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Volume 7, December 2018

Contents

Messages

Feature Articles

In the Classroom

Philip Head & Christopher Lyons (Editors)

In this year's edition of the *Mask & Gavel*, it is our continuing pleasure to share a range of excellent articles from expert educators that describe their research, activities, and suggestions for using performance in education. Our first article by **David Kluge** gives an in-depth and accessible look at research on Performance-Assisted Learning (PAL). Next is an article by **Chris Parham**, where he shares his successes and methods with a Living Newspaper project. **Kim Rockwell**'s article continues with a thorough guide to an English *Noh* theater workshop. Our Feature Articles end with **Jason White**'s article about improvisation and his Top Ten improv games. Following our Feature Articles are two outstanding additions to our In the Classroom series. **Cynthia Gonzalez** first outlines a simple and successful syllabus to introduce debate in a 9-week course. **Aya Kawakami** then guides us through context-less dialogues that can be adapted for any lesson by any teacher.

We are always looking for more articles, classroom practices, workshop reviews, book reviews, or any other scholarly piece written about Performance-Assisted Learning. If you are interested in submitting your work to the M&G, please email us at speechdramadebate.jalt@gmail.com. Our website has details about submission guidelines as well as past volumes. You can also find us on Facebook or on Twitter @SigSDD.

Volume 7 of M&G would never have come together if it weren't for the efforts of the article authors, reviewers, copy-editors, and my fellow staff. Once again, Philip Head has gone above and beyond by acting as my mentor and motivator in organizing this journal. I have enjoyed reading through these articles while helping to prepare them for you, our readers. It is my hope that you also enjoy reading them and finding ways to implement their methods, suggestions, and research into your own teaching endeavors.

Christopher Lyons
JALT SD&D (soon to be PIE) SIG
Co-Publications Editor

Gordon Rees (Coordinator)

I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation and thanks to the *Mask & Gavel* staff who worked hard to edit and put together this fantastic new edition, as well as to the six authors who contributed the thought-provoking and inspiring papers that made this production possible. This issue will serve as a kind of commemorative edition of the M&G, as it will be our last one as the Speech, Drama, & Debate SIG before we change our name and morph into the Performance in Education (PIE) SIG in 2019.

As attested to by the research findings in these papers, performance can impact language teaching and language learners in many positive ways. Our authors have demonstrated and provided some guidelines on how Performance-Assisted Learning (PAL) can be utilized to motivate students, promote language acquisition, and create a positive learning environment in the classroom. As we move forward as the PIE SIG in 2019, I encourage you to use this issue as a kind of guidebook, a blueprint if you will, for implementing and experimenting with PAL in your classes. I am sure you will discover, as I have, that the more PIE you and your students can savor in the classroom together, the happier your job as a teacher will be!

Gordon Rees
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Conducting Research on Performance-Assisted Learning

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Abstract

Teachers who include performance activities in their course syllabus may find it difficult to convince administrators and other teachers of the value of its use, and one of the reasons is a lack of research data on the efficacy of performance use in teaching. This article proposes that practitioners of Performance-Assisted Learning (PAL) conduct micro-evaluations of the PAL activities that they do in class. The aggregation of such evaluations will form a macro-evaluation of PAL and may provide support for the use of PAL. The micro-evaluations would be based on the Ellis (1997) article on task evaluation which is described in detail in this article.

Barbee (2016), after listing eleven verbal, cognitive, affective, social, and educational benefits of a performance activity from Maley and Duff (1978, 2011), went on to claim that his implementation of the activity was prohibited by the program administrator at his university. Barbee reported: "I was told directly that dramatic activities were unproductive and did not have the *appearance* of being academic enough; I was told directly not to 'play games'" (p. 6). Carpenter (2015) reports the same problem with implementing drama. Another problem with implementing performance such as drama, debate, and oral interpretation in the language class is the perception on the part of teachers that special expertise is required (Kawakami, 2012; Kluge & Catanzariti, 2013). Much of this hesitance to adopt performance activities is due to a lack of understanding about the role of performance in learning, but also to a lack of research on the benefits of such activities. This research deficit and how to ameliorate it is addressed in this article. This article first defines the blanket term for using performance in learning, Performance-Assisted Learning (PAL), then explains how PAL activities can be

evaluated through research using a model by Ellis (1997), and finally outlines the proposed micro-evaluations that will lead to a macro-evaluation of PAL.

Performance-Assisted Learning Definition

Performance-Assisted Learning (PAL) is "using any kind of performance to assist in the learning, consolidation, and assessment of content" (Kluge in Head et al., 2018, p. 234). It is distinguished from Performance-Based Learning where the performance is the main part of the course, whereas in PAL the performance is a task that is used within a typical curriculum or syllabus. In other words, PAL is a Task-Based Learning (TBL) activity, whereas Performance-Based Learning is a Project-Based Learning (PBL) activity.

Ellis' Model for Task Evaluation

In a short seven-page article on textbook evaluation, Ellis (1997) states that teachers can evaluate their textbooks using one of two ways: "impressionistically or they can attempt to collect information in a more systematic manner (i.e. conduct an empirical evaluation)" (p. 37). He suggests that one way to evaluate a textbook empirically is through evaluating the tasks contained in the textbook. Ellis then describes how to conduct such a task evaluation. He first distinguishes between macro-evaluation and micro-evaluation. About macro-evaluation, Ellis (1997, p. 37) states, "A macro-evaluation calls for an overall assessment of whether an entire set of materials has worked. To plan and collect the necessary information for such an empirical evaluation is a daunting prospect." He goes on to describe micro-evaluation (Ellis, 1997, p. 37): "In a micro-evaluation, however, the teacher selects one particular teaching task in which he or she has a special interest and submits this to a detailed empirical evaluation." Most importantly, he concludes, "A series of micro-evaluations can provide the basis for a subsequent macro-evaluation" (Ellis, 1997, p. 37). This conclusion forms the basis for the proposed macro-evaluation of PAL through a large collection of micro-evaluations of a variety of PAL tasks.

Task Definition

Ellis (1997, p. 38) describes how to conduct a micro-evaluation of tasks. He first defines "task" (emphasis added):

> This term is now widely used in language teaching methodology (e.g. Prabhu 1987; Nunan 1989), often with very different meanings. Following Skehan (1996), **a task is here viewed as 'an activity in which meaning is primary; there is some sort of relationship to the real world; task completion has some priority; and the assessment of task performance is in terms of task outcome'**.

There are four components in the Ellis/Skehan definition. Many PAL activities can easily be seen to contain each component:

1. **"a task is here viewed as 'an activity in which meaning is primary"**
   In PAL activities (e.g., speeches, presentations, dramas, roleplays, debates, etc.), communication of meaning is paramount as the role of the performer is to communicate meaning to an audience.
2. **"there is some sort of relationship to the real world"**
   Most PAL activities mimic real-world activities, especially drama and roleplays, but also speeches, presentations, and debates are done in some form in the workplace or in real-world organizations such as government and business.
3. **"task completion has some priority"**
   Most PAL activities such as the ones mentioned above are required to have a clear beginning, middle, and end, so task completion is a necessary PAL component.
4. "**the assessment of task performance is in terms of task outcome"**
   Since many PAL activities are meant to be performed in front of an audience, the performers are judged on how well they completed their task.

Skehan's definition is the one that will be used for this paper as many PAL activities clearly fit as tasks in the Skehan and Ellis sense.

Evaluating a Task

Ellis (1997, p. 38) continues by listing the seven steps to evaluating a task in four stages, with Steps 1-3 comprising the Preparation stage of the evaluation, Step 4 as the Implementation stage of the evaluation, Steps 5-6 as the Evaluating stage, and Step 7 as the Reporting stage of the evaluation (see Figure 1):

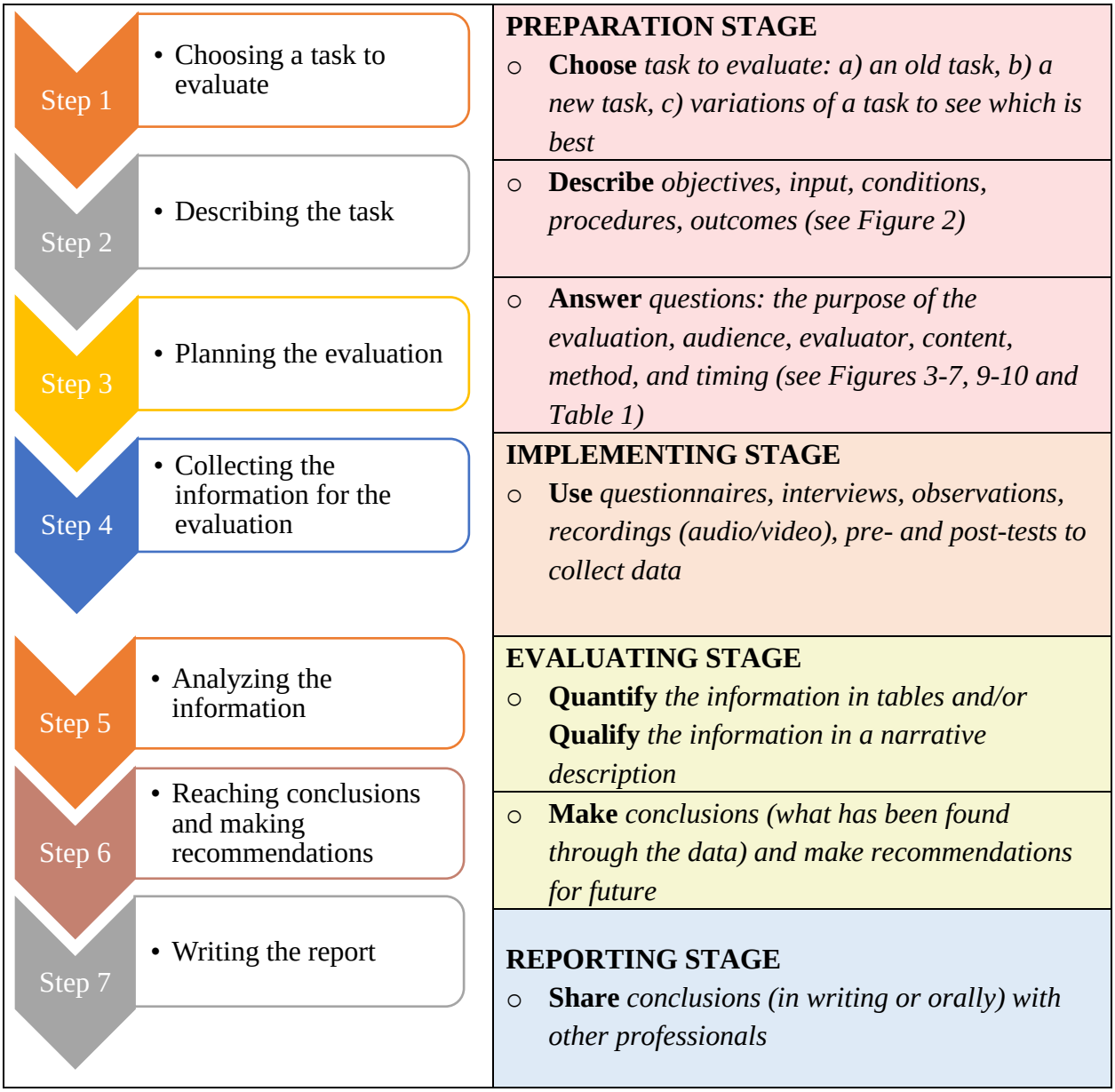


Figure 1. Seven steps to evaluating a task (Ellis, 1997, p. 38).

These steps make the process of evaluating a task easier to comprehend by breaking it down into distinct stages and steps to be undertaken in a certain order.

The Preparation Stage

The preparation stage of the task evaluation is made up of three steps as shown in Figure 1. Step 1 is choosing the task to evaluate. Step 2 is describing the task. Step 3 is answering evaluation questions about the task. Each step is described below.

Step 1: Choosing the Task

Each researcher starts the evaluation by selecting one task that they most want to research. The task could be selected because the teacher wants to check the effectiveness of a task he or she has been using, or check the effectiveness of a new task that the teacher wants to try out, or to check several variations of a task to see which variation is best.

