

Drama and role play

Drama and role play can be fun and used successfully in any area of the curriculum. Drama is a very valuable tool for exploring issues, making learning memorable, encouraging cooperation and empathy.

The use of drama and role play can create an opportunity for the learner to hear and use language in a meaningful context, so as to be able to use it. Role play demonstrates how to use language in real life with a focus on communication. Drama is great for creating an opportunity for beginner EAL learners to communicate with others.

Types of activities using drama and role play

There are many ways of using drama and role play. Some of the simplest and most flexible are:

- ◆ Hot seating
- ◆ Freeze frame
- ◆ Teacher or other adult in role
- ◆ Improvising in pairs
- ◆ Working in groups to devise a scene in a familiar genre, e.g. TV news item or documentary
- ◆ Setting a scene involving the whole class making the whole room into e.g. The Village, The Island.
- ◆ Using people to represent something, e.g. Make a bar chart by getting the class to lie down on the floor of the hall and drawing round them in chalk.

Practical ideas for using drama and role play

- ✓ **Top tip:** Some people find the idea of drama very threatening, so use a non-threatening warm up exercise to relax everyone.
- ? **To consider:** Drama does not necessarily mean performance,
often the process is more important

Simple warm up games

- ◆ Stand or sit in a circle and go round the group with everyone saying their name and something they like beginning with the same letter: *My name is Pete and I like parachuting.* (Reassure the group that in drama you are pretending so it doesn't have to be true).
- ◆ One end of the room represents YES and the other end NO. Ask the class questions about how much they like different things and they can choose to stand in the middle, near the YES end, at the NO end etc. 'Do you like chocolate?' 'Do you like school?'
- ◆ The Sun Shines On. Arrange class in a circle with one chair for each person and one person standing in the middle. The person in the middle says (for example) 'The sun shines on everyone who has a sister'. Everyone who this applies to has to get up and sit down in a different chair. The person in the middle also tries to sit on a chair, so that each time the last person to sit down ends up in the middle of the circle and says 'The sun shines on everyone who watched 'Eastenders' last night' and so on.

Drama and role play across the curriculum

- ◆ A teacher or adult in role e.g. as a character in a story, or a witness to an event is very useful for history, geography or RE. You do not have to be an expert or good actor, many drama techniques are very simple. Teachers often use drama without realising it, e.g. pretending not to understand something so that learners explain it to you. It is a good idea to have a signal that you are going in or out of role, e.g. putting on or taking off a hat, a scarf or a pair of glasses.
- ◆ **What's Your Alibi?** Any kind of alibi game is perfect for practising past tenses (especially past simple and past continuous). Make up any plot depending on your subject, e.g. during an experiment in the Science lab, a student scientist was injured yesterday at 4pm. Health and Safety is investigating who is responsible.
- ◆ Drama can make a concept more memorable, e.g. get the class to act out how particles behave in a solid, liquid and gas.

- ◆ When a group is performing a scene they have devised it is useful to freeze-frame at a decisive point in the story to involve the rest of the class in asking questions or predicting what will happen next.
- ◆ Hot seating, when one learner pretends to be a character and other learners ask them questions, is great for thinking in depth about fictional characters and their motivation. This technique can be used with all age groups, whether you're considering the actions of the Hungry Caterpillar or Hamlet. It is sometimes useful to prepare the class for the character in advance so that they have time to think of questions.
- ◆ One non-threatening way into acting is to create a character using an empty chair. Arrange the class in a circle with one empty chair. Go round the circle and each learner supplies one piece of information about the character. E.g. She's 12 years old. She has two sisters and a brother. They have to listen to each other so that they are not contradicting anything that someone else has said before. When everyone has contributed their idea you ask for a volunteer to sit on the chair and become that character. This can be used to create a character who witnessed a particular event in history for example.
- ◆ **Strange Illness:** Pairs of learners play the role of a parent and child. The child has to describe an illness and its symptoms to avoid going to school, and the parent has to try to catch the child lying. This game is a great way to practice descriptive and persuasive language. Pre teach interesting vocabulary used to describe body parts.

Good for EAL, Good for All: Can I use drama and role play with the whole class?

Yes, drama and role play work well for everyone. Your EAL learners can benefit from doing the activities with able English speakers and everyone can participate at their own level.

