that this, the third edition, will be equally popular with teachers world-wide.

The kinds of techniques or activities we advocated in the earlier editions are now well accepted by many teachers, though they were pioneering stuff at the time. Things have moved on, however, and we felt it was time for a completely new edition which would cut out some less useful activities, revamp others and introduce completely new material and ideas.

### Why use drama?

- It integrates language skills in a natural way. Careful listening is a key feature. Spontaneous verbal expression is integral to most of the activities; and many of them require reading and writing, both as part of the input and the output.
- It integrates verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication, thus bringing together both mind and body, and restoring the balance between physical and intellectual aspects of learning.
- It draws upon both cognitive and affective domains, thus restoring the importance of feeling as well as thinking.
- By fully contextualising the language, it brings the classroom interaction to life through an intense focus on meaning.
- The emphasis on whole-person learning and multi-sensory inputs helps learners to capitalise on their strengths and to extend their range. In doing so, it offers unequalled opportunities for catering to learner differences.
- It fosters self-awareness (and awareness of others), self-esteem and confidence; and through this, motivation is developed.
- Motivation is likewise fostered and sustained through the variety and sense of expectancy generated by the activities.
- There is a transfer of responsibility for learning from teacher to learners – which is where it belongs.

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- It encourages an open, exploratory style of learning where creativity and the imagination are given scope to develop. This, in turn, promotes risk-taking, which is an essential element in effective language learning.
- It has a positive effect on classroom dynamics and atmosphere, thus facilitating the formation of a bonded group, which learns together.
- It is an enjoyable experience.
- It is low-resource. For most of the time, all you need is a ‘roomful of human beings’.

#### **What are drama techniques?**

They are activities, many of which are based on techniques used by actors in their training. Through them, students are given opportunities to use their own personality in creating the material on which part of the language class is based. They draw on the natural ability of everyone to imitate, mimic and express themselves through gesture and facial expression. They draw, too, on students’ imagination and memory, and their natural capacity to bring to life parts of their past experience that might never otherwise emerge. They are dramatic because they arouse our interest, which they do in part by drawing upon the unpredictable power generated when one person is brought together with others. Every student brings a different life, a different background, a different set of memories and associations into the class. It is this we seek to tap into; and in doing so, we inevitably restore some of the neglected emotional content to language, along with a renewed attention to what is physical about language.

#### **Some practical points**

These comments apply to the standard format for activities in this series: *Aims, Focus, Level, Time, Preparation, Procedure, Follow-on, Variation(s)* and *Note(s)*.

- *Aim* This indicates the broad reasons for doing the activity.
- *Focus* This relates to the narrower, linguistic objectives. These are sometimes expressed in terms of syntax, lexis or phonology; sometimes in terms of language functions; and sometimes in terms of spoken discourse over longer stretches of language. It is important to remember that, in drama work, it is not possible totally to predict what language features will occur, so the focus can only be indicative of what we think will happen; it cannot predict what will happen.

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- *Level* The important thing to remember here is that the same activity can often be done at many different levels, drawing on whatever language the students may be able to use. Even in cases where we have prescribed an activity for Elementary, for instance, it may well be possible to exploit it at Advanced level, too.
- *Time* Similarly, it is difficult to set accurate timings. Many of the timings are based on the assumption that you will be using an activity for a whole class hour, so we need to give some guidance on how much time should be devoted to each stage. But sometimes, you may feel an activity is going so well that you want to let it run. Ultimately, it is up to you to exercise your professional judgement based on your intuition.
- *Preparation* Most of the activities require little or no special equipment or material. All you really need is a 'roomful of human beings'. Nonetheless, you still sometimes need some basic materials for the activity, such as cards, OHTs, objects or pictures. Sometimes you will also need to ask students to bring materials or objects to class.
- *Procedure* This specifies the steps you should go through to implement the activity. You may need to be flexible here too. With large classes, you may need to vary group size. With small classes, the group is already very small, so you may need to vary the instructions accordingly.
- *Follow-on* This suggests ways in which the activity can be extended, either in class or as homework.
- *Variation(s)* This suggests alternative ways of doing the activity, or slightly different yet related activities.
- *Note(s)* This provides comments on the activity. Some activities include reference to other published sources.

### **Some important points to bear in mind**

The importance of discussion

Many, if not most of these activities require students to work in pairs or groups to reach agreement on how they will conduct their work and how they will present the outcome. This is an essential part of the activity. There is no point in rushing into an activity for its own sake. The quality of the product, both linguistic and dramatic, depends largely on the quality of the preparatory discussion.

Use of the mother tongue

There is a growing climate of opinion in favour of judicious and selective use of the mother tongue in foreign-language classes. Clearly, if taken to

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extremes, this can transform the foreign-language class into a mother-tongue class, which would be counterproductive and nonsensical. For drama work, it may be sensible at first to allow a limited use of the mother tongue in discussion (indeed it may be impossible to prevent it), while insisting on the use of English in the actual activity. As time goes by, however, and students become more familiar with the English expressions needed for discussion, they should be encouraged progressively to use more English.

