

Living is a form of not being sure, not knowing what is next or how. The moment you know how, you begin to die a little. The artist never entirely knows, we guess.

We may be wrong, but we take leap after leap in the dark.

- Agnes De Mille



IMPROVISATION IN THE CLASSROOM



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***PLAY TOUCHES AND STIMULATES VITALITY, AWAKENING THE WHOLE PERSON – MIND,
BODY, INTELLIGENCE AND CREATIVITY.'***

- KEITH JOHNSTONE

WHAT IS PERFORMATIVE PEDAGOGY?

The concept of performativity and what constitutes a performative pedagogy is complex and while we cannot offer a singular definition here, we do want to contextualize the exercises you've experienced within this field. The activities and methods you've been introduced to are more than just theater games. They are scaffolding exercises which foster learning environments and teaching styles that embrace the possibilities of performance and the arts. We understand performative pedagogy as a broad term which includes drama pedagogy, theater pedagogy, arts-integration, process drama and much more. There are many wonderful resources available to you if you're interested in exploring the role of aesthetics, the arts, and performance in your teaching practice. You will find a list at the end of this document. As much of your workshop experience was focused on improvisation methods and teambuilding exercises that will be the focus of this packet.

I. IMPROVISATION

In our work as language educators, drama and improvisation have proven to be a powerful approach that can motivate students to speak English. The positive impact of performance and drama can be found in a wide range of professional contexts from therapy to executive training. For the purposes of this handout we will limit the scope of that wide range of work to the application of improvisation and drama techniques in the foreign language classroom.

WHAT IS IMPROVISATION?

Fundamentally improvisation is the ability to think on your feet: to invent, develop, listen and change in real time. At its best, improvisation is a state of heightened awareness where we as participants are free to react and to interact in new ways. In short, improvisation is the freedom to react in a spontaneous fashion without self-consciousness, judgment or hesitation.

WHY DO WE USE IT?

One of the goals of our work is to create learning environments that encourage students to speak English without being concerned about doing it 'right'. Of course, we want our students to speak with proper grammar and pronunciation but experience has shown us that it is equally important to offer lessons where students have the opportunity to simply communicate without the fear of making mistakes.

As educators, improvisation training is a chance to remove the concept of 'correct' and 'incorrect' from our lessons. Improvisation is about encouraging risk taking and rewarding failure, a mentality that we have found correlates well to the kinds of risks and



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necessary failures associated with learning and practicing a new language. The exercises we use foster different aspects of learning: ranging from personal expression, to group collaboration, leadership, public speaking and creativity. Some activities are about freeing up the individual student while challenging their personal boundaries and others are about groups preparing something to be shown to an audience.

Over the years, we have seen students excited by the fun and playfulness of acting and improvising. Harnessing this enthusiasm for play can help us as educators to develop creative frameworks that inspire students to communicate ideas and meaning. This desire to communicate and be understood or have their creative ideas understood is a strong motivator to get kids speaking a foreign language.

CREATING A TRUST ENVIRONMENT

In order to encourage risk taking and reward failure we must create an environment that is free of judgment. There are two factors to consider when preparing for improvisational lessons with students:

1. Physical Space
2. Emotional Space

1. PHYSICAL SPACE

IDEAL CASE

It cannot be overstated how important the physical space is to the success of improvisation training. Ideally spaces should have a wooden or carpeted floor. All excess furniture, desks or chairs should either be stacked orderly on the side of the room or when possible removed from the space all together. Surfaces should be clean and swept allowing for students to work comfortably on the ground, to kneel, crawl, laydown etc. Personal belongings should be located in another room when possible. When feasible a room that is not your regular classroom should be used e.g. a gymnasium, theater room, aula etc. Items like jewelry should be removed. Students should work in comfortable footwear or with bare feet. Ideally students should dress appropriately for sessions in neutral clothing without logos that allows for freedom of movement. All lessons should begin and end on time to show respect for the work, space, and fellow students.

REALISTIC CASE

We work in many schools and realize that space is a constant factor for most teachers. If a separate space is not available another possibility is to allocate a certain area of your classroom for creative work. This space could be delineated by something physical like a carpet on the floor or chairs placed in a square. The fundamental requirement is that this space should be treated with respect, it is a special area and that attitude must be encouraged and enforced by instructors and students.

Within the performance space it is important that you create a special set of rules and expectations.

Below is a list of some of the rules we may ask our students and ourselves to follow during the training.

- We agree that this space is a safe and sacred space.
- We agree to treat this space with respect, to keep it clean and to leave it as we found it.
- This is a working space – not a space for socializing, gossip, playing, chewing gum or phones.
- We agree to show respect for ourselves and classmates while working in this space.
- We agree not to laugh at anyone for trying something new – trying something new is the reason we are here.
- We agree to be brave and take risks.
- We agree that we respect each other as artists and as people. We agree to show that respect in word and action.
- We agree that our goal is to help each other to do the best work possible.
- We agree that our goal is to support each other's creativity.
- We agree not to disturb each other's rehearsals.
- We agree to criticize each other by asking questions whenever possible, rather than making conclusions or delivering orders. In any case, we agree to criticize and discuss changes in a way that is respectful and encourages creative thinking.
- We agree not to say "no" for five minutes. Or, to put it another way, we agree to consider anything for five minutes.
- We agree to discuss our differences with each other in private.
- We agree that we cannot do it alone. We agree that we need each other.

