

DRAMA PEDAGOGY ACTIVITIES – a list of suggestions

Annamaria Bellezza and Nikolaus Euba. BLC, February 11, 2016

- 1. Tongue twisters** – turn to someone and say a tongue twister giving it the intonation, volume and feeling you want. Someone else can reply with the same tongue twister with a different intonation and volume. With longer tongue twisters, you can have 3 or 4 students in a circle, each saying a part of the tongue twister to each other as in a conversation. Here are a few examples.
 - 1) Sally sells sea shells by the shiny sea shore
 - 2) How can a clam cram in a clean cream can?
 - 3) Betty bought a bit of butter but the butter was bitter so Betty bought a bit of butter to make the bitter butter better
 - 4) Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers. If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, where is the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?
- 2. “Word streaming”** – say a list of objects without stopping as if you are opening a faucet in your brain and words just come pouring out. Don’t think and don’t censor yourself. If you stop, ask yourself why.
- 3. “Throw a word”** – physically throw a word to someone while you are saying it; the other person receives it and feels its weight, smells it; how does it make you feel? Throw it to somebody else physically and vocally. Continue until somebody drops it on to the floor.
- 4. “Throw a sentence”** – throw a sentence to someone with any emotion you feel – happiness, rage, disappointment, boredom. Say what comes to you without thinking about it. (i.e. “I wish I could fly!”). The recipient will repeat the sentence in exactly the same way he/she receives it and then sends it to someone else with a different intonation, according to his/her own emotions.
- 5. “Read your poem”** – close your eyes and visualize a white page in front of you. On it you see on the top left corner the name of the publisher; in the center you see the name of the author and the title; under the title there is a poem: read it. There are no excuses for not reading the poem. If you say “I can’t read it, its’ too small”, someone will give you a magnifying glass! If you say “it’s in another language”, someone may say “oh, there is a translation on the other page!”.
- 6. “Out of the water”** – close your eyes and visualize a beach. You are sitting on it. The ocean in front of you is calm. You listen to the sound of the waves. All of a sudden something comes out of the water. Who is it? Describe him/her/it. What does he/she/it give you? What do you do with it? You can continue the story for ever by asking more questions and introducing new information.

7. **“Verbal chase”** – Put your hand in a box and take something out. What is it? What shape is it? Is it heavy? What color is it? What’s written on it?...Give it to someone. Now, take something off a shelf. What is it? Who put it there?... Reach behind you and grab something... As a variation: imagine a box, you are in it, who put you there, who else is there, what’s written on the outside of the box...You can continue this for a long time by adding on new questions and information.
8. **Story telling** – make a circle and tell a story. First, each person says only ONE word at a time. Then repeat the activity with WHOLE sentences. The story becomes “a story” when information given at the beginning of the story is recycled by the participants to make links and connections, otherwise it remains a string of disconnected sentences.
9. **“Create a character”** – in groups, let’s create a character from scratch. All participants have to agree on everything. If someone disagrees on a piece of information, the story has to be retold from scratch [i.e.: a woman (everybody agrees), age 35 (everybody agrees), lives in Cuba (everybody agrees), she is a journalist who is writing about changing Cuba (everybody agrees), she wants to leave Cuba (someone disagrees, so participants have to start story all over). Be as detailed as possible about the character. For example ask yourself questions like: If this character were to pick a song, what would it be? If this character were to pick a color, what would it be? If this character were to go on a trip, where would it go and with whom?...
10. **“It’s Tuesday”** – in pairs or in groups. Someone says something matter of fact like “It’s Tuesday”. Someone else has to respond (i.e.: Oh my God, the Pope is coming! What will we do? OR No, it can’t be, it was only Monday yesterday). The exchange could go on for just a minute or turn into a much longer story.

An example from an exchange between two students who tried this activity:

A: It’s Tuesday.

B: You have to feed the fish.

A: The fish. Of course.

B: Today it’s the first of the month. We have to pay the bills.

A: The fish and bills. Your favorite subjects.

B: Don’t forget your appointment.

A: I am leaving. Tomorrow. I am leaving tomorrow. Australia.

B: I am tired. I am going to bed.

A. You won’t see me again.

B. Turn the lights off

- 11. “Letter of apology”** – First step: two participants sit with their back to each other. One apologizes for something to the other, who does not accept the apology. No matter how convincing the other person is, the apology must not be accepted. Second step: the participants now call each other on the phone and do the same activity. Third step: participants meet face to face and try the apology again.
- 12. “Give me one of them”** – One participant (A) has TWO of something (i.e.: two houses, two kids, two cars...). Another participant (B) is asking to have ONE of them, but “A” won’t let go of it, stating each time his/her reasons. The activity ends when “A” gives up the item to “B”.
- 13. “Status games”** – in pairs, participants learn short fragments of a text, and play every possible *status* on them (*low status* or *high status*). *Status* is something you do, not something you are. We always play a *status*, in every single interaction we have in our daily lives.