Step 2: Describing the Task

Ellis (1997, p. 38) next explains how to describe a task. He states that a teacher/researcher creates a task description by describing *objectives, input, conditions, procedures,* and *outcomes* for the task (see Figure 2). The teacher/researcher first lists the *objectives,* the educational goals of the task; the *input*, what materials, information, or instruction the students receive to prepare for the task; the *conditions*, the layout and relevant facilities of the classroom, the grouping of the students in whole class, pairs, or small groups, the materials students will have or use for the task, whether the task is scripted or non-scripted, memorized or not, the time for preparation and doing the activity, and what is done after the task, etc.; the *procedure* for completing the task, described in a step-by-step manner; and the *outcomes* of the task in terms of both product and process; that is, what product should be produced as a result of the task, and what skills or language habits might be learned or what personal characteristics, e.g., the ability to work collaboratively, could be enhanced by going through the process of the task.

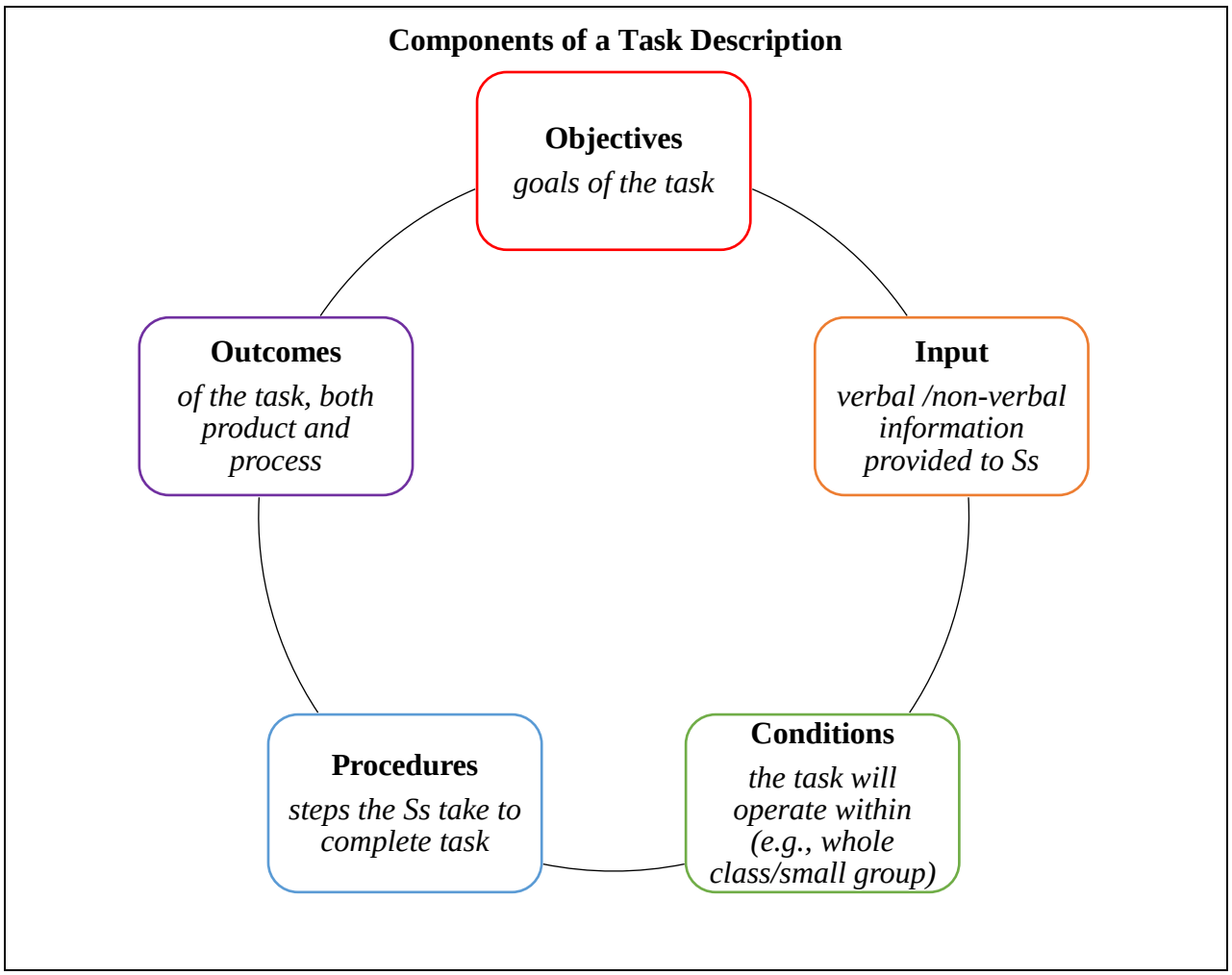


*Figure 2***.** Components of a description (from Ellis, 1997, p. 38).

Step 3: Answering Questions to Make Choices

The last step (Step 3) in the Preparation Stage (Steps 1-3) is to answer questions and make choices about the task evaluation (see Figure 3).

1. Purpose?		**2. Audience?**		**3. Evaluator?**		**4. Content?**		
Task met objectives?	Task can be improved?	Conducted for self?	Conducted for others?	Self?	Other?	Student attitudes?	Outcomes?	Learning?

5. Method?				**6. Timing?**			
Documentation?	Tests?	Observation?	Self-report?	Before task?	During task?	After task?	
						Immediately after?	*After a period of time?*

Figure 3. Questions and choices to make (Ellis, 1997, p. 39).

The questions are related to the purpose of the task, the audience for the evaluation, who the evaluator or evaluators will be, the content, the method used to evaluate, and the timing of the evaluation. In the next step the teacher/researcher will answer questions on the purpose, audience, content, method, and timing of the task evaluation, as outlined in Figure 3 and described in greater detail in Figures 4-10.

What is the purpose of the task? (See Figure 4.) The teacher/researcher can choose to use an objectives model which examines whether the objectives of the task were met, or a developmental model which looks at how the task can be developed and improved. It is possible to do a dual-purpose evaluation, objectives and developmental, with the developmental part described in the conclusion of the evaluation write-up.

1. Purpose?	
What is the purpose of the evaluation? What does the teacher/researcher hope to learn by doing the task evaluation?	
Task met objectives?	Task can be improved?
Were the objectives of the task met? (an objectives model evaluation)	In which ways can the task be improved? (a developmental model evaluation)

Figure 4. Explanation of purpose description of task (based on Ellis, 1997, p. 39-40).

Who is the audience for this evaluation? That is, who will be the beneficiary of the results of the evaluation? (See Figure 5.) The task evaluation could be done for the purpose of self-improvement as a teacher, or it could be written to be published so that other teachers could also benefit.

2. Audience?	
Who is going to learn about the task through the evaluation?	
Conducted for self?	Conducted for others?
Is the teacher/researcher the only person to learn about the results of the task evaluation?	Will the task evaluation results be shared with other teachers?

Figure 5. Explanation of audience description of task (based on Ellis, 1997, pp. 39-40).

Who is the person evaluating the data? (See Figure 6.) If the teacher is the evaluator of the data, it is relatively easy in that no effort is needed to find, train, and oversee outside evaluators, but having one or more outside evaluators will reduce the possibility of the evaluator being influenced by the teacher's opinions of individual students or by pre-conceived notions regarding the task. Having multiple external evaluators also increases the trustworthiness of the evaluation.

3. Evaluator?	
Who will be the evaluator of the task evaluation data?	
Self?	Other?
Will the teacher/researcher be the evaluator? (a common, easy way to conduct the evaluation)	Will an outside person be the evaluator? (more time-consuming as the evaluator would need to be trained, but results are often more trustworthy)

Figure 6. Explanation of evaluator description of task (based on Ellis, 1997, pp. 39-40).

What is the content of the evaluation? What part of the task will be focused on in the evaluation? (See Figure 7.) All three aspects of the task – student attitudes to the task, task outcomes, and learning outcomes – are important for the teacher to investigate. The teacher/researcher can choose any one of the task evaluation types, but by incorporating more than one of the three types, more data regarding the task is provided, and a more detailed evaluation of the task is possible.

4. Content?		
About the task, what is being explored?		
Student attitudes?	Outcomes?	Learning?
How interesting, useful, effective, easy, etc. did the students find the task? **(student-based evaluation)** These are the most common evaluation as it is the easiest. Usually uses questionnaires or interviews.	To what extent did the outcome of the task match the predicted outcome? **(response-based evaluation)** Usually uses live observation (with note-taking), audio recordings (transcripts), or video recordings (transcripts). Are time-consuming but result in useful data about the task.	Did the students learn anything, including the targeted objectives from the task? **(learning-based evaluation)** Often this requires pre- and post-task tests. Is the most difficult of the evaluations, but the resulting data is often more trustworthy.

Figure 7. Explanation of content description of task (based on Ellis, 1997, pp. 39-40).

More details about the three types of task evaluation can be found in Table 1 and Figure 10 below:

Table 1. Detailed Description of Three Contents of a Task (Ellis, 1997, pp. 39-40)

Evaluation Type	***Description***	***Investigation Method***	***Value***	**Problem**
Student-based evaluations	Students' attitudes to the task are examined. Did they find the task enjoyable, interesting, and/or useful?	Short questionnaires, interviews, focus group sessions with students. (One variation would be to do the same short questionnaires, interviews, focus group sessions with teachers who use the same task in their classrooms).	Gives important information on what students think about the task. Are the easiest kind to carry out.	Does not provide information on whether the objectives of the task were met, or whether any meaningful learning took place.
Response-based evaluations	Teacher examines the actual outcomes (both the products and processes of the task) to see whether they match the predicted outcomes.	Observations, live or recorded (audio or video), are examined to see if students are doing what the teacher/researcher intended them to do with the task.	Provide valuable information regarding whether the task is achieving what it is intended to achieve.	Time-consuming, demanding work, does not indicate whether meaningful learning took place.
Learning-based evaluations	The teacher/researcher attempts to determine whether the task has resulted in any new learning.	Pre- and post-task evaluations through tests, comparison of task before and after instruction.	Measures the learning that has resulted from performing a task.	*Most difficult to do. *May be difficult to measure the learning that has resulted from performing a single task.

A graphic illustration of the table can be seen in Figure 10 below.

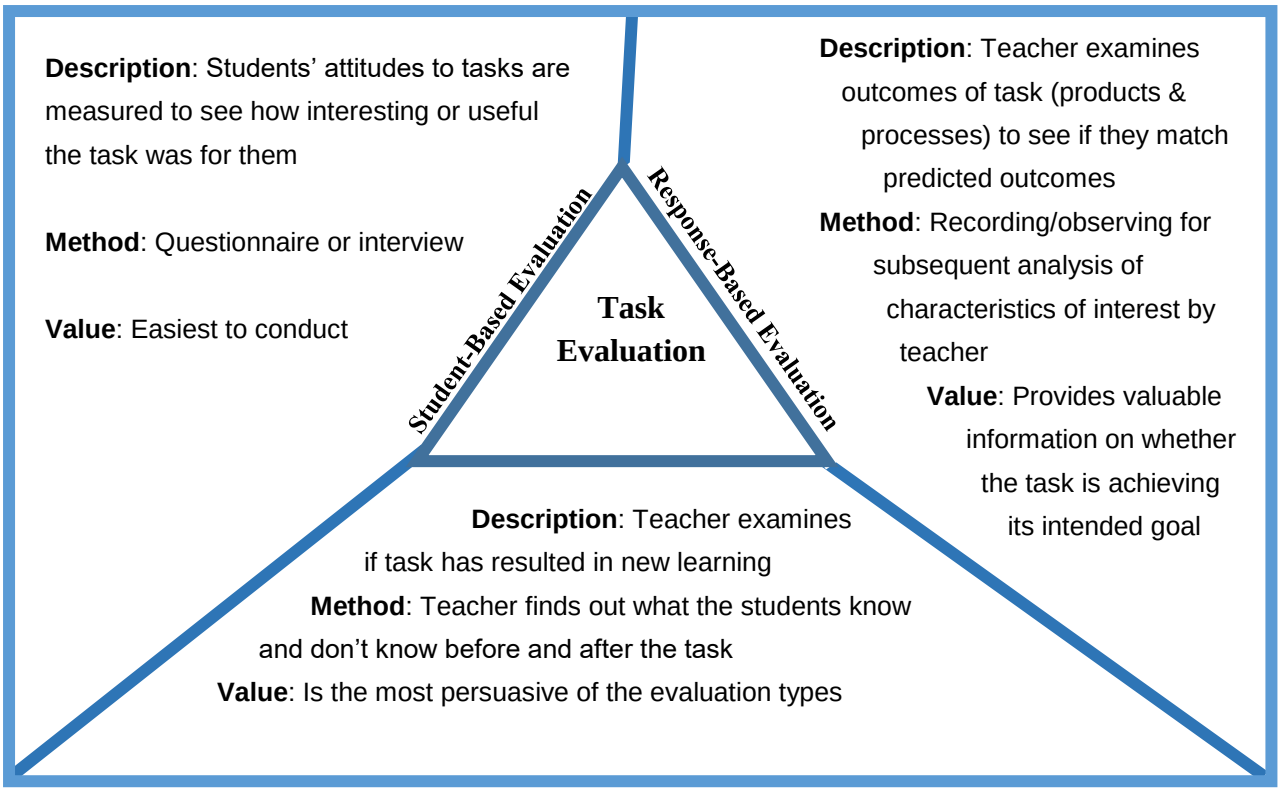


Figure 8. Types of task evaluation (modified from Ellis, 1997, pp. 39-40).

