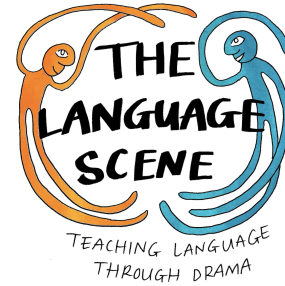


Teaching language through drama  
ATESOL ACT workshop summary  
Workshop facilitator: Jodie Whitehurst



Warm ups:

1. **Body writing:** write with different body parts and incorporate any language/ numeracy points you wish to focus on, e.g. “With your left elbow, write an adjective describing how you feel today.”
2. **Name game with action:** Going around the circle, each person says their name with accompanying action/ gesture and all repeat.  
**Variation:** do a huge version then a tiny version of each action.
3. **Zip Zap Zop:** Students need to take turns to call out the sounds “Zip”, “Zap”, “Zop” in that order, each student sending one of the sounds to a person across the circle with eye contact and a fast hand movement. Beginning consonants can be changed for pronunciation practice of challenging sounds, e.g. ‘Vip, Vap, Vop’.

Main Activities

4. **Embodying emotion adjectives:** (use emotion cards), e.g. amused, terrified, disgusted, fascinated, devastated.  
Elicit definitions of any new words.
  - a. Work on accurate pronunciation and syllable stress of new words.
  - b. Elicit accompanying actions/ expressions/ tone from students.
  - c. Have students move around the space in various ways, then intermittently hold up cards in random order and have students respond by saying the word and performing the accompanying action/expression/tone.
  - d. Repeat, but with students verbalising a neutral phrase, e.g. *fish and chips*, expressed with the actions/ expressions/ tone of the word on the card.
  - e. Finally have students spontaneously replace the neutral phrase with whatever words come out to match the emotion in the target language. E.g. if the emotion is *fascinated*, they might say “Wow! I’ve never seen something like that before!”
  - **Note-** it is important to work with vocabulary that is the right level for your group of learners. For a beginner level class, 3 basic emotion adjectives might be enough. You can also have students embody other parts of speech, such as verbs and nouns, and this is a highly effective way to pre-teach difficult words contained in a text.
5. **Scarf transformation:**
  - a. Going around the circle, students take turns to transform the scarf into any object (except a scarf) and mime out an action in as much detail as possible. The next person makes a sentence using the present continuous tense to describe the action, e.g. *Zara is riding a motorbike*.
  - b. Repeat activity but students perform an action with an underlying emotion. Others respond, practising structures: *She looks/ He seems*, e.g. *Kinh is washing the car. He looks disgusted*. Students can then speculate as to the reason for the emotion, e.g. *Maybe the car is covered in bird poo*.

### Variations:

-Have students convert the adjectives to adverbs/ adverb phrases.

e.g. *Kinh is washing the car disgustedly.*

-Have students describe the actions using the past continuous or past simple.

#### 6. Invigorating neutral scripts (through context, motivation and emotion):

- a. Give students short neutral scripts to work with in pairs or small groups (use the ones from this workshop or create your own).
- b. Ask students to use elements of timing (pauses where needed), body language, tone, etc, to convey their chosen context and meaning. Suggest they use scarves as props/costume items to help create the scene/characters.
- c. In corners of the classroom (or breakout rooms if online), groups determine the context of the scene and a key emotion for each character (using the planning sheet as a guide).
- d. Groups rehearse and then (if they are comfortable) present back to the class. Have a volunteer (or the whole class) count in each group with 3, 2, 1, ACTION!!!

#### 7. Gift giving (an exercise in improvisation):

After teaching students the basis of improvisation (offer, accept, build) have students work in pairs. They should take turns to give each other gifts by transforming a scarf into a different object each time. The recipient should accept the gift with great enthusiasm, then build on the scene by saying how he/she/they will use it, etc. After that, the recipient becomes the giver of the next gift and the cycle continues.

e.g.

A: Leila, happy birthday!! I got you something special. It's a gold necklace.

B: Oh wow! Thanks Alex. I love it! (taking scarf and putting it around neck). It's so sparkly and stylish. It will look perfect with my green dress for my birthday party tomorrow.

B: Alex, I got you this microwave as a housewarming gift. I hope you like it..., etc

### Reflection

It's important (particularly with adults) to elicit reflections from your learners after using drama strategies. This can be done verbally as a class, in small groups or through a journal reflection.

e.g:

- What language structures were we practising?
- What other skills are we developing through these activities? How might these skills be useful for me in other parts of my life?



**Want to read more about the benefits and best practice of drama and improvisation in EAL teaching?**

Scan this QR code to gain access to publications by Jodie Whitehurst. If you have further questions or wish to enquire about a workshop, please contact Jodie: [jodie@thelanguagescene.com.au](mailto:jodie@thelanguagescene.com.au)