

Course Topic: Teaching Speaking**Course Instructor:**

Dianne Tyers has held numerous English language teaching, training and management positions over the past 22 years in six different countries. She owns Advance Consulting for Education, INC, an English language teacher training and curriculum development company. Dianne is currently a PhD candidate at OISE, University of Toronto and has a Masters of Applied Linguistics (University of Queensland) and an MBA (University of Western Ontario). She has presented at local, national and international conferences on teaching and management techniques, culture, and language learning.

Course Synopsis:

Drama provides us with a wonderful selection of activities and techniques to use in the English language classroom. Drama activities are interactive, creative, and just plain fun. They are effective with all personality types (both outgoing and reserved), all language ability levels, all ages and all class sizes. And best of all, you don't have to be a drama expert to use these activities.

In this course, we take you through why drama activities are effective in the language classroom and the different types of activities that you can select from. The majority of the course, however, involves introducing you to specific drama activities to use. At the end of the course you will have a full tool box of drama activities to draw from.

Course Agenda:

1. Why is Drama Effective in the Language Classroom?
2. Categories of Drama Activities
3. Drama Activities to Try

1. Why is Drama Effective in the Language Classroom?

- ▶ It's fun!!!!
- ▶ It energizes students.
- ▶ It is good for all types of learners (visual, auditory, kinesthetic/tactile).
- ▶ It allows students to be creative with the language.
- ▶ It allows students to use the language in context.

You do NOT need to be a drama expert in order to use drama techniques—they are just as easy to use as other teaching techniques.

2. Categories of Drama Activities

Match the following categories of drama activities with the correct definition. We will go over the answers in the video.

1. Warm-up and Cool-down Activities	a) activities that allow students the opportunity to imagine scenarios or situations based upon minimal clues they are given by the teacher or by other students.
2. Observation Activities	b) activities that work with words.
3. Interpretation Activities	c) activities that involve students noticing and interacting with their physical environment and their classmates.
4. Creation and Invention Activities	d) short, fun activities that get students energized or that relax the students at the end of the class. They often, but not always, involve physical movement. They can be verbal or non-verbal.
5. Wordplay Activities	e) activities that allow students to work to solve problems presented by the teacher.
6. Problem Solving Activities	f) activities that allow students to create situations or objects.

3. Drama Activities to Try

The following are sample activities for each of the drama techniques listed above. Not all of these activities will work with your student age group.

A. Warm-up and Cool-down Activities

Mirror Image

Materials: None

Time	Procedure
7-8 minutes	Divide the class into pairs. One pair is the lead person. The other person must copy everything the lead person does, but in a mirror image, with everything opposite. After 3 minutes, have the partners switch roles.

Freeze Frame

Materials: Recordings of one or two popular songs and a CD player.

Time	Procedure
7-10 minutes	The teacher plays a piece of popular music. Students get together in small groups and dance to the music. The teacher stops the music and calls out a scenario. In their groups, students have to freeze in a pose that fits that scenario. For example, if the teacher calls out “playing tennis” all participants have to strike a pose in which they look like they are playing tennis together. Other scenarios can include: playing basketball, flying an airplane, fighting, working in an office, eating dinner, shopping, playing soccer, teaching, waiting in line for a movie.

Building Construction

Materials: None

Time	Procedure
15-20 minutes	Divide the students into groups of five or six. The teacher says the name of a famous building (the Eiffel Tower, the Tower of London, the Empire State Building, the Pyramids, etc.). In their group, the students must construct that building using ONLY the people in their group and every group member must participate. Give them no more than five minutes to construct each building before moving on to the next building.

B. Observation Activities

What am I Holding?¹

Materials: A collection of objects with which students would be familiar.

Time	Procedure
	Divide the class into pairs. Students stand facing their partners, with their

¹ Alan Male and Alan Duff. 1993. Drama Techniques in Language Learning. Cambridge University Press.

10 minutes	hands behind their backs. The teacher places an object in the hands of one of the students in each pair. The student cannot see the object because it is behind his/her back. The other student in the pair must ask yes/no questions to the student with the object, in order to figure out what it is.
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Circle of Feelings²

Materials: None

Time	Procedure
15-20 minutes	<p>The students and the teacher sit in a circle. The teacher asks the students to choose a feeling or emotion each, and to think of an appropriate gesture to accompany it.</p> <p>The teacher begins by stating a feeling using the appropriate voice quality and gesture. For example, the teacher might tense their body and face, slam their right fist into their left palm, and say (loudly) "ANGER!" The group copies the stance, gesture, voice and word of the teacher. Next, the first student (S1) makes eye contact with the teacher, renders "ANGER" with them, and then offers a new feeling word and quality, perhaps "sad", with the appropriate voice quality and face/body gestures. The group then echoes "ANGER" and "sad". The second student (S2) will do "ANGER" with the teacher (making eye contact), "sad" with S1 (making eye contact), and then do his/her emotion for the group. The group then repeats all three of the feelings in sequence. This format is followed around the circle. To intensify the use of the nonverbal components, the group can later do all the feelings sequentially in unison, using only the face/body gestures (i.e. omitting the voice). You can also omit the face/body gestures for one round, and thus build the expressiveness of the voice, as the contrast between feelings is now relayed with just the voice. This activity should end with at least one sequence in which the group states in unison the feelings with their accompanying gestures.</p>

C. Interpretation Activities

One-Word Dialogues³

Materials: One or more short one-word dialogues.