Ellis (1997, pp. 39-40) notes that student-based evaluations, typically using questionnaires to discover student attitudes toward the ease, usefulness, and entertainment value of a task or project, are the most usual form of research done in classrooms. This is because they are relatively easy to do, and more complex types of data are more difficult to obtain and analyze. However, student-based evaluations often do not supply data that would lead to sufficiently persuasive conclusions. It should be noted that a task could be evaluated through any combination of these three evaluation types, including the possibility of using all three types, that would supply enough data that could result in conclusions that might persuade administrators and other teachers. The more fully the task is evaluated, usually the more trustworthy the conclusions are, if the evaluation is done properly.

The kinds of evaluation instruments include documentation (e.g., student-written compositions), tests (pre-, post-, and formative), observation, and self-report (written or spoken). (See Figure 9.) The kind of evaluation instruments would depend on the content decided upon in Figure 7 above.

5. Method?			
What kind of evaluation instruments were used in the task evaluation?			
Documentation?	Tests?	Observation?	Self-report?
Were documents used (e.g., compositions from a writing task)? Used mostly for response-based or learning-based evaluations	Were tests used (written or oral)? Used mostly for response-based or learning-based evaluations	Were students observed? (live or audio- video-recorded) Used mostly for response-based evaluations	Did students report by themselves (self-report interview or questionnaire) Used mostly for student-based evaluations

Figure 9. Explanation of method description of task (based on Ellis, 1997, pp. 39-40).

What is the timing of the evaluation? That is, when will the data be collected? Ellis (1997) explains that the data to evaluate the performance can be collected prior to the task being performed (e.g., a survey on attitudes towards particular types of task or a pre-test), while it is being performed (e.g., observation, audio/video recording, performance as test), and after it is completed (e.g., surveys, written reactions to the task, interviews, focus group discussions, or a post-test), or any combination of these data collection types. If the data is collected after the task, the researcher has to decide whether the data will be collected immediately after the task or after a period of time has elapsed since the task. Students could also write a journal that would cover all three time periods: before the task, during the task, and after the task. (See Figure 10.)

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">6. Timing?</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">When will the task be evaluated?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Before task?</td><td>During task?</td><td colspan="2">After task?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Will Ss be given a pre-task interview or test?</td><td>Will Ss be observed during the task?</td><td colspan="2">When the task is ended, will the Ss be interviewed, given a questionnaire to fill out, or tested?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2"></td><td>Immediately after?</td><td>After a period of time?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2"></td><td>Will the Ss be evaluated immediately after the task?</td><td>Will the Ss be evaluated after a lapse of time after the task?</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 10. Explanation of timing description of task (based on Ellis, 1997, pp. 39-40).

The Implementation Stage

After the Preparation Stage, composed of steps 1 to 3, is completed, the Implementation Stage begins. Step 4 is to collect the data using the instruments that were decided upon (Figure 8) according to the timing that was decided upon (Figure 9). The teacher/researcher will collect the data (through questionnaires, interviews, observations, focus groups, audio or video recordings, or pre- and post-tests). The teacher/researcher is expected to abide by research ethics, and so will need to distribute bilingual consent forms to be completed by the teacher, student participants, and perhaps even by the institution.

The Evaluation Stage

The data that was collected is analyzed and arranged in a way that makes it easy to understand (Step 5). Quantify the information in tables and do a statistical analysis and/or qualify the information in a narrative description. Then make conclusions based on what was found in the data and make recommendations for the future (Step 6). If the teacher/researcher has questions or feels incapable of doing the statistical analysis, then the advice of fellow teachers should be sought.

The Reporting Stage

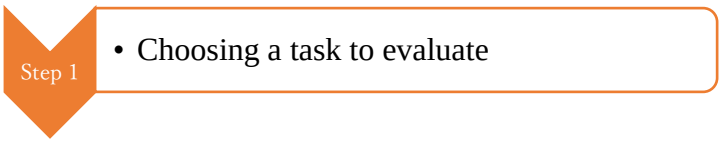
Step 7 makes up the Reporting Stage. The teacher/researcher shares the evaluation with other teachers orally in conferences or in writing in journals, unless the teacher decides to do the evaluation only for his or her self. However, it is advisable for teacher/researchers to write articles to be published or prepare a conference presentation to add to the knowledge base of the profession and provide the details for other teacher/researchers to replicate the evaluation in order to verify the results and conclusions.

Proposal: Applying the Task Evaluation Model to Performance-Assisted Learning

This proposal to address the lack of research studies supporting Performance-Assisted Learning (PAL) is to encourage PAL practitioners to become teacher-researchers and research what they are doing in their classrooms, and, most importantly, to write up their research. As mentioned earlier, Ellis (1997, p. 37) concludes, "A series of micro-evaluations can provide the basis for a subsequent macro-evaluation." That is the purpose of this proposal – to encourage the conducting of a large number of micro-evaluations of PAL that in aggregate will form a macro-evaluation of performance in learning. The way a PAL task micro-evaluation could be done is described below (cf., Figures 1-10, and Table 1).

Example Preparation Stage

As mentioned above, the Preparation Stage of a PAL task would be comprised of three steps. Step 1 is choosing a task to evaluate. Step 2 is describing the task. Step 3 is planning the evaluation. All three steps of the Preparation Stage are described below using the PAL task evaluation by Yoko, a PAL practitioner and teacher/researcher.



The task could be a speech, drama, debate, oral interpretation, or any other performance activity done in class. In this case, Yoko, the teacher/researcher, selects a variation of a speech activity she often has her students do – an informative speech – to check whether the variation is an improvement over the previously evaluated informative speech task.

Step 2 • Describing the task

Yoko describes the informative speech task she wants to evaluate as follows in Figure 11:

Objective: To successfully deliver an informative speech.

Input: Yoko teaches the students details about the structure of the information speech (Introduction, Body, Conclusion, Question Period) and the seven key performance qualities of a successful informative speech she will be rating the students on: Smoothness (smooth but without memorization), Energy, Loudness, Look (eye contact), Smile, Posture, and Gestures (SELLS+PG).

Conditions: There are 12 second-year university English majors, 10 females and 2 males. They sit in two groups of 6, 5 females and 1 male in each group. Students in a group sit around tables arranged in the shape of a U with the open end of the U facing the front of the room so that they can work in pairs or groups of 3 or 6, yet all can easily see the front of the room where the performer stands. In the first half of the course when they did presentations, they had to perform without a practice session, but in the latter half of the course the teacher wants to see if there were significant changes in learning due to the practice sessions.

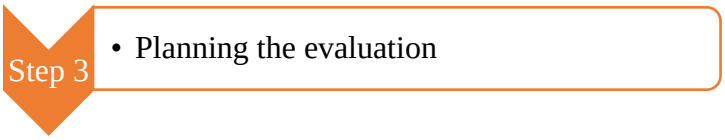
Procedure:

1. Each week, students create a poster in their B4-sized sketchbook on the topic of the unit as homework.
2. They practice a short speech on their poster as homework.
3. In class, after a general conversation warm-up (talking with a partner about what they did over the weekend), students individually move to an empty table, set their smartphones attached to a mini-tripod against the wall, set the smartphones to video, face their smartphones, and give their speech.
4. Students take out their earphones and watch and listen to their presentation while looking at a card with the organization and delivery items listed on it, noting what needs to be improved.

5. Students individually give their smartphone to an audience member to video record their presentation, which is done without notes and is not memorized, while the teacher also video records it.
6. At home, students watch their video and mark on an evaluation sheet their evaluations of the organization and 7 key characteristics of their presentation using a ten-point scale.
7. Students take a photo of their sketchbook page and evaluation and send them to the teacher.
8. The teacher watches the video and marks it on the same kind of evaluation sheet as students used.
9. Students write a final report on the information speech experience at the end of the semester.
10. Students complete an online survey about the activity.

Outcomes: Students should rate higher on organization and the seven key qualities when they are afforded a practice session than when they perform without a practice session.

Figure 11. Description of a sample informative speech task.



Yoko answers the questions regarding purpose of the evaluation, audience, evaluator, content, method, and timing of the task (see Figure 12):

Purpose of the Evaluation

Yoko wants to know if adding a self-recorded practice trial before doing the actual speech makes it easier to successfully perform the speech, changes the students' perception of their performance, and improves the actual quality of the speech. She wants to know if the task met the objectives and how the task can be improved.

Audience

Yoko wants to know herself but also wants to share the results of the evaluation with her colleagues at conferences and in papers.

Evaluator

Yoko would have liked to have had colleagues help her in evaluating the video recorded presentations, but because she did not ask earlier in the semester and the last part of the semester is extremely busy, she decides to be the evaluator. However, in the future she might ask other teachers to evaluate the recordings.

Content

Yoko decides to do a complete evaluation and decides to evaluate student attitudes, outcomes, and whether learning took place.

Method

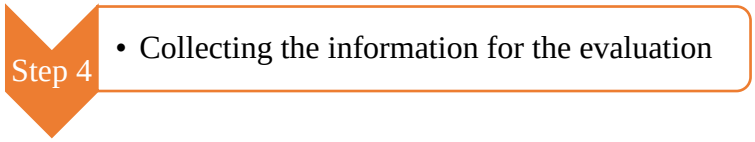
Yoko will use documentation (the final report), tests (the first pre-practice recording at the beginning of the semester and the last post-practice recording from each student), observation of partial transcripts from the recordings, and self-report (the students' weekly self-evaluations and an online survey of what students thought about the information speech activity.

Timing

Yoko will evaluate the task immediately after each speech, and a week after the final speech.

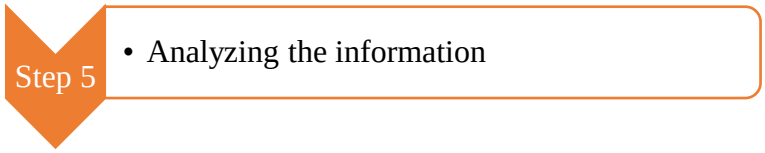
Figure 12. Example of planning an evaluation.

Example Implementation Stage



Yoko creates the online survey and collects the data, inputting it into spreadsheets for analysis.

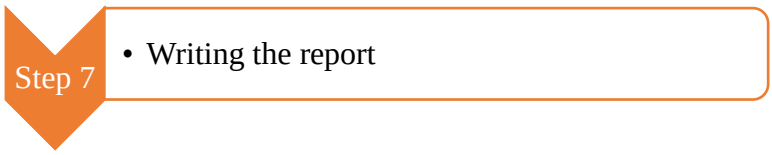
Example Evaluation Stage



Yoko uses simple statistical analysis (mean, median, high and low scores, and standard deviation) to analyze the quantitative data and identifies key concepts in the qualitative data.

Yoko looks at the data and determines that the practice had a strong effect on student attitudes toward the activity, helped improve the quality of the presentations markedly, and helped students to learn the key characteristics of performing a good information speech as well as key phrases in the conclusion and question and answer sections of the speeches. She recommends that video-recorded in-class practice be a standard feature of speech presentations.

Example Reporting Stage



Yoko gives presentations at several conferences, including one international one, and writes up a report for the international conference.