2. EMOTIONAL SPACE

A proper emotional space for improvisational work is one of focus and relaxation. Students often become excited, loud and exuberant during the initial phases of this work. There is also a tendency to laugh at and make judgments about others in the beginning. We tend to run a very strict disciplinary policy. Normally we ask students struggling with their behavior during the exercise if they'd like to sit out. Quite often this is enough to improve the situation as the activities are fun and most students actually do want to participate. Naturally you will employ your own preferred measures for your students.

Opening sessions with a physical warm-up that includes stretching and vocal exercises is a great place to start. By putting the students focus on their body or the difficulty of a physical task we can help them to be less self-conscious and/or judgmental.

Your role as an instructor when using improvisation is to simultaneously guide the group and participate. In this work we ask the students to take risks, to expose themselves, to *go big*. How can we do this if we ourselves aren't willing to take the same risk? We demonstrate all exercises first and where possible make these demonstrations as big and loud and over the top as possible. In doing so we open the door for students to go big as well. The boundary of how far your students can go will be defined by how far you as an instructor are willing to go in the demonstration of what is possible. So go all the way.

As a class teacher, this might seem like a difficult position to be in. It certainly may be a new light in which your students encounter you. The creation of the proper physical space and the building of an emotionally space safe for experimentation will support you. In time students will recognize that just because you might act like a maniac, clown or buffoon 'in role', does not mean you will act or react that way to them outside of the performative space.

EFFICACY AND OUTCOMES

To adequately address the efficacy of the performative approach one must dive into the research. There is by now a large body of evidence regarding the positive impact of drama and drama pedagogy on foreign language learners. In an attempt to meet the practical needs of students, a growing number of teachers and teacher educators are embracing a performative pedagogy in their classrooms. This movement is supported by a global network of researchers with major contributions coming from the USA, Germany and Ireland. In 2007, the University College Cork founded the *Scenario Journal*, a bi-yearly peer-reviewed publication dedicated to 'performative teaching, learning, research' with a specific emphasis on the role of drama and performance in language learning. Susanne Even in *Moving in (To) Imaginary Worlds: Drama Pedagogy for Foreign Language Teaching and Learning*, offers us an excellent summary of the power of drama pedagogy.

As a holistic teaching and learning approach, drama pedagogy strives to overcome the cognitive isolation that characterizes a lot of foreign language teaching. Learners are confronted with fictitious situations that require not only their intellectual-linguistic faculties but also body language, joint negotiation of meaning, and emotional understanding. These kinesthetic, social, and empathetic learning moments make for intensive and lasting experiences with the foreign language, literature, and culture (Even, 2008, p.162).

Language is a subject which requires an embodied understanding. That is to say the act of speaking, hearing, reacting and performing is not only a cognitive exercise, it is a physical one. Modern science is beginning to unravel the mind-body connection to learning. In the interim we as foreign language teachers can already benefit from a long tradition of performance practice and teaching.

Embracing the performative allows us to teach communicative competencies, to reach various learning types and also to do more with our lessons. In arts-integrated classes students are also taught about the arts and artistic processes, they develop aesthetic sensibilities, learn to improvise, to think creatively, to collaborate and to take ownership of their unique ideas. In fact a wide range of social skills can be developed. In this sense, a performative foreign language pedagogy offers more than language, it's actually a holistic approach focused on developing young people hearts, heads and hands.

II. GAMES / TECHNIQUES

A. TEAM BUILDING GAMES

We encounter two situations when working in schools and teambuilding activities have proven useful in both circumstances.

1. A group of students has been recently put together and they are not yet fully comfortable working with each other.

2. A class has been together for a long period of time. Over the course of time group dynamics and hierarchies become well established. This type of categorization/separation of students amongst their peers can often be damaging to our work. Accepting the existing social order in the group allows students to remain within their comfort zones. We work to extend the student and group outside of their normal comfort zone.

Teambuilding activities serve the very pragmatic purpose of reorganizing social cliques or developing trust in new groups. Naturally, relationships between pupils are complex and conflicts potentially longstanding but by introducing teambuilding games for the entire group students are challenged to work together to be successful. Adding performance and physical activities into these activities also provide kinesthetic and other types of learners the opportunity to excel in ways they might not in more traditional classroom settings.

Below is a collection of activities that we have found to be effective in the classroom. The origin of improvisation games is difficult to track, as each instructor takes and freely adapts and changes them. We have put together a small collection of the activities we have found to work best in our programs. Some we have made our own through adaptation, some are as we found them. We encourage you to try them, change them, improve them and make them yours.

LINING UP // 5 MINS

Aim of exercise:

To build non-verbal communication and consensus in the group

Instructions:

Tell the group to do the following in complete silence and if they need to communicate to find a non-verbal way to do it. Ask the participants to form a line in silence as fast as possible from shortest to tallest showing them the start and end points of the line. Once they have completed it check if the line is correct. Next, ask them to line up in the order of their birthdays, January 1st to December 31st (not the year), once again ensure that the line is done in silence. When they are finished, check the line by getting everyone to say their birthdays. Next, ask them to line up in eye colour from light blue, blue, blue green, green, green brown, brown, brown –black, and black. Check then line. Of course, feel free to add your own ideas.

Tips:

Using a time limit can add further motivation, for example “You have 45 seconds to line up in eye colour”

COUNTING IN A CIRCLE // 5 - 10 MINS

Aim of exercise:

With improvisation, knowing when to speak and when to listen is a challenge. To complete this exercise, participants will need to focus and control their impulses of when and when not to speak in a group.