#### Re-cycling of known language

We need to remember that the primary function of drama techniques is to offer opportunities for use of language already learnt. It is not primarily to teach new items. This does not, of course, preclude a good deal of incidental learning, whether from teacher input (supplying a missing phrase or word) or from peers (the class as a group has much greater linguistic resources than the individuals who make it up).

#### The teacher's role

Remember that you do not need to be a trained drama expert in order to introduce drama into your teaching, though some training, especially of the voice, is desirable. For drama activities to work well, teachers themselves need to be convinced that they will work. A class rapidly senses any hesitancy or nervousness, or lack of conviction on the part of the teacher. You are the key to the success of these activities. If you do them reluctantly, or half-heartedly, it is better not to do them at all.

#### How to do it

How will you convey this commitment? You will show your confidence through your 'open' body language, by the firm yet friendly tone of your voice, by demonstrating that you know what you are doing through being well prepared and organised, by giving helpful, non-threatening feedback, by being good humoured: in short, by creating an atmosphere of relaxed energy in which everyone can experience the 'flow' experience. Does this sound like you? If it does, then we hope you will enjoy using this book, and continue to extend your range as a teacher. If it does not – why not give it a try anyway? Many teachers who started out using drama techniques with some trepidation report that the experience has changed their lives.

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### **So, what's new?**

The third edition is a radical revision of the second edition. The main changes are:

- Most of the activities are now in the new series format, and have been completely rewritten.
- We have cut a large number of activities which experience has shown to be less useful.
- We have added a large number of new activities.
- We have completely reorganised the structure of the book, reordering activities, and adding new chapters on Voice and Performance.

In short, this is a *new* book, even though it draws substantially on the ideas and materials from the earlier edition. We hope you will enjoy using it.

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## 1 Getting ready

This chapter includes both non-verbal and verbal activities. None of them take very long to do. All of them are intended to get students in the mood for more extended drama activities. More specifically:

- They all involve a degree of physical activity, thus helping to restore the balance between thinking and doing.
- They help put students in a relaxed, less inhibited state, in which they are more receptive than they might otherwise be. This helps to lower the threshold of unconscious resistance to learning a foreign language, and to foster more open, creative work in subsequent activities.
- They help to develop confidence and cooperation with others. Being aware of others and how we relate to them is an important aspect of class bonding.
- They can help students to make a smooth transition from their activities outside the class (perhaps a lesson in a different subject, or the stress of coming from a job in heavy traffic) to the learning atmosphere of the language class.
- They may also be used to make smooth links between one activity and the next.

There are four main types of activity:

- 1 non-verbal warming up
- 2 non-verbal relaxation / cooling down
- 3 activities involving language
- 4 group formation activities.

The way you choose to use the activities is up to you. As you come to get the feel of your class group, you will know best which ones to use at which moments. There is no grading, though activities are presented in clusters when they share common elements.

There are a number of further general points to be made:

- 1 Most of these activities involve physical activity. You will need to be vigilant to ensure that things do not get out of hand, and that students observe care and attention for others.

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- 2 Some of the activities recommend lying on the floor. This must be at your discretion. If there is insufficient space, or if surfaces are too hard or dirty, students can usually do the activity standing or sitting.
- 3 Many activities involve physical contact between students. In some societies, such contact is taboo. Make sure that it is acceptable before launching into it. (Note that it is often possible to do these activities if males are paired with males, and females with females.)
- 4 Many of the activities are good ways of warming up a group of students who do not yet know each other. It is important therefore that they change partners as often as possible so as to interact with a larger number of other students.
- 5 For many of the activities you may need to demonstrate the procedure with one of the students.

**Non-verbal warming-up activities****1.1 Handshakes**

Aim	To have everyone in the group meet and have contact with everyone else
Level	All
Time	5–10 minutes

**Procedure**

- 1 Clear space in the room so that students can walk around freely.
- 2 Tell students to walk around the room. As they do so, they should shake hands with every other member of the group as they meet them. Each time they shake hands, they should make eye contact with the other person and hold it for a few seconds, and smile.

**Variations**

- 1 Students mill around in the space. As they do so, they must try to meet as many other students as possible. When they meet, they should shake hands, smile and say: *I'm (name). Nice to meet you.* Repeat the activity. This time, they say: *Hello (name of the other person). Nice to see you again. How are things?* Obviously, you can vary the phrases they say to each other.
- 2 If students have trouble recalling names, the person being greeted should help them out. You can also teach the ploy: *Hello. Nice to meet you again. Now you are ...* (hesitation when the other person will usually

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supply his/her name!) as well as some useful face-saving expressions, such as: *I'm very good at faces but I'm terrible with names*, etc.