Conclusion: From Many PAL Task Micro-evaluations to a Macro-evaluation of PAL

This paper suggests taking the Ellis (1997) model for textbook micro-evaluation and repurposing it for PAL task micro-evaluations as Yoko did. This will help start to create a macro-evaluation of PAL if many PAL teacher/researchers do the same with their own PAL tasks. In my efforts to do micro-evaluations around the country, I have run into insurmountable resistance from institutions about having an outsider conduct research on teachers and students. Instead of one person attempting the herculean task of conducting the macro-evaluation, it should be easier for teachers within the institution to conduct the micro-evaluation and contribute the results to a pool of researchers' efforts.

A joint project conducted by teachers throughout Japan should give support to teacher/researchers who want to evaluate tasks, should answer many questions about PAL, and should provide answers that might be used to support PAL activities. Such a project will provide support to teacher/researchers so that they will not have to conduct their research alone but will have a group of researchers willing to help give advice. Finally, it will improve both individual teaching practice as well as the teaching profession.

If a large number of these micro-evaluations on PAL tasks were conducted in a careful manner and then collected in one accessible place, e.g., an online journal or at a conference with a digital post-conference publication, then PAL teachers perhaps would not have to go through the situation that Barbee (2016) and Carpenter (2015) experienced of having to answer to skeptical administrators and colleagues without adequate research data.

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NOTE 1: Rod Ellis will elaborate on the topic of this paper in a plenary talk in the June 15-17 conference in Nagoya.

NOTE 2: If you are interested in participating in the research project described above, please contact the author at klugeresearch@gmail.com.

NOTE 3: If you are interested in the research project described above, consider attending the June 15-17 conference in Nagoya where like-minded people will discuss the PAL task micro-evaluation project. See <https://sites.google.com/view/sddsigconferences/home>.

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Living Newspaper in the English Discussion Classroom

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Abstract

Since 2003, the Japanese government has been urging universities to improve and reform the way they teach English to develop young people who can actively and immediately work in global contexts after graduation (MEXT, 2003). Some universities are using drama in the English language classroom to nurture students' creativity, cooperation, and confidence. As has been shown, drama brings a multitude of psychological and communicative benefits – it helps students think about pronunciation, meaning, emotion, motivation, cooperation, confidence, and active participation, all of which can help to promote language acquisition and the spontaneous use of language (Miccoli, 2003; Ranzoni, 2003; Sato, 2001; Shapiro & Leopold, 2012; Zyoud, 2010)**.** With a background in theatre and some useful drama resources at my disposal, I have been seeking ways to give my English classes a communicative and performative edge, and this article examines how I tried to incorporate a drama activity into my university discussion class.

One resource book I frequently refer to in the ESL classroom is *Drama Games for Classrooms and Workshop* (Swale, 2009), a lean and handy compendium with over a hundred drama games and activities. In the *storytelling* section, there is a game called *Living Newspaper* in which students create a living version of a newspaper front page story. For the activity, students must have a copy of a newspaper front page, a bit of imagination and analysis, and be ready to explore the notion of theatre as a social force. The purpose of the activity is to present the news by considering different aspects of the article by getting the students to think about "what do the articles say, what fonts are used, what do the pictures show, are there adverts,

what is the tone, the colour, the image presented to the reader?" (Swale, 2009, p. 133). This seemed like a perfect supplementary activity for my two intermediate-level university discussion classes. In these classes, students lead discussions in English on a recent news story. Each week a student facilitates a small group (3 or 4 students) in a ten-minute discussion by summarizing the story, defining key vocabulary, highlighting the writer's and their own opinion, and asking three or more discussion questions, repeating the whole process a few times to improve clarity, fluency, and confidence in delivery. The Living Newspaper activity advocated many of the same aims as the discussions: it encourages students to work collaboratively as a group and share their insight and opinions on the news. On top of that, it encourages students to show imagination, creativity, and expression – to take risks and show confidence – and allows them to see that words, beyond simply conveying information, have the power to affect others. The following article explains how I implemented the Living Newspaper activity in two university classes and how the activity deepened the perception of the participating students.

Background

The Living Newspaper idea, or Newspaper Theatre as it is more widely known, is a kind of sociodrama and psychodrama which explores the social and therapeutic potential of theatre through the presentation of real-life events and the exploration of social problems. The idea dates back to the experiments of the Futurists in Europe in the 1920s and their need for something that was not fully prepared but improvised, intuitive, and revealing actuality (Drain, 1995). In the Soviet Union performances of the news were given in public places to make news accessible to the masses and pass on revolutionary propaganda, while in Vienna this idea became a more spontaneous and improvised style of theatre under Jacob Levy Moreno who believed that "when a playwright writes a play about the news he has already lost the thrill of immediacy and actuality" (Cukier, 2007, p. 231). By the 1940s many of the proponents of Newspaper Theatre, most of whom were small independent supporters of the workers' movement, were either halted by government censorship or the closing down of the theaters, yet it was revitalized and documented in the 1970s by theatre practitioner Augustus Boal in experiments which led to his body of work *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Boal saw theatre as a way of educating and empowering deprived and

under-represented people, and through his work he wanted his spectators (audience members actively involved in the performance) to examine their oppressions and try to make changes to their present situations (Boal, 1979).

The First Attempt

I had learned about some of Boal's techniques during my undergraduate studies, so it was nice to revisit and broaden my understanding of them and apply them in different surroundings. Before attempting this experiment, however, I used the description of the Living Newspaper activity from *Drama Games for Classroom and Workshops* as my stimulus and guide to how to implement the activity since I had it readily available. The week before we did the activity I gave students the short description: "what do the articles say, what fonts are used, what do the pictures show, are there adverts, what is the tone, the colour, the image presented to the reader?" (Swale, 2009, p. 133). As foreign newspapers are not readily available, the one exception I made was that students did not need to choose a front-page news story and instead they could find an online news story.

On the day of the activity I divided the session in two: the first half for preparation and the second half for presentation and feedback. There was a total of 46 students participating in the activity: 25 psychology majors in my period one Oral English class, most of whom are intermediate level, and 21 English majors in my period two Integrated English class, all of whom are upper intermediate level.

The first attempt at the Living Newspaper was a test-run and I expected students to be hesitant and uncertain about what news they were going to present and how they were going to present it to the group. So, although it was no surprise to see students produce work which was a little superficial in content and unassured in delivery; the work was thoroughly enjoyed by the audience. As expected, the lower level and proficiency of the Oral English class, and the larger class size, were factors in the prudent way the students approached the activity. Their stories included staff discrimination at Starbucks, racial discrimination before a high school prom, the retirement of a well-known baseball player, and the U.S. and North Korea summit in Singapore (which three groups did). Most of the presentations were scripted with students reading their lines off a sheet of paper and their delivery was straightforward and careful – some groups merely stood

in a line in front of the class and read the news. In contrast, the English majors were bold and confident in delivery and more elaborate and opinionated in content – plus all the groups met or exceeded the 6-minute time requirement. There were no crossovers in topic choices - the U.S. and North Korea summit, admission fees at a theme park, birth rate, and gun rental from U.S. vending machines. Also, some of the groups used dynamic and engaging techniques in presentation, particularly the *admission fees at theme park* group which used reconstruction and interview techniques to inform the audience of the different perspectives of the people involved in the news story.

Questionnaire

After carrying out the Living Newspaper activity for the first time, students were given a questionnaire to fill out for homework with the following questions about the activity:

- How was it beneficial as a creator in understanding the story?
- How was it beneficial as a spectator in understanding the story?
- How was it beneficial as an English learner?
- Was it more beneficial to you than the usual group discussion?
- How could the activity be improved?
- Other comments.

The following week I collected 42 completed questionnaires, with the following list of some of the benefits as a creator taken from the results:

- Ten students mentioned that they could freely contribute to the discussion and preparations, and openly share and learn different perspectives of those involved in the story.
- Nine students mentioned that the longer preparation time meant a deeper understanding and interest in the news.
- Eight students mentioned that communication and cooperation between group members improved.
- Five students mentioned that they gained skills in summarizing or simplifying the story for the observer.

- Five students mentioned that they were more motivated as they had to show their work.
- Three students mentioned that greater care was taken in speaking English and this led to more natural conversation being achieved.
- Two students mentioned that an ordinary discussion focused more on learning vocabulary (which is written in their vocabulary book) rather than listening to the story and engaging in discussion.
- Two students mentioned that they felt more responsible for making decisions about the information being used.
- Two students mentioned that the activity gave them basic public speaking skills.
- One student mentioned the Living Newspaper activity had a "talkative" atmosphere whereas during the ordinary weekly discussion there was a "hard atmosphere."

The following information is a list of some of the benefits of participating as a spectator, taken from the questionnaire results:

- Eleven students mentioned that the act of visualizing the story and embodying the characters aided the observer's understanding.
- Five students mentioned that the use of voice, gestures, or expression brought the story to life and an immediacy as if the news event was in fact happening before their eyes.
- Four students mentioned that the creative unfolding of the news – the use of narrating, reporting, or reconstructing events – made the act more engaging.
- Three students mentioned that the use of videos, pictures, graphs, or charts helped inform or support the presentation.
- Three students mentioned that the different views of those involved in the story brought an objectivity to the work.
- Two students mentioned that seeing all the performances (listening to three stories like in an ordinary discussion class) meant students could find out about every story which was being shared that week.

The activity generated a lot of positive feedback, yet the students noted there was a lot of room for improving the activity, as shown in the following list of suggestions:

- Fourteen students mentioned that the delivery – eye contact, volume and clarity – could be more assured or greater consideration be placed on the way the work is presented.
- Six students mentioned that leaders needed to be more organized and decisive and all the members more willing to actively contribute.
- Five students mentioned that the amount of Japanese spoken during the preparation period needed to be reduced or altogether prohibited as it was expected that the activity be undertaken in English.
- Three students mentioned that memorization could help inhibited or non-confident students with their delivery.
- Two students mentioned that groups and topics should be decided earlier, and all members contribute to researching about the topic.
- One student mentioned that students who are observing should be designated to answer any questions posed by the presenting group to avoid unnecessary pauses and to give every student a chance to speak. The same student mentioned that a vote on the best presentation be made at the end to motivate groups to do well.

Overall, the response to the activity was very positive, and many students even stated that they had “fun”, “enjoyed watching others”, and wanted to “do it many times.” Also, two students stated they preferred it to the ordinary weekly discussions.

Guidelines

Using the questionnaire results and the following research by Meir (2017) on Newspaper Theatre (see Figure 1), I considered ways to improve the activity.

Simple Reading – The news is read without commentary or comment.

Complementary reading – The news is read, and additional information is sourced from other news to find out more information.

Crossed reading – Two contradictory or linked stories are read to shed new light and dimension on the story.

Rhythmical reading – The news item is filtered and read (or sung) with a rhythm as a musical commentary.

Parallel action – The news is read, and parallel actions are mimed to show the reported event.

Improvisation – The news is improvised on stage and the audience can participate by making suggestions or replaying the action.

Historical reading – The news is read along with facts showing a similar event in history.

Reinforcement – The news is read or sung with the aid of reinforcing material, such as audio/visuals, jingles, advertising or publicity materials.

Concretion of the abstract –As the news is read, terms showing the concepts that encompass the work are shown, such as torture, hunger, or unemployment, and real or symbolic imagery is shown for emotional impact.

Text out of context – The news item is presented out of the context, for example, someone portraying the Prime Minister delivers a speech about austerity while devouring a huge dinner.

Insertion into the actual context – The news is read in the real context in which the problem happens, for example, a story about war is presented in a battlefield.

Integration or field interview (the lost technique) – This news is presented as an interview with the subject being interviewed by a host or cross-examiner. This allows for a "hot-seating" and a dynamic investigation with the audience.

Figure 1. Techniques Boal used in Newspaper Theatre (Meir, 2017).

I then changed the instructions to make the task clear and specific for the participants. The following guidelines were given to the students the week before doing the activity again:

The leader is responsible for deciding the news story based on recommendations from the whole group.
No group can present on the same topic.
The story should be relevant to the students, i.e., a problem that affects them or their community.
Each student must find at least two articles about their chosen news story from different sources which offer different perspectives or greater insight.
Each group must use at least one of the following techniques – reconstruction events, interview with a person involved, commentary or summary by an expert, reporting by a host who ties action together, some sort of visual aid – placard, PowerPoint, prop, etc. – in presenting their story.
During the presentation the group must pose one question and elicit an answer from each group
Presentations should be between 6 and 8 minutes long

Figure 2. Changes in instructions for the activity.