Time	Procedure
15-20 minutes	<p>Sample one-word dialogue:</p> <p>A: Hungry? B: Very. A: Lunch? B: When? A: Noon? B: Perfect.</p> <p>Students work in pairs. Each pair is given a one-word dialogue. Make sure that</p>

² Mark Rittenberg. 1989. *The Teacher as Performer*. Vancouver Community College Press, p.3

³ Alan Male and Alan Duff. 1993. *Drama Techniques in Language Learning*. Cambridge University Press.

	at least two pairs have the same dialogue. In their pairs, students decide who is talking, where they are and what they are talking about. They rehearse the dialogue with the correct intonation for the situation they have created. They then get together with the other pair who has the same dialogue. They compare what they have created. They then work together to lengthen the dialogues.
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Group Charades

Materials: A list of 10-15 movie titles, activity names, people or places.

Time	Procedure
10 minutes	Divide the class into groups of four or five. One student from each group goes up to the teacher. The teacher gives each student the same name of a movie, activity or person. The students return to their respective groups to act out what they were given. They cannot speak. Their group members must guess what they are acting out. The person in the group who guesses the answer runs up to the teacher to get the next topic. The first group to work through the whole list is the winner.

D. Creation and Invention Activities

Themes and Scenes⁴

Materials needed: Ten small pieces of paper, each with a different theme on it ('crime doesn't pay', 'nobody loves me', 'you get what you deserve', 'live now and pay later', 'the early bird gets the worm', etc.) Ten small pieces of paper, each with a different scene on it (on a picnic, at a supermarket, in the airport, at a restaurant, etc.).

Time	Procedure
30-40 minutes	Divide the class into groups of four or five. One person from each group chooses one piece of paper with a theme on it and one with a scene on it. They must not look at the pieces of paper before they choose them. Each group has 20 minutes to prepare a short skit that integrates both the theme and the scene. They have to make up the characters, dialogue and actions. They may choose to use props as well. Each group then performs their skit for the whole class. The teacher provides language guidance and feedback as necessary.

Story Beginnings

Materials: The climactic ending of a dramatic story (a ghost story, a love story, a crime story).

Time	Procedure
20-30 minutes	Divide students into groups of three or four. Distribute the climactic ending of the dramatic story you have chosen. Read it together as a class and check for comprehension. Students work in groups of three (female, male, narrator) to write a short 3-4 line prequel, rehearse it with the climax, and perform it in front of the class. Tell them to keep their texts simple and short to focus on their gestures and stage movements as well as their vocal delivery.

⁴ Alan Male and Alan Duff. 1993. Drama Techniques in Language Learning. Cambridge University Press.

Tableaux

Materials: None.

Time	Procedure
25-35 minutes	Students are divided into groups of four or five. Each group is given a well-known story (a fairy tale, for example). They have fifteen minutes to read the story, assign characters and create three or four tableaux that capture the main stages of the story plot. The group performs their tableaux for the rest of the class. The class has to guess what story they are enacting.

E. Wordplay Activities

Group Spelling

Materials: None

Time	Procedure
7-10 minutes	Divide the students into groups of five or six. The teacher says a short word that the class has learned recently. Each group must arrange and shape themselves into the letters that spell out that word using all of the group members.

Alphabet Conversation

Materials: None

Time	Procedure
5-10 minutes	Students work in pairs. The teacher calls out a letter of the alphabet. One student has to start a conversation with a word that starts with that letter. Their partner must respond with a sentence starting with the next letter in the alphabet and so on. The teacher can end the activity at any time.

F. Problem Solving Activities

Committee Meeting

Materials: A scenario on a typical community or school issue.

Time	Procedure
25 minutes	Divide the students into groups of five or six. Give each group the scenario. Assign one group member as the committee chairperson, responsible for keeping the group on track and for ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to speak. Indicate that they have 20 minutes to come to a decision to resolve the scenario. At the end of the 20 minutes, ask each group what decision they arrived at and why. Examples of possible scenarios are: 1) You are on the entertainment committee for your school. You have to decide what kind of Christmas party to hold, and how to use the budget of xxx dollars; 2) You are on the police services committee for your town. You have to decide how to deal with a recent rise in vandalism in the town.

Life Raft

Materials: A list of fifteen objects that you would typically find on a boat.

Time	Procedure
20-25 minutes	Divide the students into groups of five or six. Give each group the list of objects. Indicate that they have to abandon their boat and get into a life raft. They only have room in the life raft for eight of the fifteen objects listed plus their group members. They must decide which objects to take and why. Give each group 15 minutes to make their decision. Have each group report on their decision to the whole class.

Remember: Drama allows your students to loosen up and use language creatively in real contexts. Drama techniques are VERY effective for language learning.

Thanks for participating!

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