Instructions:

The group should stand closely together in a circle, facing each other. The objective of the exercise is to count consecutively from 1 -20 in a group (If you want to start at an easier level count from 1 - 10). Anybody in the group may say the next number in the sequence but only one person may speak at a time, no interrupting or more than one person saying the same number. As the leader of the exercise, try to get the group in a state of focus and relaxation, through breathing deeply and calmly and closing their eyes. They should try and focus on an inner impulse to speak and find the right time to do so.

If any of the following rules are broken the group starts back at zero.

Rules:

1. Only one person may say one number at a time.
2. The same person cannot say consecutive numbers (e.g. 3,4,5)
3. The group cannot say numbers simply by going around the circle in one direction

Tips: When a rule is broken and the group starts back at zero, the group can quickly lose focus and blame someone for the error, it's important to get the group back on task and tell them to focus on the challenge not on the mistakes.

PILLARS // 10-15MIN

Aim of exercise:

To collaborate and problem solve

Instructions:

Students are broken into groups of 3 - 5. It is explained that their bodies are made up of pillars and that 1 pillar is one part of their body that is in contact with the ground.

So one person standing on two feet equals 2 pillars.

Two students both standing on two feet equals 4 pillars.

Two students standing on one foot with one student placing their fist on the floor is 3 pillars and so on.

The rules are that the group must make an interesting picture with their bodies. They must all be touching in order to be counted.

The instructor then begins by calling out numbers. The students must work together to create pictures with the correct number of pillars. Hands can count as 1 or 5 pillars depending on how students use their fingers. Check the groups as they call out 'finished' then give them a new number to create.

Try alternating between large and small numbers. The game culminates in a countdown to 1 pillar. Meaning the groups will have to find a (safe) way to support and balance all together on 1 pillar.

You can add a competitive element by awarding points for the teams which make the structures the fastest.

SWITCH SEATS // 5 - 10 MINS

Aim of exercise::

Physical warm-up game to get participants moving and speaking

Set up:

Participants sit on chairs in a circle, facing inwards. One participant stands in the inside of the circle and the chair is removed from the circle.

Explanation:

The person in the middle of the circle says the phrase "Switch seats if ... (for example)... you are wearing blue jeans", if anyone in the group is wearing blue jeans they must stand up and quickly switch their seat with another person wearing blue jeans, at the same time the person in the middle should try to sit down on an available chair. The last person standing and unable to find a chair is now in the middle and says a new sentence "Switch seats if you like to ride horses" and so on. One rule is that you cannot sit back down on the same seat that you stood up from.

Tips:

- Before they begin the exercise give a few examples of what they could say to encourage different and imaginative sentences, as the sentences often become overly repetitive, examples may include people's fears (if you are scared of spiders) wishes (if you wish to fly in space or want to be rich one day), beliefs (if you believe in ghosts or aliens) or habits (if you bite your fingernails).
- Ensure that they group is not pushing or running to fast to endanger anyone.

PEOPLE BINGO // 10 MINS

Aim of exercise:

Group warm-up fostering interaction and curiosity about others in the group

Set up:

A big room with empty space in the centre. Hand out mixer sheets and make sure every participant has a pen.

Instructions:

Each handout has a grid of 12 boxes with a different statement in each box. The participants walk around the room and ask questions to each other, their goal is to matches them to the statement in a box, e.g. 'Someone who has travelled to more than 5 countries' or 'Someone who sings in the shower' and write that name in the box. You can only use a person's name once. The winner is the first person who filled in one row of boxes with names horizontally, vertically or diagonally.

Below is an example use for more advanced language learners:

Someone who is afraid of spiders	Someone who speaks 3 or more languages fluently	Someone with a special talent	Someone who is vegetarian
Someone who wants to be famous	Someone who has been pooped on by a bird	Someone who has slipped over before in public	Someone who sings in the shower
Someone who has a secret	Someone who has travelled to more than 5 countries	Someone who believes in aliens	Someone who thinks their phone is their most important possession
Someone addicted to facebook	Someone who doesn't watch television	Someone who has a fish as a pet	Someone who knows a joke (they must say it)

Tips: You can extend the game by asking participants to complete more lines or the whole table

TERMINATOR 1 // 5 -10 MINS

Aim of exercise:

Collaborative team problem solving, fosters verbal communication under pressure

Set up:

Participants sit on chairs in a circle, facing outwards. There should be enough room for a person to walk on the outside of the circle.

Instructions:

Explain to the group that one person will be the villain, called the Terminator, their objective is to destroy the world, and the rest of the group will be the heroes who will need to work together to save the world from destruction. Next nominate a person to be the 'Terminator', they stand up and walk to the point in the circle that opposes their vacant chair. Explain that to win the game and to destroy the world, all the Terminator simply needs to do is to sit on a vacant chair, the group on the other hand saves the day by stopping the Terminator from doing so.

These are critical rules:

- The participants cannot touch the Terminator
- The participants cannot impede the Terminator's path
- The participants cannot sit back down on the same chair they have stood up from
- The Terminator walks at a slow pace

TERMINATOR 2 // 10 MINS**Aim of exercise:**

Collaborative team problem solving, fosters verbal communication under pressure

Set up:

Participants sit on chairs that are evenly spaced out in different places around the room facing every direction. There should be enough room between each person for someone to walk all sides of their chair.

Instructions:

Explain to the group that one person will be the villain, called the Terminator, their objective is to destroy the world, and the rest of the group will be the heroes who will need to work together to save the world from destruction. Next nominate a person to be the 'Terminator', they stand up and walk to the point in the circle opposite their vacant chair. Explain that to win the game and to destroy the world, all the Terminator simply needs to do is to sit on a vacant chair, the group on the other hand saves the day by stopping the Terminator from doing so.