The Second Attempt

After I observed the second attempt at the activity I noticed that students in both groups were far more enthusiastic, informed, and confident. In their presentation all the groups provided background information about their news story and showed the different views of the people involved. The psychology majors chose the following news stories – suspicious death of a rich business person, murder on a *shinkansen*, a celebrity taking advantage of an under-aged girl, discrimination on an airline, cost of Olympics tickets, and bomb hoax at Aoyama Gakuin University – and although these topic choices – with the exception of the bomb hoax one – were not necessarily relevant to the students, each presentation was far more assured than the first attempt. The English majors chose the following news stories – power harassment at Nihon University, shrinking food, tattoos in an *onsen*, reducing club activity hours in high school, and overuse of social media – and all the groups produced imaginative work which highlighted the

social effects of the problem. Particularly, one group presenting on reducing club activity hours in high school not only presented the thoughts of the different people in the news story (the National Sports Agency representative, the teacher, the ordinary student and the sports captain) but also revealed how dedication to club activity affected their own high school life.

Discussion

By doing this activity, teachers can learn how much their students understand the news story they are presenting. This activity encourages students to read deeply into a topic and understand how events affect people in different ways and how journalists write from different perspectives to put forward their argument. Grasping this will benefit students when they work on preparing to be discussion leader in an ordinary discussion class. By monitoring the preparation and presentation process teachers can also see which students make an effort and actively contribute to the work. In an ordinary discussion class, it is difficult to monitor each discussion group as there are several other discussions going on at the same time, so this is a way to monitor, assess and evaluate individual students as well as the leaders.

This kind of activity is a good alternative to straightforward speech presentation. Normally, individual or pair presentations are daunting for Japanese students, whereas group presentations can take the pressure off individual students so they can focus on presenting the story. By implementing this activity, teachers provide students with the opportunity to do something creative as they are asked to retell and recreate their interpretation of the story.

Throughout the process, if students are disciplined to use English throughout, like most of my students were, the students will greatly benefit from using it and be exposed to English throughout the whole period. The one drawback, as students noticed, is that English needs to be used throughout the preparation time, so I recommend that the teacher carefully monitor students to ensure that they are using English.

Since one function is to simplify and summarize information, this kind of activity could work on different kinds of text, such as short stories, fairy tales, narrative poems, epic songs, or even plays, and students could take a fixed idea, comprehend it, make it their own, and share it with an audience. The act of presenting something to the group provides students with the chance

to gain public speaking skills and confidence and allows them to enjoy the act of performing and watching their peers perform.

Conclusion

The Living Newspaper was a great supplemental activity to my discussion class. Students gained skills in researching and understanding a news story from the different perspectives of the people involved in it. Students were creative, collaborative, and opinionated in presenting the news story to the audience. They also overcame inhibition and gained some public speaking skills by showing their work to the whole class. One thing I found difficult was having spectators actively participate in the work, other than through post-discussion questions. I think this activity would need to be refined and repeated several times before Japanese students have the confidence to stand up, participate, and explore its therapeutic potential. But as a way to examine social issues and how they may affect the students, it was a good start.

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English *Noh* Theater Workshop: Lessons from a Japanese University EFL Classroom

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Abstract

Recognizing the value of performing arts activities within EFL education, teachers have experimented with a wide variety of approaches in their teaching. This article draws broadly on one such project which took place at a prefectural university in Fukushima during late 2016 and early 2017. Here, English was embedded in a traditional Japanese dramatic form and students in a third-year elective course developed an English language *Noh* theatre set in cyberspace. While this work is discussed in detail elsewhere (Rockell, 2019), the current article focuses on some of the practical ways the project was carried out and uses these ways as a basis for a suggested English Noh Theatre workshop to be offered to language teachers in Japan in the near future.

Like many other language teachers based in Japan, I am fortunate enough to be able to attend local live performances of traditional theatre such as *Kabuki* and *Noh*. As an ethnomusicologist, however, I have never been quite satisfied with being only an occasional spectator. I wanted to discover what it is really like to learn Noh directly from a Japanese teacher. Accordingly, I have been studying Noh as a *deshi,* or beginning student of *utai* (chant) and *shimai* (dance) in Aizu-Wakamatsu, Fukushima prefecture since 2015. At the same time, most of my recent academic work has focused on teaching English through Performance-Assisted Learning or PAL (Kluge, 2018b; Rathore, 2018), and in particular, music (Rockell, 2016; Rockell & Ocampo, 2014). Inspired by the work of Richard Emmert (Emmert, 1994), I began to develop the idea of educational English language Noh drama, which I recently trialed with third-year students at the University of Aizu as part of an elective course. I deal with this English Noh

play extensively in other soon-to-be published work from the points of view of intercultural performing arts, and the sociolinguistic notion of translingualism (Rockell, in press). In this article, however, I will examine some of the practical aspects of teaching Noh in English and set out a suggested workflow for developing educational English language Noh projects. The suggestions made are based on the experience of working with students at the University of Aizu (henceforth referred to as Aizu), learning traditional Noh with a local Japanese teacher, and attending workshops in Japan directed specifically at foreigners. The article is written with a view towards introducing this style of teaching at practical workshops for PAL teachers in Japan in the near future.

First Steps

Traditional Japanese Noh combines poetry, drama, music, song, and dance (Choo, 2004; Emmert, 1994; Hensley, 2000; Komparu, 2005). Nowadays, Noh teachers specialize in teaching only one, or sometimes two, of these areas, though they may well be personally competent in other areas. Written scripts use old style *kanji*, or Japanese ideographs, include antiquated language, and quote liberally from classical literature and Buddhist texts. This makes learning utai chants very challenging, and perhaps even more so for non-Japanese students. Such students can more immediately experience Noh at the very beginning by trying *suriashi* or sliding feet walking style. I noted that this approach was followed at a beginner's Noh workshop hosted by the *Kanze* school of Noh for delegates at the International Musicological Society Congress in Tokyo 2017. Similarly, limited by space, *Kyogen* master Tokuro Miyake the 10th also emphasized stance first when teaching predominately non-Japanese participants at an Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Professional Communication Society workshop at the Shibaura Institute of Technology in 2018. Thus, a Noh workshop can best commence with a short demonstration of Noh -style walking by the instructor. The start of a workshop also provides an appropriate opportunity to display the wonderfully elegant costumes. Following this, participants can all stand, adopt the *kamae* or basic Noh posture in imitation of the instructor, and try taking their first steps in Noh (Moore, 2014). Of course, it is easier to move on a polished wooden Noh stage wearing the traditional white socks with a toe-separation called *tabi*. These can be made available to

participants to purchase for an additional fee or alternatively participants could be asked to simply bring a pair of white socks to the workshop. If a smooth floor area is not available at the venue, instructors can provide a rectangular mat of thin polished wood, vinyl, or a similarly smooth material and students can line up and take turns passing over the mat. At this stage the instructor coaches the participants individually on weight balance, manner of stepping, and position of head and arms. To complete this phase of the workshop, a Noh mask can be introduced to participants for them to try on and enjoy the fascinating experience of Noh walking with the limited visibility that the mask provides.

The Chant: Approaches to Drilling

Having experienced Noh walking, workshop participants can then try utai (chanting). Depending on the venue and individual health conditions, students can either kneel *seiza* style or sit upright in a chair with the hands placed on their thighs towards the knee and with fingers pointing inwards. Many present-day amateur students of Noh are of advanced age, so a variety of mini-stools and chairs are provided for students who are no longer able to comfortably adopt seiza for long periods. The same rote-learning, call and response imitation method used in traditional Noh lessons can be used with students at English Noh workshops. First, students can briefly experience utai in Japanese. Students' competence in Japanese might vary greatly, so we begin with long single syllables drawn from hiragana such as the vowel sounds あ、え、い、お、う(ah, ei, ii, oh, ooh).

Next, romanized copies of the first two lines of the standard beginners' répertoire *Tsurukame* (The Crane and the Tortoise) can be distributed to participants and drilled using additive repetition and back spacing (building up a sentence syllable by syllable starting with the final syllable). The instructor should also explain a little about *Tsurukame's* narrative and how this play is frequently taught to beginning students of Noh (Moore, 2014). This is the point in the workshop where we begin to move more directly towards English Noh. After giving a brief background to English Noh, focusing particularly on the work of Richard Emmert, the instructor can explain the layout of a traditional Noh stage, the roles of actors such as *Shite* (protagonist) and

Waki (supporting actor), and the underlying syllabic pattern based on *tanka* poetry that is common to Noh. This understanding will make it easier for students to interpret the script, which is distributed to participants at this point in the workshop. In Aizu in 2016, both online and paper versions of scripts were made available, but students unanimously preferred working with paper versions, saying that they felt more comfortable making notes by hand or personalizing them in various other ways. The affordances and constraints of paper vs. online/electronic scripts begs further scrutiny, but at the present time I prefer to provide photocopied scripts for English Noh participants.

The Script

While English Noh plays exist, their scripts are not directed towards language learners. Consequently, a would-be instructor is faced with the task of translating, adapting, or creating a completely new script. The latter is the route I took when working with university students in Aizu, and the following brief description illustrates the breadth of creative freedom that an educational context allows. Usually, Noh stories deal with dramatic or tragic themes. In Aizu, I created *The Coding Catastrophe*, which is an Internet tragedy involving a search for lost data in the cloud and culminating in a robot dance. Any tragic story might be suitable as a theme for English language Noh, but here the key point was appropriateness for students. The student participants in Aizu were all computer science majors so a cyberspace theme was chosen in an attempt to interest and motivate them. This, however, was not the only reason for selecting such a theme. It was also chosen in an attempt was made to incorporate mimetic anthropomorphism.

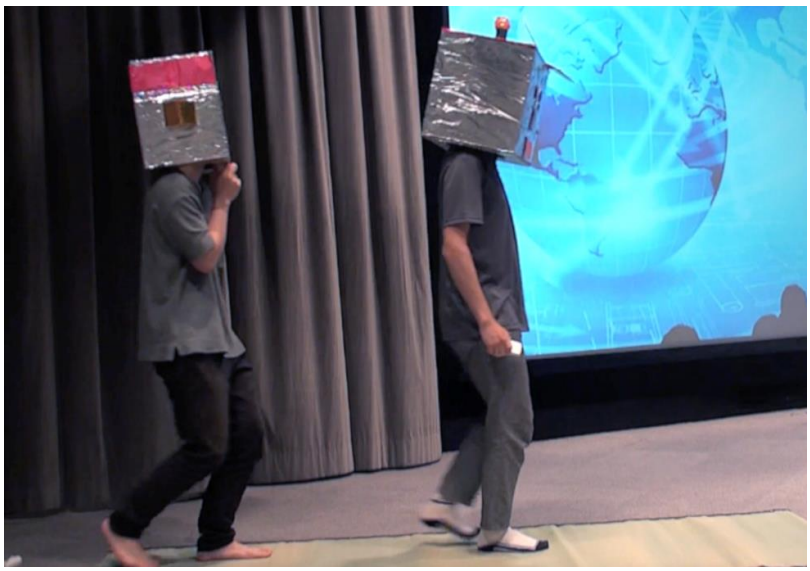

Figure 1. Multiple Shite return from the Cloud transformed into robots.

Mimetic anthropomorphism is an idea that I began working with in 2013. It arose as a result of my colleagues and myself experiencing pressure to adapt in all areas of our professional and personal lives, which were being increasingly colonized by changing technologies. In response, I reverted to a version of mimicry as has been described in post-colonial societies (Fay & Haydon, 2017). The first of these plays was *Smart Phone Baby and the Galapagos Girls*, performed at the Heights Centre English School in Hokkaido in 2013. Here, as seen below, the performers' cellphones are incorporated, worn around the dancers' necks as they bob on the spot performing movements that suggest ringing, buzzing, vibrating, and updating.

Figure 2. Cellphone dance in *Smart Phone Baby and the Galapagos Girls*, HCES Hokkaido, 2013 (Photo by HCES).

This use of mimetic anthropomorphism continued in Aizu with the Noh Shite undergoing a transformation having retrieved lost data from the cloud and returned to save his professional reputation. After personally spending many hours seated at a work computer over a 4-year period, I began to contemplate the idea that humans could become deeply attuned with and influenced by machines, and even develop robot-like walking styles. This was also an inspiration for the English Noh play.

