**A Drama Toolkit for English Teachers**

Luca Kertész, Judit J. Tóth and Emese Szabó, ELTE Radnóti Miklós Gyakorlóiskola

contact: J.Toth.Judit@radnoti.elte.hu

**words > sentences > texts**

**CLAP CIRCLE (warmer, introduction into a topic + cooperation and concentration)**

*Warm-up*

Get the group standing in a circle. One player turns right and claps, the other will clap again to the right and this goes on. If one wants to change the direction of the circle, they have to clap twice. If one wants to pass the clap across the circle, they clap their hands towards and keep eye contact with that person.

*Clapping with expressions*

The teacher chooses 3 expressions to go with the three types of claps (right, left, across). These expressions can be associated with the material of the lesson.

*Clapping with word association*

The teacher starts the same game but now with the teacher saying one word, the students continuing with their own associations creating an association chain while they are doing the clapping game.

*Clapping with word association 2*

Same as above, except everybody associates to a word / idea given by the teacher at the beginning, not the last word (this can be the topic of the lesson).

**‘WHAT ARE YOU DOING’ WITH A TWIST (present continuous actions + cooperation, concentration, creativity)**

Get the group to form an inward facing circle. One person moves to the centre and begins acting an activity, such as walking the dog (it is important that the people really do the activity). A second person enters the circle and asks, “What are you doing?” The first person then responds, mentioning a *different* activity, while still doing the original one: “I’m having breakfast” The second person then begins to pretend they are having breakfast, and the first person re-joins the circle. A third person enters and asks, “What are you doing?” The person in the centre, while still doing their activity, replies: “I’m climbing a tree” (or any other activity they can think of). This continues until everyone has been in the middle of the circle. Stepping into the circle is voluntary, and the players have to negotiate (non-verbally) who enters next.

**GIBBERISH – TRANSLATION (giving definitions + acceptance, creativity)**

Get the group standing or sitting in a circle. One student starts with a gibberish ’expression’, like: ’garbalaha’. This expression is translated by the student sitting on their right, who is, of course, a linguistic expert of that language. Then, the student tells their own gibberish expression that is translated by the next student and so on. The aim is to get students reply immediately without overthinking their answers.

**GIBBERISH – CELEBRITY INTERVIEW (questions and answers (within a topic), free oral production + cooperation, acceptance, creativity)**

One person is chosen to be a foreign celebrity (from Gibberiton, if you like) who is being interviewed by a journalist, played by another student. A third student is chosen to be an interpreter who will “speak both languages”. The journalist starts by greeting the guest in English and asking a question – this is “translated” by the interpreter into Gibberish. Then the celebrity answers in Gibberish, which is in turn translated by the interpreter into English. Continue like this for a few more questions.

If you like, change players, or turn it into a press conference where the whole group are journalists and they can all ask their questions.

Translations, again, have to be given quickly, without overthinking. Depending on who our “celebrity” is, the topic of the interview can be narrowed down to some topic we want to practice (e.g. a sportsperson, a world traveller, a poet, etc.).

**WHAT IF… FAIRY TALES WITH A TWIST (“what if” questions, conditionals + creativity)**

Students are given fairy tales (the same to each student, or a different story to each pair/small group) and asked to speculate about different storylines by finishing the sentence “What if….”. (e.g. What if the hunter is visiting a far-away relative, What if the Ugly Duckling turns into a turkey; What if Snow White was lazy, etc.)

Groups of students then choose their favourite questions from the list (or combine a few of them) and prepare a short improvised piece to perform to the other groups.

**PROVERBS WORD BY WORD (sentence structure, language of proverbs, writing skills in the extension + cooperation, acceptance, creativity)**

Similarly to building a story with each student only adding one word to what has already been said, the group can create new “proverbs”. Have 4-5 students at a time sit in front of the class as the “expert panel” sharing “old wisdom”. The teacher can give the first word or can leave it to the first student in the line. Then taking turns they add one word at a time to the proverb until they feel it is finished. The student who does not wish to continue, saying the proverb is already finished, will explain the meaning of the proverb to the class. If the class decides they are not sure they understand the meaning, the student next in line also gives an explanation, etc. Change panels and repeat with the next 4-5 students. The activity can be extended into a writing task: each student chose one of the newly created “proverbs” and write a fable in Aesop’s style, the last sentence being the chosen proverb.

**LETTERS SENTENCE BY SENTENCE (letter writing + cooperation, acceptance, creativity)**

Similarly to the above, letters can be written one sentence at a time as a group effort, with every student starting a letter and then passing it round the circle for completion. Give guidelines. Letters started by the different students can have the same topic or each student can get a different topic to write on (or different character for the sender, for the receiver, different occasion to write, etc.).

**NEWSPAPER HEADLINES IN “PICTURES” (language of headlines, speaking skills in the extension + creativity, cooperation)**

Students work in small groups. They are given headlines from newspapers, a different one for each group. They then, using the tableaux technique, decide on a “photo” that would go best with the headlines and create it using their own bodies, freezing in the moment they think illustrates the headlines best.

As an extension, each group, when showing their tableaux to the class, can be asked to improvise a little scene with the photo as their starting point/finishing point. Further restrictions can be given to help the students, like each person has to say exactly one sentence. After seeing each photo, or in the extension each scene, the class can try and guess the headlines. Though they are unlikely to guess correctly, they are sure to create some good ones of their own.

**SEMI-STRUCTURED SIMULATION (conversation, small talk + cooperation, creativity)**

A situation is given by the teacher, e.g. ‘You are going to travel on the morning commuter train, coming to Budapest’. Before entering the situation, each student thinks of a character they want to play. To plan the character, they each draw a gingerbread man figure, and write the inner traits into the figure (e.g. brave, clever), the appearance or any external features of their life around it (e.g. married, retired, blond, fat). They are also asked to think of a typical posture, a typical gesture and assume it. Then the teacher poses some questions (Who are you? How old are you? Where are you coming from? Why are you here? etc.) which the students only answer by silently mouthing their answers all at the same time. This gives them a sense of the character already, without having to produce anything to the others.

Then the space is rearranged for the situation (chairs arranged to resemble train seats in this case) and the students are invited to join the scene. Teacher assumes role of conductor, greets passengers and asks them to board the train. Students are then asked to engage in small talk with the passengers sitting near them, and try to figure out who they are. When they’ve had enough time to chat, teacher as conductor announces that the train line is closed off and passengers have to continue their trip by replacement buses. Rearrange space, students board the bus and sit with new fellow passengers. This time they will not only talk about themselves, but also spread rumours by repeating what they have heard from their previous partners.

As the next step, pairs of students are given the following lines:

“OH NO

OVER THERE

RATS

COME ON

YOU’RE KIDDING

I’M OK

HELLO”

Each pair, using their own characters, thinks of a scene where these exact words are spoken, they practice for a few minutes and then perform their version. Audience will try to figure out who the characters are.

**MIX AND MATCH (storytelling + cooperation, creativity)**

Introduce characters from one fairy tale into another and see how they interact. The whole class can agree upon the matches or each group can choose their own ones. Groups then collect some ideas on how the story develops and develop it either into a group storytelling or a rehearsed improvisation.

Sources:

David Farmer 101 more Drama Games and Activities, CreateSpace ([www.dramaresource.com](http://www.dramaresource.com))