These are critical rules:

- The participants cannot touch the Terminator
- The participants cannot impede the Terminator's path
- The participants cannot sit back down on the same chair they have stood up from
- The Terminator walks at a slow pace

SOUND BALL // 5 - 10 MINS**Aim of exercise:**

A group warm-up offering permission to take physical and vocal space. Behaving in a 'silly' or 'crazy' way requires vulnerability and risk which the group subsequently rewards.

Set up:

A big room with empty space in the centre. The group should stand in a circle facing inwards.

Instructions:

This exercise requires some good energy and risk taking from the group. It is advised not to start with this or use as standalone exercise as the group may need to be warmed up first before jumping into a risk taking scenario.

Explain to the group that this exercise requires everyone to think of a unique sound and movement. The exercise starts with one volunteer stepping into the middle of the circle and making their sound and movement. The group responds by stepping in and repeating the same sound and movement, then stepping back. The next person in the circle steps into the middle of the circle and makes their unique sound and a movement. The group responds by stepping in and repeating the sound and movement, then stepping back, repeat these steps until the entire group has had a turn doing their sound and movement.

Tips:

When running this activity there are a few things to look out for:

- The key is not to think too much about the sound and movement, so encourage participants to jump in and improvise.
- Try to avoid the sounds being words: 'hello'
- As with all theatre exercises encourage people to take risks and openly compliment them doing so.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING? // 5 - 10 MINS**Aim of exercise:**

A disassociation game to break thinking patterns

Set up:

A big room with empty space in the centre. The group should stand in a circle facing inwards.

Instructions:

This exercise requires some good energy and risk taking from the group. It is advised not to start with this or use as standalone exercise as the group may need to be warmed up first before jumping into a risk taking scenario.

The exercise starts with one volunteer in the circle asking the person to their left "What are you doing?", the person on the left replies with an action "I am digging a big hole", the person who asked the question then pantomimes the action of digging a hole. The next person in the circle (on their right) asks "What are you doing?", the person digging the hole must continue with the action at the same time saying a new action such as "I am shooting a bow and arrow at a mosquito" once they have said the new action they can stop pantomiming and the person who asked the question acts out the new action "shooting a bow and arrow at a mosquito" until the next person in the circle asks "What are you doing?" and so on. The activity is finished when the entire group has had a turn at pantomiming an action.

Tips:

When running this activity there are a few things to look out for:

- Ensure that the person pantomiming says the new action at the same time while doing their action, as that is the challenge of the exercise.
- Try to encourage playable and imaginative actions, as participants often offer underwhelming actions like: Reading a book and eating dinner
- As with all theatre exercises encourage people to take risks and openly compliment them doing so.

REMOTE CONTROL // 5 - 10 MINS**Aim of exercise:**

A kinaesthetic exercise which requires participants to be present, listening and aware of the space and others around them.

Set up:

A big room with empty space in the centre.

Instructions:

The instructor explains that they are holding a magical remote control and when a button is pushed then the group needs to do exactly what they say. The remote has the following buttons:

PLAY: Walk around the room at a normal pace
 PAUSE: Freeze all movement
 FAST FORWARD: Move around the room faster
 SLOW MOTION: Move as slow as possible
 REWIND: Move (carefully) backwards

ADDED EXTRA (OPTIONAL):

CHANNEL 1: ZOMBIE MOVIE // Act as if you are either A) a zombie or B) a victim
 CHANNEL 2: ANIMAL CHANNEL // Act as if you are either A) a predator or B) prey
 CHANNEL 3: ACTION FILM // Act as if you are either A) the hero or B) the villain
 CHANNEL 4: ROMANTIC SOAP OPERA // Act as if you are A) in love or B) heartbroken

Make sure the group understands the instructions and explain the following rules:

- Use the entire space in the room, not just the centre
- Do not move in groups/pacts
- Be careful and do not crash into each other
- Change directions, try not to walk in circles

Now the instructor calls out one action at a time, changing them frequently. Once the group has familiarised with the actions the instructor can trick the group with variants of the instructions such as saying 'stop' instead of 'pause' or 'go' instead of 'play', this should be ignored by the group as it is not the correct instruction and they should continue with the current action. Once the group has understood this, add in the next element 'broken remote control mode', explain to the group that remote is broken and now they must do the opposite of the said instruction, for example:

PLAY: Freeze all movement
 PAUSE: walk around the room
 FAST FORWARD: Move as slow as possible
 SLOW MOTION: Move around the room faster
 REWIND: Move forwards

For the channels, the participants act as the opposite character as they did previously e.g. if they acted as a zombie last time now play the victim.

1,2,3 // 5 - 10 MINS**Aim of exercise:**

Improve collaborative abilities between participants. Exercise requires focused attention to complete complex listening and physical tasks

Set up:

A big room with empty space in the centre.

Instructions:

Tell the group to walk around the space and then get them to quickly find a partner (this should be done within 2 seconds, with the point that they are not choosing a partner they always work with but rather the closest partner). The partners now stand face to face, one big step apart and count 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3 each taking a turn to say a number, e.g. partner 1: "1", partner 2: "2", partner 1: "3", partner 2: "1", partner 1: "2", and so on for 30 seconds.