While the themes described above were relevant in their specific educational settings, they may not be appropriate for an English Noh workshop aimed at a broad spectrum of language teachers. For these purposes, it would be more helpful to adapt a script that has already been prepared for an educational context such as Kluge's *Tanabata* readers' theatre script (Kluge, 2018a). To convert a script to a basic Noh style, the following guidelines should be followed:

1. The play is divided into the three sections *jo* (introduction) *ha* (exposition) and *kyu* (denouement).
2. In general, the text is adapted to follow the syllabic pattern of tanka poetry (5-7-5-7-7).
3. The roles of shite (main actor or protagonist), waki (supporting actor), and *jiutai* (chorus of chanters) are determined and represented in the script. While usually there is a single waki, for educational purposes multiple waki can help to increase participation.
4. Jiutai sections can be extended through repetition and the incorporation of more descriptive detail that helps to evoke the context.

As a concrete example, Kluge's setting of *Tanabata* begins:

> *Narrator*: Once upon a time, up in the heavens lived some gods. The king of the heavens was named Tentei.
> *Tentei*: I am Tentei, the king of the sky. I am strong and just. I make sure everything runs smoothly, that everyone is doing their jobs and things are always as they should be.
> *Chorus*: Strong Tentei! Just Tentei! (Kluge, 2018a)

Adapting this opening section for an educational English Noh would see the first lines of the narrator and Tentei both taken on by the waki and the chorus extended as follows. Note that / indicates syllable divisions and the number of syllables follow in parenthesis.

Jo (Introduction)

Waki: Here/ in/ the/ hea/vens (5)
I/ live/ in/ the/ Sky/ Pa/lace (7)
King/ Ten/tei's/ my/ name (5)
Strong/ and/ just/ I/ help/ people (7)
Live/ safe/ly and/ work/ smooth/ly (7)

Jiutai: Pa/lace/ in/ the/ sky (5)
Migh/ty Ten/tei lives/ on/ high (7)
King/ of/ the/ hea/vens (5)
Migh/ty Ten/tei rules/ the/ sky (7)
Migh/ty Ten/tei/ lives/ on/ high (7)

Note that in Japanese Noh, the n (ん) sound in Tentei (てんてい) would likely be considered as a separate syllable and the full name Tentei would take up 4 syllable units. In our stress-timed English Noh, however, Tentei is considered as having only two syllables.

A suggested script workflow would follow the following sequence:

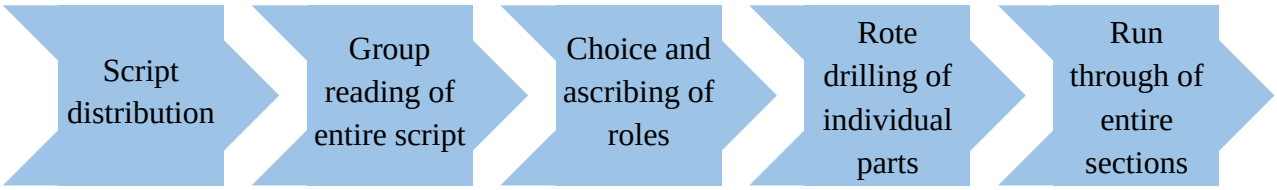

Figure 3. Suggested script work sequence.

Although full-length scripts can be prepared for English Noh workshops, the amount of material covered will depend entirely on circumstances such as time frame and number of

participants. At the University of Aizu, seven rehearsals each lasting ninety minutes were required to prepare an English Noh play of six minutes duration. In the case of a large number of workshop participants with a limited time frame, participants could be divided into three separate troupes, rehearsing the *jo*, *ha* and *kyu* sections respectively. Also, while basic workshops should provide ready-made scripts, at more advanced levels participants could collaborate on writing activities and create their own scripts based on their own choice of tragic theme.

Costumes and Set

The traditional Noh stage is simply adorned with only the image of a large pine tree that symbolizes everlasting life painted on the back wall of the stage. At the university of Aizu, we instead used an image of the global Internet in keeping with the cyberspace theme in place of the large pine tree. Although the Noh costumes and masks are of great beauty, the performance space is generally sparse. It thus becomes incumbent on the audience to imbue what they see and hear with a richness of interpretation and imagination. Accordingly, there is no need to prepare an elaborate stage set when conducting an English Noh workshop. On this occasion we also used homemade masks with features that resembled Steve Jobs and the Japanese entrepreneur Horiemon.

Figure 4. Waki on stage performing *The Coding Catastrophe* in the University of Aizu Ubic 3D Theatre 2016.

We also prepared two portable tatami mats. One of these was used by the assembled jiutai and the other was used to approximate the *hashigakari,* or hanging bridge to the other world, by means of which the waki enters and leaves the stage area. Also, students used cell phones in place of the ubiquitous folding fans.

One significant feature of a traditional Noh stage is the vertical pillar, by means of which actors orient themselves spatially, despite limited visibility while wearing masks. In Aizu, we simply placed a chair on the stage where a pillar would usually be, but this was not totally effective and students complained of not knowing where they were on stage. At the time of writing we are still searching for an effective solution to this problem.

For the purposes of an English Noh workshop, the following items should then be prepared:

1. Two portable tatami mats (or blankets if this is not possible).
2. A representative image for wall at the back of the stage (either PowerPoint or a large poster).
3. Masks (basic masks bought from either a toy store or discount store and then adjusted to suit by the workshop organizers or participants – the number required will vary but four would be a good starting estimate).

Other Performance Considerations

As mentioned earlier, the language education context allows for liberal adjustment to the protocols that would normally apply in traditional Japanese Noh. The use of multiple shite and waki so as to give greater speaking opportunities to participants is an example of this.

For a single workshop, it is less reasonable to expect performers to memorize their lines, so scripts should be prepared that are durable and with appropriate-sized font and page breaks that encourage page turns at appropriate places during the play.

In traditional Noh, the *hayashi* or musical group of drums and Noh flute are very important. However, the approximation or incorporation of a hayashi in a basic English Noh workshop is likely to be too complex and draw the focus away from language learning.

Nevertheless, the instructor could usefully play a short recording of a typical hayashi to give them a sense of this important musical dimension of Noh, and even include the recording at certain points during the performance. Longer or more advanced English Noh workshops could certainly incorporate live instrumentalists and drummers, and this is an aspect for further consideration.

Conclusion

The techniques set out in this article offer teachers and students alike an opportunity to engage vigorously with English while at the same time learning some of the basic features of a classical form of Japanese drama. While there is some complex decision-making involved in preparing appropriate scripts, the general simplicity of Noh staging reduces the necessary preparation time for would-be English Noh instructors.

Reporting on *The Coding Catastrophe* performed by students at the University of Aizu at conferences, both within Japan and overseas, has frequently invited positive commentary. This, combined with observations of traditional Noh workshops for non-Japanese participants, suggests that English language Noh workshops aimed at English language teachers, based on the workflows and guidelines presented in this paper, could be well received and be a useful potential site of further learning and discovery. Also, during the hermeneutic establishment of the workflow suggested earlier, based entirely on qualitative data from a recent more extensive study, important areas for more future investigation arose. These were:

1. The use of paper vs. electronic scripts
2. Student co-creation of scripts as a potential writing exercise
3. Practical ways of approximating Noh stage pillars as a visual guide for performers
4. The problem of incorporating the hayashi or musical group into English Noh workshops

I am hopeful that when language teachers in Japan are invited to workshops on Noh in the near future and are asked whether they think Noh in English is something they would consider doing in class, their response will be a resounding “Yes.”

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Top Ten Improv Games for EFL Classrooms

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Abstract

This paper focuses on improvisation (also known as improv), which is one of the dramatic techniques that teachers are using in EFL classrooms today. Many teachers have found that improvisation is valuable for a multitude of reasons, including increasing student motivation and lowering foreign language anxiety, creating a positive learning environment, and generally increasing the level of enjoyment for foreign language students. There are numerous possibilities for teachers who would like to use improv games as a main component, or as a supplement, to the standard curriculum in their foreign language classes. This paper discusses the history of improvisation, and then gives a detailed explanation of ten popular improv games that teachers can use in their classes. It should be noted that these games are discussed as used by the author and may not match exactly with the definitions or parameters of similar games found on improvisation websites or in books about improvisation.

Many foreign language teachers are searching for new and innovative techniques to enhance the classroom learning environment and increase student engagement and classroom enjoyment. One option that some teachers are implementing is Performance-Assisted Learning (PAL). PAL is a growing trend in the EFL community in Japan because of the variety and freshness the techniques offer in comparison with the standard textbooks and regular activities that seem to saturate the foreign language curriculum. There are a wide variety of choices among the techniques within PAL (Kluge, 2018). Improvisation is one option that can be valuable within the umbrella of PAL because of the variety of games to choose

from, ease of use, potential for enjoyment, and increased engagement by foreign language learners. With resources such as books by Spolin (1963) and Johnstone (1979), and a plethora of articles on the subject, there are hundreds of improvisation games to choose from so that teachers can easily find games that match the skill level of the learners in their particular classrooms.

Improv games are also valuable for reinforcing speech patterns that are part of the standard curriculum but going one step further and providing the catalyst for more creative and genuine language use. As noted by Kobayashi (2013, p. 166), "The rules of improvisation can help to bring these elements back into the classroom and give students the confidence to become successful communicators and engage in spontaneous conversations." Students might be more apt to practice target language if they are given the freedom of expression and choice that improv games offer as a fundamental aspect of their nature. According to Becker and Roos (2016, p. 9), "In order to progress in their acquisition of the target language and to become truly communicatively competent, learners also need to be able to use language spontaneously and creatively." Improvisation offers the means for creativity in oral communication practice that can help students achieve higher levels of learning and proficiency.

Another valuable aspect of improvisation is the focus on cooperation and mutual understanding within the process of performing. Specifically, almost all improv games that are performed with more than one player require teamwork, cooperation, and reciprocity. As noted by Athiemoolam (2004), "Dramatic activity also fosters the skills of group interaction since the learners have to work in groups to discuss, negotiate and reach consensus," (p. 5). Students may be more likely to become engaged in the learning process if they enjoy the improv games that help to reinforce their learning.

History of Improv

Improvisation has been an important component of theater perhaps since the beginning of the art form. However, the art or act of improvisation in American theater was solidified, and eventually defined, by the works of Viola Spolin and Keith Johnstone. As noted by Holdus et al. (2016), "After Commedia Dell'Arte died off, improvisational theatre was separately reinvented by two people, who in many ways have shaped improvisational theatre as it exists today: Johnstone (2012)

and Spolin (1963)." Her seminal guidebook *Improvisation for the Theater*, first published in 1963 and with two subsequent editions, has become known as the fundamental text for all those who have an interest in improvisation, and is sometimes referred to as the "Bible of improvisational theater" (Elliot, 2018). Actors, teachers, directors, and students throughout the world have used her methods and ideas for improvisation. More recently, foreign language professionals are using improvisation and other drama techniques which fall under the umbrella of PAL. Improvisation in particular is gaining momentum as a viable tool for foreign language teaching and learning, as opposed to the more common role-play activities that are included already in many EFL textbooks.

Another pioneer in the field of improvisation is Keith Johnstone. His influence in improvisation cannot be understated because of the sheer volume of ideas and quality of creative force that he has put forth since he began his career serving as the Associate Artistic Director of the Royal Court Theater in the 1950s. In addition to the two seminal books, *Impro: Improvisation and the Theater* (1979), and *Impro for Storytellers* (1999), his catchy slogans have become well-known to those who follow improvisation in any capacity. What allows Johnstone to produce innovative and useful improvisation games is his deep well of creativity and innovative thought. One example is found in his first published volume, where Johnstone (1979) stated:

> As I grew up, everything started getting grey and dull. I could still remember the amazing intensity of the world I'd lived in as a child, but I thought the dulling of perception was an inevitable consequence of age… I've since found tricks that can make the world blaze up again in about fifteen seconds, and the effects last for hours. For example, if I have a group of students who are feeling fairly safe and comfortable with each other, I get them to pace about the room shouting out the wrong name for everything that their eyes light on (p. 13).