Example 1: A plays *high status*, claiming ‘cultural superiority’.

A: What are you reading?

B: *War and Peace*.

A: Ah, my favorite book! Read it twice.

Example 2: Same scene but now A plays *low status*.

A: What are you reading?

B: *War and Peace*.

A: Ah, my favorite book!

B. Really?

A. Oh yes. Of course I only look at the pictures...

Example 3: A enters the room. Now you decide which *status* to play for A and B. Feel free to continue the dialogue.

A: Did you open my letter?

B: Yes.

A: Yes?

B. I always open your letters

A: You always open my letters.
B: I am curious to see what's in them.
A: I told you never to open my letters.
B: Yeah, I know. I am sorry.
A: They are addressed to me.
B: Well, technically, yes.
A: Technically?
B: The last one was from Mark.
A. Oh. I see. I guess now you know.

14. "Connect the dots" (more advanced narrative skills) – work in pairs. Participant A tells a story for 30 seconds and then participant B finishes it for 30 seconds. Participant A provides disconnected sentences, and participant B must somehow connect them in a coherent story. An example:

A: It was a hot summer's night. The moon was shining in the black sky. Cats were feasting on a big piece of cheese. The dancer pivoted on the stage. A young man sat outside a theater.

B: When the young man heard the music he looked up at the moon and thought of her sister dancing the "Swan" for the first time. He sat on the stairs of the theater, too nervous to go in, watching two cats eating a big piece of cheese.

15. "Machine" – participants stand in a circle. One starts by making a sound (or uttering a word) and a gesture, linking them to the person to his/her right, who picks up the gesture and makes another sound which then connects to the next person on the right and so forth. This can be started several times, so in the end the whole group becomes an assembly line.

16. "Counting" – warming up voice and body, participants stand in a circle, then kneel down and become as small as possible. Everyone counts from 0 to 10, starting from a kneeling down position and with a whisper, then slowly expanding the body and getting up while raising the voice with each number until 10 at which the voice is the loudest and the body the biggest/most expanded. Then count backwards. To release from their final kneeling down position, participants have to jump up and expand again, shouting a favorite word of their choice (or the instructor's choice).

17. "Mirroring" - participants work in pairs, one being tasked with pantomiming an activity (e.g. "morning routine", "cooking favorite meal" etc.), the other mirroring the exact movements of their partner.

18. **“The Walk”** – guided improvisation: participants walk in a circle and follow directions in which they react to certain situations (i.e., it’s starting to rain, the floor is getting wet and slippery, but you have to walk faster because you need to be in Dwinelle etc.)
19. **“The Circle”** – participants stand in a circle, hands extended. One participant has to close his/her eyes and walk around the inside of the circle, using his/her hands for orientation while the other participants have the responsibility to safely guide the person inside the circle.
20. **“Statues”** – in groups or pairs, students build human statues based on words that are provided by instructor (great pre-reading activity!).
21. **“Still images”** – in groups, participants create a living picture. One person starts, assuming whichever pose and facial expression he/she wants. Then another person joins the picture. Then a third one and so on until the picture is done and ready to be ‘framed’. A variation: have a director or two placing participants into position in the picture. You can then give a title to the picture.
22. **Say it with a drawing.** Make a drawing of how you feel today. Give the drawing to someone and have him/her interpret the drawing.
Then, vocalize the emotion you are feeling – any sound that comes to you
Then, physicalize what you are feeling – a gesture, a pose
Then, say anything that comes to mind with that gesture, in that tone of voice

Two additional “humanistic” activities that call upon students to share things about themselves –their feelings, values, memories. This type of sharing is known as “self-disclosure”

What an old shoe mean! Describe an article of clothing you are particularly attached to. Describe it. Why has it meant so much to you? What do you associate with it? Is there any story or event you connect with it? How do you feel when you wear it? Share your stories.

- A variation: Describe the most significant and personally meaningful object you own

What would you be? In pairs or in groups, tell each other what you would be and why if you were: a color, a season, a day of the week, a country, a musical instrument, an article of clothing, a fruit, a car, a dessert, a number, a month of the year, a shoe, a feeling, a geometrical shape, an animal, a planet, a stone...

Please, feel free to email us with any questions you may have.

ambellezza@berkeley.edu and nikoeuba@berkeley.edu