Now tell them to walk around the room again for 10 seconds or so and then to quickly find a different partner, then again to quickly find a different partner and again quickly find a different partner (by doing this the group is always focused and this ensures the partners are not their first choice and someone who they would not normally work with). In this round, explain that now the number 1 has disappeared and in its place is a sound, for example 'boing!', the partners need to quickly think of a unique sound (not given example of boing!) and just as before the partners stand face to face, one big step apart and start the sequence: sound, 2, 3, sound, 2, 3, sound, 2, 3 each taking a turn to say a number and sound.

Now tell the group to walk around the space for around 10 seconds and then ask them to quickly find a different partner and then again to quickly find a different partner. In this round, explain that not only has the number 1 has disappeared and in its place is a sound like last time but also number 2 has disappeared and in its place is a hand movement, the partners need to quickly think of a unique sound and hand movement, (ensure that they are not copying the example and have made a unique sound and movement) Just as before the partners stand face to face, one big step apart and start the sequence: sound, hand movement, 3, sound, hand movement, 3, sound, hand movement, 3 and so on for 30 – 60 seconds.... each taking a turn making the sound, hand movement and saying the number.

Now ask the group to walk around the space for 10 seconds and then get them to quickly find a different partner that they haven't worked with before. In this final round, explain that not only is number 1 a sound, and number 2 a hand movement but now number 3 is now a short English sentence consisting of 3 words, for example 'I like cabbage'. The partners need to quickly think of a unique sound, hand movement and short sentence, stand face to face and do the sequence: sound, hand movement, sentence, sound, hand movement, sentence, sound, hand movement, sentence and so on for 30 - 60.

Tips:

To add to the challenge, yell out: 'speed up', 'slow down' and 'reverse sequence' (3, 2, 1) during the sequences.

CREATIVE CLUSTER // 5 MINS**Aim of exercise:**

Ensemble collaboration exercise requiring leadership, compromise and creative thinking

Set up:

Big, empty room

Instructions:

Divide the group into smaller groups of 4 or 5 people. Each small group should find a different space in the room where they are not impeded. The instructor explains that the goal of the exercise is to form an object such as a 'school desk' together using their bodies as best they can in 10 seconds (or 15 – 20 seconds depending on the group). They should understand that the idea is that they are all pieces of a 3D puzzle. The instructor announces the first object and counts down from 10 and says 'FREEZE', review the results and move to the second object.

Suggested objects: A comfortable sofa, Christmas tree, a scary alien, a playground, a giant elephant, a corporate sculpture.

Tips:

Although not necessary, the instructor may find it best to make a competition to incentivise the participants. In this case they announce the best object and award a point.

FROZEN PHOTO // 10 MINS**Aim of exercise:**

Early scaffolding exercise preparing participants to work in front of an audience in preparation for performance. Providing opportunities for students to embody and empathize with characters, situations or concepts.

Set up:

Use a stage and chairs if available, otherwise simply place chairs in rows facing forward towards a 'stage' area and have the participants sit and wait for instruction.

Instructions:

Divide the group into smaller groups of 4 or 5 people. The instructor explains that the goal of the exercise is to create a frozen scene with the group such as 'hospital' (as opposed to Creative Clusters the group in this case is acting as the people in the scene). The examples can vary in difficulty depending on the group's language level, from simple settings (places) such as 'beach' to more complicated scenes such as 'hitting a home run'. The groups will have 10 seconds to create a believable frozen image of the scene while the rest of the group closes their eyes. The first group goes on stage and the instructor shows them a card or quietly tells them the first scene and counts down from 10 and says 'FREEZE', and the audience opens their eyes and can raise their hands to guess what the scene was. Once the scene is guessed move onto the second group/ scene.

Suggested scenes: Fashion Show, working out in a gym, bank robbery, zombie apocalypse, rock concert, old people's home, shark attack, wedding, funeral.

Tips:

- Point out that for a group to be successful they should make their scenes as clear as possible through their postures and facial expressions. It's the details of the scene which help make a clearer picture.
- Keep the language level of the group in mind when choosing the scenes. Another option is to give the group the option to think of their own scene, in this case give them more time on stage.
- For advanced groups try working with abstract concepts like 'Nothingness' or 'Hope'.

MINI MOVIE // 10 MINUTES**Aim of exercise:**

Continuation of performance preparation scaffolding exercise

Set up:

Use a stage and chairs if available, otherwise simply place chairs in rows facing forward towards a 'stage' area and have the participants sit and wait for instruction.

Instructions:

Divide the group into smaller groups of 2 - 4 people. The instructor explains that the goal of the exercise is to pantomime a silent mini movie scene in a small group such as 'a plane crash' (no sound or dialogue). The examples can vary in difficulty depending on the group's language level, but should all be an interesting playable action such as 'catching a mouse'. The first group goes on stage and the instructor shows them a card or quietly tells them the scene, the group will need a couple of seconds to quickly organise themselves, once they are ready the instructor acts as the director of the movie and yells out "ACTION!" and the groups has 15 seconds to perform a scene while the rest of the group quietly watches. When the scene is complete the Instructor yells out "CUT!" and the audience can raise their hands to guess what the scene was. Once the scene is guessed move onto the second group/ scene.

Suggested scenes: Stealing a car, feeding a lion, a horse race, vomiting on a rollercoaster, cheating on a test, in a plane crash, heart surgery

Tips:

- Point out that for a group to be successful they should make their scenes as clear as possible through their postures and facial expressions. It's the details of the scene which help make a clearer picture.
- Keep the language level of the group in mind when choosing the scenes. Another option is to give the group the option to think of their own scene, in this case give them more time on stage.