This innate ability to understand the creative aspects of improvisation are what practitioners like Spolin and Johnstone have shared with the theater world. Teachers implementing improv and other PAL techniques today seek to expose their students to this creative energy in hopes of enhancing the learning process for foreign language students. Many modern educators adhere to the notion that it is no longer adequate to simply rely on pedagogical practices focused on teacher-centered lectures, but rather accept the need for student participation in the learning process

(Maheux & Lajoie, 2011). The qualities inherent in improvisation (creativity, spontaneity, and innovative thinking), are key elements that teachers can rely on to try and improve student engagement and increase enjoyment for their foreign language students. With this in mind, the following are ten improv games that teachers can try with their foreign language classes.

Top Ten Improv Games

There are a multitude of possibilities when teachers are deciding which improvisation exercises to try in their classes. The following is a top ten list of highly effective activities taken from personal experience and informal self-reflective practices. These practices include informal surveys and one-on-one discussions with students following completion of the improvisation activities at various times throughout my last five years of university teaching. The list begins with the top three choices, which are geared towards lower-level or beginner-level English students. These first three activities can be used at primary and secondary school levels as well as university because they require little or no English oral competency.

Activity One: Mirror, Mirror

Mirror, mirror, sometimes referred to simply as *mirror* or *copycat*, is a simple and fun warm-up activity that is useful for energizing a subdued class or for getting the creative juices flowing before moving on to more complex improvisation or other drama techniques. To begin, choose two of the more outgoing students in the class and have them stand facing each other about three or four feet apart. If the class is a newer class for the teacher, it might be better for the teacher to take part in the demonstration portion of the activity.

Next, one of the two participants will begin the improvisation by moving their arms in any way they choose. This can be simple waving up and down, or more complex movements such as breakdancing-style waving or disjointed movements; anything works in this improv. Partner B must try and imitate, or mirror, the movements of partner A as best as they can. There is no set time limit for how long the mirroring should last. Generally, 20-30 seconds is enough. The key is for the lead player to be creative and spontaneous in their movements, such that the action is engaging and interesting for the observers and the participants.

Step two is for partner A and partner B to switch roles. Now partner B begins the action and partner A does the mirroring. Again, spontaneity and creative expression are the key. If the teacher observes partner B repeating the same movements as partner A in turn one, then the improv should be stopped and new players should be inserted from the audience. The time for turn two can be shorter if the action loses energy or can be extended if partner B chooses to try and "one-up" partner A's movements in turn one, which would be a desirable progression.

Turn three follows turn two, but this time there is no leading partner. The teacher will facilitate the action with a basic signal to begin. At this time both partners begin moving and simultaneously trying to mirror their partner's movements. This is when the stakes are raised and the game increases in intensity. Along with the increase of action, students must now utilize cooperation and teamwork skills, which magnifies the value of the activity. This can be used as a wonderful lead-in to pair or group work because students' fundamental tendency to work together is activated through turn three of the improv.

After partner A and partner B have successfully completed the demonstration portion of the activity it is time to include the entire class. The students form two lines, facing each other in the same manner that the demonstration took place. The same three rounds can be utilized, or the teacher may choose to skip ahead to turn three depending on time and student engagement. The activity can also be done in a *kaiten sushi* or *speed-dating* format where students rotate partners after a random interval. This option allows for more variety and interaction with a wider range of partners.

Mirror, mirror ranks number one on the list because of the simple nature of the game, but perhaps more important for foreign language students is the fact that the activity involves no language skills whatsoever. Because of this aspect of the improv game it can be used in any foreign language environment, and at any grade level, with positive outcomes (such as increased energy and student engagement) almost guaranteed.

Activity Two: Fruit

Activity two is called *fruit*, and it involves another simple game that can be used as a warm-up activity or as a change-of-pace activity during a lesson on food. In this activity, two or more

students come to the front of the classroom or to a designated area that allows for some movement and for all others to view the game easily. If the classroom has movable desks it may be beneficial to clear a space in the middle of the room and have the students form a wide circle to allow the players to perform the improv in the center area.

The improv begins when the teacher assigns a situation to the players. There is no requirement for the situation, although it would be best if it is something familiar to the students and filled with interesting possibilities. For example, it would be best not to try to use a situation between a business CEO and a salary man because students do not have a frame of reference for this scenario. Whereas, if the situation were a teacher who catches one or more students cheating on a test, this would be something that the students could relate to because they would be used to the environment that the improv explores.

The scenario can also be decided upon by the students after brainstorming a list of possibilities. This option allows for the students to be more invested in the entire activity as well. After choosing the scene the next step is to choose a designated fruit. Again, the teacher can assign a fruit, but it is best if the students decide. The teacher can even ask for possibilities, and then have a vote between the top two or three.

Once the scenario has been chosen, the players are given a signal to begin. At this time the students act out the scene, but instead of using regular dialogue they can only say the fruit that has been designated for the scene. The players must try and express their thoughts and feelings without using regular speech. This forces the players to rely on facial expressions, gestures, and intonation when saying the fruit word. There is a good chance for laughter and humorous outcomes with this improv activity, which helps to create a positive atmosphere and enhanced learning environment. As with most improv games, there is no set time limit. The teacher, working as facilitator, can decide when to end the scene.

Other options for *fruit* involve adding or eliminating players during the improv or changing the designated fruit midway through the game. The only drawback to *fruit* is that only a few players can perform the improv at a time, but this can be remedied easily by dividing the class into small groups and having each group perform their own game. This might make for a very loud classroom however, so this option may be better for smaller classes of less than 20 students.

Activity Three: Numbers

The third activity is called *numbers*, or sometimes referred to as *1-50*. This is another activity that involves very little English language skill, but still can be valuable for inducing spontaneity and creativity. Furthermore, it is useful for creating energy, enthusiasm, and a positive atmosphere at the beginning of a lesson or as a supplement to a lesson based on numbers. This activity is especially useful for low-level learners who are unfamiliar with numbers beyond 10, or for review of numbers for intermediate-level learners.

This activity begins by choosing two participants. Again, it may be useful, but is not necessary, to choose two higher skill level classmates or two of the more outgoing members of the group. The teacher can also participate in the first round as a demonstration. The game then proceeds with a simple exchange between the two players, in which one or more numbers is said in succession by each player. For example, player one may begin by saying 'one, two, three', followed by player two's reply of 'three, four'. There are no rules about how many or how few numbers are to be stated in each turn. This is where the teamwork and the cooperation of the players is important. Through non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions or gestures, the two players will realize when each is finished with their particular set of numbers and when it is now time for the other to take their turn.

The key element of the improv game is that emotion and expression must be included when each player gives their turn of numbers. Similarly to the *fruit* game, the idea is that the two players are having a "conversation" using non-standard oral communication; in this case only numbers.

A possible differentiation is to add the element of an argument somewhere in the number stream. For example, the teacher may require that the players become involved in an argument for numbers 31-40, and that the argument is then resolved by the time 50 is reached. This adaptation helps to ensure that the two players do not get stuck using the same emotions or repeating the same pattern when taking their various turns.

Although the game is designed as a two-player improv it can also be adapted for more than two participants. In this scenario the players involved would need increased teamwork and

turn-taking awareness. However, if two or more of the players started their turns at the same time it would not necessarily be a hindrance to the game. In fact, it might allow for some added humor and some more improvisation from all players in the game.

Activity Four: Tag

The first three activities are excellent for warm-ups or for very low-level English learners. The next three on the list can also be used in these situations but are more suited for intermediate and advanced-level English learners or for classes where there has already been a positive learning environment established through time spent together and familiarity among all group members and the teacher. For these situations the improv game *tag* is an excellent choice. Perhaps the most well-known of the improv games; *tag* involves two or more players who act out a scene that has no pre-determined direction or outcome. Within the course of the scene a student not involved in the scene at the beginning will touch a participating player and say "tag," replacing the tagged player in the scene. The new player must then change the direction of the action in any way they wish. This can be done in any manner that the interloper chooses, so there are innumerable possibilities for creativity and innovation within the scene.

There are no set rules as to how many new members can "tag" into the scene. There are also no set rules as to how long the scene should last. As a general rule it might be helpful to finish the scene when each original player has been tagged out, or to simply let the scene come to a natural end after a progression of action has seemingly been resolved or when there is a significant pause in action or dialogue, or a lull in the overall energy of the scene.

Activity Five: Freeze

Activity five, known as *freeze*, is similar in design to *tag*, but with one distinct difference. As with *tag,* the game begins with two or more players acting out a scene with only a starting point for the action determined at the beginning. In *freeze* the difference comes when another player enters the game. Instead of touching an existing player, the person who wants to enter the action simply says "freeze", and then takes the place of any player they choose. The key to the game, and what provides for the most challenging aspect of the scene, is that the person entering the scene must do

so with their body in the exact position of whoever they are replacing. The new player can then become a completely different character, which includes an animal that fits the shape that the departing player was set in at the time of the freeze.

There are several variations that can make freeze even more exciting and unpredictable. The first is to have all the non-participating class members line up, and then the teacher inserts each one at random intervals by saying "freeze," such that all class members will have participated by the time the game is finished. With large classes the teacher can also divide the class into smaller groups and have each group perform their own game.

Another possible variation is to have the line of non-participating members stand with their backs to the action so that they are unaware of what position the players are in when they must enter the scene. This possibility increases the need for quick thinking and creative improvisation.

Activity Six: Tell the Tale

This game is often used in writing assignments because of the cooperative nature and elements of teamwork that are required. However, this activity can also be used as a fun oral improv game. The game involves a continuous story that is told by the members of the class as a whole, or it can also be done with smaller groups depending on class size and set-up. The teacher will set the stage for the game by having all class members stand up and form a circle. If the class is large the game can be played by having smaller groups stand in designated areas and form their own circle.

The teacher will begin the story by giving a prompt, which is simply an opening line of an undetermined narrative. The story is then continued by the next player in the circle. The action continues by each class member adding a new sentence to the story. The teacher can choose to end the tale when every player has participated, or the story can continue until there seems to be a natural end or when time constraints dictate.

Some variations include having class members or group members brainstorm for opening lines before beginning the game. Another option is for the class to brainstorm a list of descriptive adjectives and verbs that then must be included whenever the teacher or the players decide within

the course of the storytelling. This option also gives teachers an opportunity to teach and reinforce lessons on descriptive adjectives, verb tenses, and general sentence structure.

Activity Seven: Helping Hands

The seventh activity, called *hands* or *helping hands*, is a more physical-based improv game, but also involves language use along with the standard elements of creativity, teamwork, and innovative thinking. As the name suggests, players will be helping each other by taking on the role of the hands for the student who is telling a story or acting out a scene. It seems a bit complicated at first glance, but in fact this is a very easy improv game that can be quite humorous and entertaining to all who are involved or viewing the action. The set-up is simple in that one or more students are chosen to be the players. The players then come to the front of the class, middle of the circle, or other designated area where the entire class can see and hear clearly.

The teacher then assigns a scene that the participants must act out, but with a twist. A corresponding classmate is chosen to be the "hands" of each participating member. The "hands" student stands or sits behind the main player and puts their arms under the players armpits such that their arms and hands appear to be the arms and hands of the person doing the scene. Then the "hands" person must gesture and make movements to try and express the emotions and feelings that the main player is saying. Very creative *hands* players might add certain small actions to increase the engagement of the audience, such as scratching the head or chin of the player or rubbing their nose or ear to express some emotion or to imitate regular physical tics that many people have.

Activity Eight: Emotional

The eighth improv game, which is called *emotional* or *emotion*, is another game that does not rely heavily on language skills, but rather focuses on the use of changing emotions and irony to create fun and exciting exchanges. The game is set up in much the same way as many of the other games on this list; there are two or more players chosen to take part in the action. The scene is chosen by the teacher or assigned through brainstorming or by a call for ideas. After setting the scene, the

players begin to exchange what can be considered as a normal dialogue for whatever the situation calls for.

The game then turns on the addition of a specific emotion that one or more players is assigned by the teacher or the audience. For example, a student may call out "anger," at which time one or more of the players must continue in the normal progression of the scene but by showing the specified emotion regardless of the content of the dialogue. This can cause a great deal of ironic humor if the scene is completely different in emotional content than what would be expected in a normal exchange. There are some really funny possibilities, such as a wedding proposal given in extreme sadness, or a funeral eulogy given in blissful happiness.

The class should decide beforehand whether one or more of the players will take on the designated emotion so that the action is not interrupted during the scene. Adding multiple emotions within the same scene can be tricky but is possible with intermediate to higher -level classes. Another possible alteration is to combine a game of *emotional* with *tag* or *freeze*. The combination would allow for many students to participate, as well as ensuring variety and spontaneity when new players enter the fray.