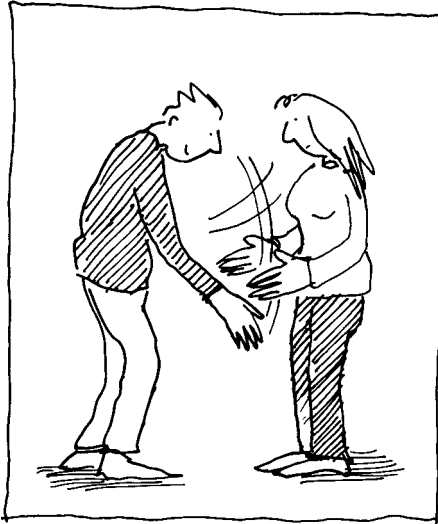
- You may wish to set the occasion for the greeting. For example: a reunion party for school friends who have not met for ten years; a wedding bringing together family members who have not met since the last wedding ten years ago; a funeral gathering of an ex-colleague, etc. Alternatively, give students a theme word, such as *Cheerful*, *Sad*, *Disappointed*, *Hurry*. They then shake hands in a way that reflects the theme word. Change the theme word several times.

**1.2 Hand catching**

<b>Aim</b>	To release some of the nervous energy students often bring with them to class – this helps prepare them for more sustained activities
<b>Level</b>	All
<b>Time</b>	5–10 minutes

**Procedure**

- Students stand in pairs facing each other. One partner holds out both hands, palms facing inwards, about 25 cm apart (see illustration).



- The other partner tries to quickly pass his/her right hand vertically between the partner's hands without getting caught in the trap, which can close at any time.



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### Getting ready

- Reverse roles: the one caught becomes the catcher. After a few turns, change partners.

#### Variations

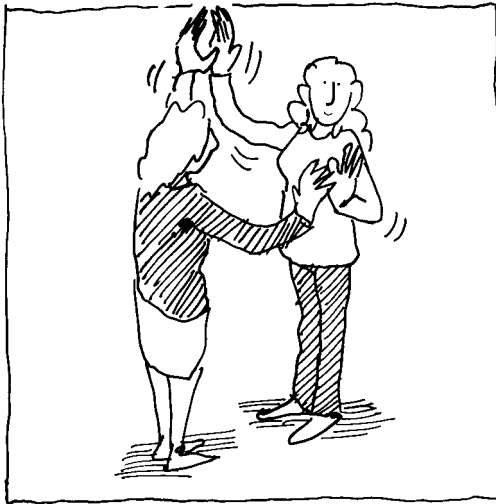
- Student 1 holds out two hands palms down. Student 2 places hands, palms facing up, underneath. Student 1 tries to catch one of Student 2's palms by a quick slap down. Student 2 tries to move before getting slapped.
- Students face each other in pairs with their left hands behind their backs, palms facing outward. When you say *Go*, each student tries to touch their partner's left palm with their right hand while avoiding being touched themselves. After a couple of minutes, change partners. Continue changing partners every few minutes.

## 1.3 Mirror hands

Aim	To develop concentration and anticipation of what a partner will do next
Level	All
Time	10 minutes

#### Procedure

- Students stand in pairs facing each other with their hands raised to shoulder height, palms facing outward, and as close to their partner's hands as possible *without* actually touching (see illustration).



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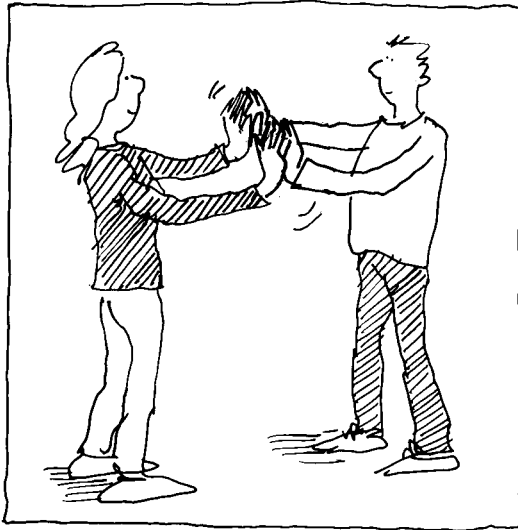
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- 2 One student is the 'leader' and begins to move both hands in a plane, i.e. always keeping the palms facing toward the partner's hands. The partner must try to follow the movements as accurately as possible, as if in a mirror.
- 3 After a few minutes, the other partner takes the role of 'leader'.

#### Variation

Students face each other in pairs with hands raised to shoulder height and palms touching their partner's palms (see illustration). They move their hands slowly in as many different directions as possible without losing palm contact. After a few minutes, pairs become threes and continue the movements. A few minutes later, threes become fours and continue.



#### Notes

- 1 The need to concentrate on another person is analogous to the sort of anticipation demanded in verbal exchanges. It also develops a high degree of eye contact between partners.
- 2 You may suggest to students that they use the whole space available, i.e. from high above the head to the feet, and from side to side.
- 3 You may also need to remind them that this is a cooperative, not a competitive, activity!