ALIEN, COW, TIGER // 5 MINS**Aim of exercise:**

In any creative process with a group, finding consensus on ideas can be challenging. This simple exercise is a way to practice converging together one idea.

Set up:

In a big empty space, the group should stand in a circle facing inwards.

Instructions:

Explain the objective of the exercise is to converge (or agree) on one idea and to do that one must submit to the will of the group rather than hold onto their own ideas. There are 3 different creatures the group can choose to make: a Cow, alien or tiger and the challenge is completed when the entire group has chosen the same creature, such as everyone is a cow for example. Demonstrate how to make the creatures: To make the cow, put your fists to the top of the head to form horns. To make alien, point your index finger out and put your hand on your head so the index fingers are pointing up like antennae. To make a tiger, form your hands like claws and put them in front of your body as if you were catching prey. To start the exercise the instructor counts down 3,2,1 and the group should instantly form one of the creatures, either a cow, alien or tiger. The group quickly looks around to see what creature was in the majority. The instructor counts down again 3,2,1 and group once chooses a creature. This process continues until the entire group is the same creature. Please ensure that there is no talking during the game.

NARRATORS // 10 - 20 MINUTES**Aim of exercise:**

To foster creative thinking, active listening, oral storytelling and performance skills, including: pantomime, tableaux and improvisation.

Set up:

In a large empty space, the group should stand in a half circle facing inwards. The space in front of the group serves as a stage.

Instructions:

The objective of the exercise is to create a story and for everyone to participate as actors or narrators. First, nominate 3 narrators (choosing narrators with strong language skills is suggested), the narrators come on stage and stand opposite the audience, leaving enough room in between for the action to take place. The narrators' task is to create a story by each saying one or two sentences in turn, continuing on from the last narrator e.g. Narrator 1: "Once upon a time a rat called Harold wanted to become King", Narrator 2: "The problem was that no one in the kingdom liked rats, so Harald decided to transform into a mouse instead", Narrator 3: "For this extreme makeover Harold decided to visit the famous beautician, Selma the duck", Narrator 1: "... " and so on, repeating until the story has been deemed finished. It should be clear that the objective of the exercise is NOT creating the best story or even make sense for that matter but rather to step into the unpredictable creative process with a group and be happy with the random and absurd results. The task of the group is to physicalize the narration stepping onto stage to become actors and objects in the story, every time a narrator mentions a new character (or group of characters) such as "Harold the rat then fought with a group of villainous one-armed pirates " actors jump in. The actors stay on stage until their character is no longer required.

Tips:

To ensure everyone gets on stage, the narrators should try to include groups of characters, such as 'an army of ____' or 'a team of ____'

ONCE UPON A TIME // 10 - 15 MINS**Aim of exercise:**

To build a story in a group, to listen and incorporate others ideas while working as a team

Set up:

Divide the group into 5-8 people. Each group finds a space in the room and sit down together in a mini circle.

Instructions:

Explain that they are to improvise a story together in their mini groups that will be later presented to the rest of the group. To do this they have the aid of ordered story cards that have prompts on them, such as "1. Once upon a time...", "2. Everyday...", "3. Until one day..." and so on. Every person in the group should have a card and when it is their turn they should continue the story adding 1 – 4 sentences depending on the language level. Each group has 8 cards, if there is less than 8 people in a group either omit a card or give someone two cards. The first round usually takes 5 minutes, after this the group can decide whether to improve on the story or start from scratch. After 5 – 10 minutes more each group should present their stories. It should be clear that the objective of the exercise is NOT creating the best story but rather to step into the unpredictable creative process with a group and be happy with the random and absurd results.

Story cards (these should be altered to the appropriate language level):

1. Once upon a time...
2. Everyday...
3. Until one day...
4. And then...
5. And then...
6. Until finally...
7. Ever since then...
8. The moral of the story is...

Tips:

Help the groups by offering ideas or prompts when needed. As a facilitator one can often add drama or humour by raising the stakes in the narrative.

COMIC STRIP FLIP BOOK // 20 - 30 MINS**Set up:**

Create groups of about 5 participants. Each group finds a space in the room

Instructions:

Each group should make a story creating 5 freeze framed 'photographs' such as in *Frozen Photo*, the difference being that they link to form a narrative.

These 'frozen photographs' are then shown to the rest of the group using the command (given by the teacher) CLOSE - (the whole group closes their eyes) and OPEN - the audience opens their eyes.

While the audience have their eyes closed, the acting group change their picture. The effect is a simple 'flip book' theatrical drama.

Developments of flip book into comic strip / simple text and dialogue:
Give each group four 'speech bubbles' made from cardboard and a marker.

Then instruct them to include in their story as many of the following as you wish:

1. One onomatopoeic word – WHAM! / BASH! / POW! Or one word such as HELP! Or NO!
2. One 'Thought Bubble' coming from a character containing something that they are thinking and the rest of the cast can't hear, the thought bubble can be written or spoken. If written, the speech bubbles should be held up in the appropriate frozen photograph so that the rest of the group can see it clearly.
3. Two lines of dialogue with no less than 3 words.

Homework tip: Give the students the task of drawing and writing up the simple story their group created including and even developing on the dialogue from the speech bubbles.

B. VIEWPOINTS

One of our goals for you in this workshop is to offer you access to a new set of tools to be applied in your own lessons. In our work over the past years we have drawn, borrowed and adapted heavily from a system of actor training known as Viewpoints. Much of the material below is taken directly from the authoritative book on viewpoint technique called 'The Viewpoints Book: A practical guide to viewpoints and composition' by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau.