Activity Nine: Little Voices

The ninth activity is called *little voices*, and it is a fun and creative improv game that can be used to reinforce situation-specific language learning, such as ordering food at a restaurant or checking in at an airport or hotel. The set-up is to choose a scene and then decide on the number of players. The players then take on the role of inanimate objects in the scene rather than the people who would normally be acting out the scenario. For example, in a scene involving ordering food at a restaurant the players could take on the roles of the menu, table cloth, silverware, chairs, or even the lights on the ceiling or the pictures on the walls of the restaurant. The idea is that the players have a language exchange that is a sort of running account of the action that the people of the scene are doing but given from the vantage point of the inanimate objects. For example, the player being the silverware might comment about how they were not cleaned properly and how the restaurant goers are unhappy with them.

There are many humorous possibilities with *little voices*, but the players need to be creative, resourceful, and insightful when creating dialogues because the game will stall if they are unwilling to try and complete the scenario enthusiastically. For this reason, the game should be used only when the students are comfortable with the scenarios they are given. Ideally the game should be used as a post-lesson follow-up for reinforcement of learned concepts rather than as a warm-up or introductory activity. Additionally, *little voices* is probably better for small numbers of players (ideally two to four and not more than five) because of the challenging language and creative thinking involved. Smaller seminar classes would be a prime situation for utilizing this improv game.

Activity Ten: Remote Control

The tenth activity is a personal favorite because of the connection with electronics and video viewing involved. The game is called *remote control* or *remote*, and it involves acting out improvisational scenarios, much like many of the games discussed previously. The twist with *remote control* is that the action can be controlled much like a video or movie can be controlled when using a remote control device. For example, the audience might yell out "rewind," at which point the player or players must try and retrace their previous movements and dialogue. Just like in the comedy movies that employ this action, the results are almost always hilarious and entertaining.

The game is generally performed as a warm-up because of the quick nature but can also be used as a follow-up activity for reinforcement of concepts or specific language that has been taught recently. The fact that there are a limited number of actual commands that could be employed is a possible hindrance to the game, but if the game is kept short and spontaneous then it is fine to use the same commands several times. One key factor is that the player or players must try and continue the action even if they are given a challenging command. For example, if someone yells "mute" the players must continue in the normal progression of the scene, only without any noise. This allows for excellent practice using expressions and gestures. This aspect of the game makes it a good choice for advanced classes or for practice with presentation classes.

Gestures and facial expressions, along with posture and stance, are key components taught in many presentation courses, so using *remote control* would be useful in these situations.

Variations

All of the improv games discussed in this article are open for adjustments and modifications. Additionally, many of these games are well-suited for combinations with others on the list or with games not mentioned in this discussion. Specifically, the games *tag* and *freeze* can be combined with almost any other improv game because they are basically focused on exchanging players into the action.

Concerning the language requirements, modifications can be made for all of the games listed here by spending some time reinforcing target language or key words and phrases before performing the games. If necessary, the teacher can make a list of key words and phrases on the board or projector before beginning the activity. This is borderline crossing over into role-play activities but can still qualify as improv if choice remains available for the players when performing the actions rather than requiring specific words and phrases be used. The teacher must be careful to make the distinction between a role-play activity and an improv. Improvisation is sometimes confused with simulation or role-play, but it is important that the scene has an open-ended aspect in order to qualify as a true improvisation (White, 2012). Therefore, even if the teacher needs to make a list of key words and phrases for the students to use during the improv game, the element of improvisation is still intact as long as the outcomes are not pre-determined.

Conclusion

Improvisation can be a valuable tool for teachers at any grade level to implement within the context of a foreign language curriculum because of the elements of creativity, spontaneity, and innovation that improvisation offers. Improv games can be used effectively with just a basic knowledge of games to choose from and how to set up the games. Improvisation can be effective regardless of the teacher's experience or background (or lack thereof) in theater. Furthermore, improv games do not rely on any specific student skill level because the plethora of games to choose from ensures that there are games which match any environment. The possible advantages

of improvisation (increased motivation, lower anxiety, and a refreshing variety or change from the standard EFL classroom activities), make it worthwhile to try even if teachers are not very familiar with the background or basic structures of improvisation. The ten choices discussed in this paper provide a good starting point for teachers who are inexperienced in the use of improvisation but would like to add excitement and energy to their daily lessons. Additionally, there are hundreds of other improvisational theater games that can be used to practice speaking, listening, and presentations skills for English language learners.

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In the Classroom

Introduction to Debate for EFL Students: A 9-Week Course Syllabus

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Keywords: Debate, critical thinking, citing references, giving opinions, refutation, rebuttal, presentation, plagiarism,

Learner English Level: Intermediate and above

Learner maturity Level: Senior high school and above

Preparation Time: 10 to 30 minutes (varies by lesson/week)

Activity Time: 50 to 90 minutes per week, nine weeks

Materials: Handouts, worksheets, video clip, Internet access

Recently, many high schools have begun to offer "debate" classes as part of their English oral communications curriculum, but rarely provide the instructor with the curriculum or syllabus needed to teach such a class to English as a foreign language (EFL) students. This 9-week course provides students with the basic introductory tools to research topics so that they have evidence to build an argument and refute an argument in a simplified 10 minute, 6-team debate format. This multiple skill-building syllabus ensures that the students will be able to perform a debate at the end of 9 weeks while providing inexperienced debate teachers with methods and techniques that will make the process effective and enjoyable.

Preparation & Procedures

Week 1: Print *Debate Class 1* worksheet (Appendix A)* for the class. Use the worksheet as a guided practice to give and share opinions, identify key components of webpages for citing references, and paraphrase information to avoid plagiarism.

Week 2: Print *Debate Class 2* worksheet (Appendix B) for the class. Use the worksheet as a guided practice to give and share opinions, identify key components of webpages for citing references, and paraphrase information to avoid plagiarism. *(Note: Internet access is needed to complete this worksheet.)*

Week 3: Watch the video *STeP Structure of Debate (https://youtu.be/juuiZPQ1ZWk)* in class or assign as homework at the end of Week 2. This video will give a visual example of how the debate is structured. Print *Debate Class 3* worksheet (Appendix C) for the class. Use the worksheet as a guided practice to review the debate format the students will perform. Put into groups of 4 (2 pro and 2 con). Have students practice reading the script for debate training.

Week 4: Print *Debate Class 4* worksheets Pro and Con (Appendix D). Separate the entire class into two groups, Pros and Cons. In respective groups, put students into pairs, Speaker 1 and 2. If possible, keep Pros and Cons out of earshot from each other so that they cannot hear the opposing sides. Use the worksheet as a guided practice to build arguments for their position and predict and anticipate arguments from the opposing teams. Reunite the sides by taking one pair from Pro and one pair from Con. Repeating the script reading exercise from Week 3, have students read their arguments and listen to the opposing team and take notes.

Optional Activity: Print *Debate Topic Survey* handout (Appendix E). Allow students to vote on school-related debate topics that they would enjoy debating. Collect survey sheets at the end of class and tally results.

Week 5: Print *Debate Class 5* worksheet (Appendix F). Put students into groups of 6. Randomly distribute debate topics selected by students from Week 5 to each group. Groups decide Pro & Con speakers as well as speaking order. Use the worksheet as a guided practice to review the debate structure as well as practicing refutation, rebuttal, and closing statements.

Week 6 & 7: Students work in their 3-member teams to research, write, and practice their side of the debate. Groups should remain separated from the opposing sides. Emphasis should be given to timing (1 minute per speaker) and delivery (eye contact, intonation and inflection, and gestures). Print *Debate Rubric* handout (Appendix G) for the class. Review scoring criteria. The students may use the rubric as pre-debate self-evaluation to ensure that they have met all of the requirements.

Week 8 & 9: Students perform their final debate in class. If possible, the instructor should be responsible for the evaluation while another teacher, staff member, or student is responsible for time keeping.

Optional Activity: Print double-sided *Debate Rubric* handout (Appendix G). During the debate, the remaining teams in the audience watch, listen, and evaluate the debate performances. Students vote for the "winner" based on content, argument, and delivery. The instructor collects the evaluation sheets and tallies the score. Winners are announced after all the debates have been performed. Evaluation sheets may be given to the teams and used as feedback and a wrap-up to the course.

Conclusion

This is a nine-week syllabus that may be completed over the course of one academic term that incorporates the following objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. conduct basic research skills in English to investigate debate topics.
2. discern information between advantages (pros) and disadvantages (cons).
3. provide evidence to support their position and refute arguments from the opposing side.
4. develop critical thinking and analytical skills.
5. paraphrase passages from websites and online resources and cite them to avoid plagiarism.

Finally, this syllabus will provide inexperienced debate teachers with methods and techniques that will make the process manageable and effective.

Cynthia Gonzalez is an 18-year veteran second and foreign language teacher. She has taught ESL in California and EFL in Japan in a variety of educational settings. She holds a Master of Science degree in Education with an emphasis in TESOL from Temple University, Japan. Her specialties include debate, critical thinking, persuasive writing, and public speaking. Currently, her area of research is in investigating the variables that affect willingness to communicate in EFL learners and the effects and benefits of positive affirmations in the EFL classroom.

＊Appendices may be downloaded on our website at https://sites.google.com/site/speechdramaanddebatepublicsite/home/mask-gavel-archives

Context-less Dialogue (Drama-based EFL Activity)

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Quick Guide:

Keywords: Inflection, physicality, intention, emoting, creativity

Learner English Level: Any

Learner Maturity: Tertiary level

Class Size: Suitable for classes of 6-20 students

Preparation Time: 20-30 minutes

Activity Time: 45 minutes to an hour

Materials: Context-less dialogue (example included here)

This is a great activity that can help students work on emoting and using their bodies to communicate a message. Often used as an acting exercise, context-less dialogues can help students analyze a dialogue for clues and figure out what intentions the dialogue could convey. As the title suggests, there are multiple possibilities as the vagueness of the dialogue leaves it open to being between different people and in different contexts. It is up to the students to create meaning. The sample dialogue here is of medium difficulty; the teacher may choose to create dialogues of differing difficulty to match their students' levels.

Procedure

Step 1: Give the context-less dialogue (example below) to students in pairs.

Step 2: Tell the students that they should read the dialogue and decided who they are, what their relationship is, and what the situation is. Make sure that they do not tell other pairs this.

Step 3: Ask the students to practice in pairs the scene and explain to them that they should not tell other classmates any information about who they are or what the situation is. Explain that through their acting (physical as well as through emoting in the dialogue) they have to try to demonstrate what is happening for the other pairs to guess.

Step 4: Give the students 10-20 minutes, go around and answer any questions about the dialogue and provide some advice to the pairs. Alternately, in a large class, have pairs of students work in small teams, helping each other create a good scene.

Step 5: Have each pair perform their scene for the class or for other pairs. The audience must guess what the situation is and who the pair are.

Sample Dialogue

A: Oh, wow.

B: I know.

A: I can't believe it.

B: Yeah, I thought you might be surprised.

A: So, what now?

B: I… I don't know.

A: Right. Ok, well… hmmm…

B: Let's leave it for now.

A: Ok.

B: Shall we go?

A: Ok.

Comment

Side coaching is a great way of helping the students to connect their physicality and how they say their lines with conveying their intention. Observing different interpretations of the same lines also can help students to understand the importance not only of what they are saying but how they are

saying it. A reflective phase after the activity could be useful in helping the students further recognize this.

Conclusion

This activity keeps the dialogue simple to focus on the tone, intonation, and emphasis to convey a message, as well as the physicality. It can help connect, much like their L1, that it is not merely what you say, but how you say it that is important. The response to question and suggestions within this dialogue, for example, can convey whether A is enthusiastic about following B's plans or not. The opening phrase "Oh, wow" could be positive or negative surprise also, allowing for a wide range of situations. It may be useful for the teacher to start with a short dialogue that could be used as an example prior to the students trying on their own.

Aya Kawakami is a teacher, researcher, actress, and director living and working in Nagoya, Japan. She works as a lecturer at Aichi Shukutoku University, teaching drama related language courses, and as the artistic director of Theatre Iridescence, a multi-cultural theatre company. She is currently working on her doctorate which focuses on process drama in English language education.

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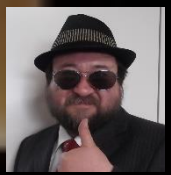

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