OVERVIEW

'Viewpoints is a philosophy translated into a technique for (1) training performers; (2) building ensemble (3) creating movement for the stage.

Viewpoints is a set of names given to a certain principle of movement through time and space; these names constitute a language for what happens onstage.

Viewpoints is points of awareness that a performer or creator makes use of while working.
Tina Landau and Anne Bogart, The Viewpoints Book

GRID WORK

The elements of grid work are easily adjusted to accommodate levels and ability. In our work it serves the function of helping students to explore their bodies, space, objects, other people and the relationships between them.

The exercise itself begins by simply asking students to begin walking around the space as if there was a grid on the floor. Meaning they may only move in straight lines and turn on right angles. They may not walk around someone they encounter on their line. Students should work with what we call 'soft focus' meaning not locking their eyes onto other people or objects. The goal is to create a heightened state of awareness about the objects and people around them. Once walking is established your job is to help prompt the action on the grid.

The basic elements that we introduce to our students in grid work are:

- Tempo: How fast or slow an action is performed (we use a 1 – 10 scale)
- Kinesthetic Response: Your spontaneous physical reaction to movement outside yourself
- Shape: The shape of your body in space
- Gesture: Behavioral and Expressive.

Additional elements for advance practice include:

- Repetition: Repeating the actions of yourself or others
- Spatial Relationship: The space between bodies
- Topography: Moving off the grid and into other forms or patterns e.g. circle, swirls etc.
- Duration: How long do you stay in an action

Grid work improves self-awareness and sensitivity to the group. It also presents an interesting opportunity to introduce new vocabulary or ideas through a physical exercise.

GESTURE WORK

Gesture work is also an important element of Viewpoint training.

'We work with two types of Gesture Behavioral and Expressive. Behavioral Gestures are those that belong to everyday life, that are part of human behavior as we know and observe it. Expressive Gestures are those that belong to the interior rather than the exterior world. They express feeling or meaning which is otherwise directly manifest'

Anne Bogart and Tina Landau. The Viewpoints Book

Example: Gesture exercise

Recently we worked with a group of 15 teenage students. We asked them to create expressive gestures about the following words.

Freedom . Acceptance . Proximity . Borders . Safety Community . Ownership . Privacy
.Sanctuary .Territory. Provocation . Invasion

After asking students to develop the Gestures on their own – taking time to make sure they can repeat them perfectly we asked volunteers to teach the group their movements.

Through a process of selection we arrived at 10 – 12 Gestures, which the group could then use in later stages of our work.

Over time you can develop a Gesture collection to be used for different purposes. Note that it is important to name the gesture and take time to practice it until the entire group knows it and can execute it.

Of course you can create Gestures around any set or words for any age and relating to any thematic.

C. COMPOSITION

OVERVIEW

'Composition is a method for creating new work.

Composition is the practice of selecting and arranging the separate components of theatrical language into a cohesive work of art for the stage. It is the same technique that any choreographer, painter, writer, composer, or filmmaker uses in their corresponding disciplines. In theater it is writing on your feet, in space and time, using the language of theater.

Because we usually make compositions in a compressed period of time, we have no time to think. Composition provides a structure for working from our impulses and intuition.

Composition is an assignment given to an ensemble (group of students) so that it can create short, specific theater pieces addressing a particular aspect of the work. We use Composition during rehearsal to engage the collaborators in the process of generating their own work around a source. The assignment will usually include an overall intention or structure as well as a substantial list of ingredients, which must be included in the piece.'

Anne Bogart and Tina Landau. The Viewpoints Book

WHY WE USE IT

Compositions like the ones you created are an excellent vehicle to get students engaged, creating and speaking in a fun way. The arrangements and possibilities are endless and with time students can become very adept at creating these short but structured improvisations. Based on students' ages and experience it is easy to continually adjust the exercise to keep things exciting and challenging.

HOW WE USE IT (STEPS 1-4)

STEP 1: SET UP

Set up the framework and explain it as simply as possible. Every group should receive a piece of paper with their instructions on it. It is important to emphasize at this point that the intention is not to be perfect or even to be good. The intention is to try. We will often tell our students we have created an impossible task and that it is normal when they fail. This helps to alleviate the pressure of being good.

Allow groups to work on their own for a specific amount of time. Tell them when they will be required to present their work. Another note worth giving at this point is to not spend too much time thinking about the correct way to do things. It is much better to get up on your feet as quickly as possible and simply start going through a process of trial and error.

When possible groups should not work in the same space. We often let groups choose spaces outside of the classroom and to incorporate what they find there. The architecture can be a strong creative element in the composition and when possible students should be allowed as much freedom as possible in that regard.

It is critical to end every composition session with a performance of the work and discussion about what was seen.

STEP 2: MONITOR

Rotate between groups. Be on the look out for groups that are sitting and talking too long or writing in their books. A good rule of thumb is that a maximum of 1/3 of the allotted time should be allocated to discussion the rest should be active exploration on their feet.

Some groups may need some creative direction or ideas. Offer input and ideas until the group is creatively back on track then allow them to continue on without your input.

Groups may have questions about the parameters of the Composition. Define or explain these only enough to get the group back to work. There are no correct answers or defined way of doing things. But some groups might find too much freedom in this regard overwhelming. When necessary provide the group with more specific boundaries or definitions.

Give the groups regular time warnings so they know where they are in the process in relation to the remaining time.

STEP 3: PERFORM

If this is the first time the students have done this work we have a short discussion about the role of a good audience.

Students will naturally be nervous to present their work. Encourage them by reinforcing that no one is expecting this to be a perfect performance or a final idea. The group just wants to see what they were able to accomplish.

STEP 4: DEBRIEFING THE PERFORMANCES

After the performance always finish with a round of applause. Ask the audience to point out things within the composition that really worked. We are not interested at this point at pointing out things that did not work. You just want to speak about the moments that were interesting to watch.

When a moment has been identified ask the audience about it- Why was it interesting? What did you see? Ok, so it was funny...but why was it funny?

Ask for details. This line of questioning will guide the audience into articulating their understanding of the performance moment. Something all human beings are innately in tune with.

The range of things students will pick up ranges widely but some of them are:
Body language, voice + volume, articulation, character, timing, rhythm, tempo, structure, clever ideas, commitment to given circumstances.

Ask the group that goes next to try to incorporate some of the good elements they've just seen.
e.g. clear speaking, big physical characters etc.

If groups were allowed to work in different spaces within the building ask them where they would like to perform their piece and take the audience there to watch the performances. Ask the performing group to position the audience where they would like them to observe from.

After all groups have gone see if you can generate a list about what they noticed. Things that made the performances interesting to watch - Are there any rules that apply to all of the pieces? What are the 3 most important parts of a performance? etc.

Also questions about the process of how it was to work in the group are very important- Was it difficult, why? Was there a leader? Were there problems? How did your group make decisions? If you were to do this again what would you try differently?

COMPOSITION TEMPLATE | LOTS OF IDEAS TO CREATE YOUR OWN

COMPOSITIONS FOR CREATIVITY

Below are some examples for the parameters for a group composition. There are too many things listed here to be included in one composition this is rather a template to draw ideas from as you create your own.

BASIC RULES

- Set an amount of time to work (normally 30 - 45 minutes for beginners) Allocate an extra 5 – 7 minutes for each group's Performance.
- Everyone must participate
- Assign the working spaces or allow students to choose
- Outline expectations for how the rehearsal time should be used

COMPOSITION ELEMENTS

Add source material: Add materials for the groups to help them create: text, theme, mood, etc. This can be anything: a random page from a book, a newspaper clipping, pictures in a magazine, have students write sentences and throw them into a hat. This is a chance to focus your Composition on the learning you are working towards. Create a process for how groups will select these materials. Is it random? Are they allowed to discuss and choose? Does another group choose for them? All options are open.

THE CONTENT

Here we create a list of ingredients that students should try to incorporate. These elements might be textual, physical, rhythmic, musical, picturesque, or they may be qualities of movement. The list below is just an example of elements we will sometimes include. Naturally we alter the wording of these terms based on English level.

Your scene could include:

- A beginning, middle, and end
- A moment of rhythmic sound
- A moment of slow motion (level 1)
- A moment of Hyper Speed (Level 10)
- Incorporate 2 gestures (created previously)
- A moment of synchronized movement
- 3 – 5 lines of text
- An Entrance and an Exit
- A moment of stillness
- A discovery
- A moment of great distance
- A moment of extreme closeness
- Text of your own creation / improvised or written
- Revelation of space
- Revelation of object
- A sustained moment where everyone is looking up.
- One element (air, water, fire, earth)
- A reference to a famous painting
- Broken expectations
- One gesture repeated 15 times
- A staged accident
- 15 seconds of top-speed talking
- Something sung
- Something very loud
- A physical action: A slap, a jump or fall
- A scream
- A laugh
- A good character
- An Evil character
- A rescue
- In the genre of 'horror, western, music video, love story etc.'

Or anything else you can dream up. Try not to overload students with too many elements in the beginning. Depending on their levels and experience 4 – 6 separate ingredients may well be enough.

COMPOSITION SUMMARY

Composition is a great exercise as a stand-alone activity or as a tool to be used in working towards creating a performance piece. Characters, moments and ideas developed in a composition can easily be incorporated into larger theater projects. Compositions are not only limited to theater. The same exercises and principles can be used to create a radio play or a short film.

It is a structural tool to aid students in creating content. Explore, experiment and see what applications you find for your own work.

COMPOSITIONS

+YOUR GROUP HAS ONLY 25 - 30 MINUTES TO COMPLETE IT.

+EVERYONE MUST PARTICIPATE AND HAVE A CLEAR CHARACTER WITH A SPECIFIC CHARACTER TRAIT.

STEPS:

1. Create your composition in the genre of _____.
2. Your piece must have a clear problem. The problem is _____.
3. Add the idea: Try to include the idea of _____ into your performance.
4. Content: Your scene must include:

- A beginning, middle and end.
- At least 1 narrative device e.g. Dialogue, Narrator, Monologue, Pantomime etc.
- A surprise
- A moment of synchronized movement
- A minimum of 12 lines of text / written or improvised
- An entrance and exit

5. You must name your piece.

Note: This exercise is not necessarily about creating a linear story which travels from A to B. Text in this composition is rather a supporting element to the visual / physical performance you are creating. If you get stuck, stand up and start trying things.

III. FURTHER RESEARCH

We created this short document to offer you a few resources after the training we've done together. Naturally, in the few hours we've had and in these short pages we haven't been able to offer more than a cursory overview of the field. However our goal has been to offer you an introduction to Performative Pedagogy and to hopefully peak your curiosity to investigate further.

If you are interested in exploring this work in a more academic context we can recommend the literature below as an excellent place to get started.

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An excellent online source for information regarding performance and foreign language education is the *Scenario*, Journal for Performative Teaching, Learning, Research <https://www.ucc.ie/en/scenario/scenariojournal/>