IMPROVLANG 2021-2-PL01-KA220-SCH-000049974

"Improvisational theater methods applied to English language learning"

Supplementary Tools

Partners:

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

METHODOLOGY

This booklet is a collection of tools to improve the English language skills of shool-age participants through the application of improvisational theatre techniques. The tools are intended to be adaptable to a range of ages, language levels, and interests and allow for a high degree of flexibility so that they may be used in many different contexts. The tools have been arranged under three different categories:



- **Lights**: activities designed to enlighten participants to new issues and concepts



- **Camera**: activities focussing on detecting and solving problems



- **Action**: activities that ask participants to learn by doing

This collection of tools is supplementary to the original set of 18 tools produced during the IMPROVLANG project.

LEVEL AND AGE APPROPRIATENESS

In order to give a basic idea of the age range and difficulty of the activities without putting them into a strict category such as the Common European Reference Framework (CERF) scale, the tools are ranked with a star system of 1 to 5 stars.

The system loosely indicates that low star activities are for lower ages and language levels. However, please note that due to the flexibility of the tools, some lessons with low star rankings can be adapted to older ages and higher levels, so be sure to check the descriptions for this possibility. The rankings are as follows:

★

Very basic, for low language levels and young ages (around 10 years old)

★★

Around a pre-intermediate level. Requires some knowledge of forming sentenes.

★★★

For participants with intermediate language skills and appropriate for middle teens (12 to 16 years old)

★★★★

Somewhat advanced activity requiring solid communication skills in English. Most appropriate for students aged 16-18.

★★★★★

Complicated and advanced activity requiring a high level of communication and advanced knowlege of grammar and vocabulary. Appropriate for participants aged 17+.

DISCLAIMER

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LIGHTS

IMAGINARY ORCHESTRA

IMPROVISATION, DEVELOPMENT OF IMAGINATION, VOCABULARY AND MIMING PRACTICE, LISTENING AND RESPONDING

LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this activity, participants will be part of an imaginary orchestra and act out different situations according to what they hear.

By the end of this activity, participants will:

- Practice their vocabulary while miming actions
- Learn how to keep an open mind and listen attentively
- Listen to the words and try to picture what the speaker is saying.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The only material need for this activity could be a Music player. Encourage the participants to be imaginative. Ideally, the activity should have 5-10 participants and last 15-20 minutes.

PROCESS

Participants are asked to stand up. While playing a highly lively piece of classical music, the participants conduct an imaginary orchestra as if they were conductors. The facilitator can give participants new situations and ask them to add mime:

- Somebody poured itch powder onto your jacket
- A little kid comes in front of you and starts staring at you.
- You hear a wrong note.
- A fly is buzzing around your head.
- A dog's attacking your foot.
- Bring the end of the scene yourself.

The activity is expected to produce some funny scenarios as they will be acted out one after the other.

REFLECTION

Afterwards have a discussion with the group about the overall experience they had about this activity?

- Which action did you find the funniest?
- What was difficult about this activity?

Improvlang

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

1. You can add music to change the mood of the activity.

2. Check for understanding as new words are introduced.

3. Vocabulary must be relevant to participants' age/ level

CAMERA 

CONTINUE THE ACT

IMAGINATION, CREATIVITY, COOPERATION, VOCABULARY AND GRAMMAR DEVELOPMENT

LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this activity, learners will use contextual cues to recreate scenes from movies and use their imaginations to create scripts.

By the end of this activity, participants will:

- Create a script using common words and phrases from movies
- Apply their knowledge of intonation when impersonating roles
- Improve their ability to speak in English using correct pronunciation
- Practice colloquial expressions used in everyday conversations

RECOMMENDATIONS

We advise you to have the following materials ready for this activity to be effective: electronic equipment (projector, video player, speakers etc). This activity takes about 45 minutes 10 minutes for each of the first two stages/25 minutes for the rest of activity.

The number of participants required for this activity is at least 20. An external person can be sought (a drama teacher, for example) who can suggest movies or series/provide insight into acting techniques or supervise the activity.

PROCESS

1. All participants, divided in groups of 4 or 5, watch scenes from famous series/movies on mute.
2. Then they select some of their favorite scenes and press pause. They will discuss what the scenario might be and recreate each scene based on the actors' gestures and expressions. They must use context cues to decipher what is happening and what is being said.
3. Each group acts out their version of the scene to their classmates.
4. The audience must decide if there is any relevance between the new version and the original script of the movie/series.

REFLECTION

Voting at the last stage of the activity helps participants to reflect on their performance. After the activity participants are asked the following questions to reflect and share any additional comments or insight:

- What challenged you the most?
- How did you work together to come up with lines?
- Do you think this activity had an effect on your confidence in speaking? Why or why not?

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

1. The activity runs best if participants are familiar with drama/acting beforehand

2. The films/series chosen for the activity must be age-appropriate

CAMERA 

IS EVERYTHING OK WITH US?

AWAKENING, AWARENESS, PAYING ATTENTION, IMAGINATION, DEVELOPING LANGUAGE CONSCIENCE AND IMAGINATIVE USAGE OF LANGUAGE

LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this activity, participants will work together to perform imaginary actions.

By the end of this activity, participants will:

- Develop improvisation and imagination skills
- Understand and learn vocabulary relevant to the actions being performed

RECOMMENDATIONS

This activity can have unlimited participants and usually lasts around 10 minutes. Make sure that participants have enough room.

PROCESS

1. One participant starts an activity, for example, digging potatoes, and does it until others understand what they are doing.
2. Gradually the group joins them. People come one by one and also do the similar work - for example, they bring a bag and start putting potatoes in it.
3. Someone else comes with a tractor or anything else relevant to the imagined situation. The activity continues until every participant is working.

REFLECTION

- Together, name all the movements/tools/technique used in this exercise.
- Talk about your emotions while doing this task - did it bring you joy, satisfaction?

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

1. Can be used as an icebreaker to start a lesson.

3. After the task, you can repeat what movements they have learned in the lessons.

ACTION 

EMPTY CHAIR

IMAGINATION, CREATIVITY, EMPATHY, LEARNING THROUGH DOING, CREATIVE LANGUAGE USAGE

LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this activity, participants will learn to develop empathy while working creatively and imaginatively.

By the end of this activity, participants will:

- Be more confident, use the target language desired and be free to express their ideas
- Associate words with actions
- Potentially lower their anxiety surrounding speaking in a foreign language

RECOMMENDATIONS

We advise you to have the following materials ready for this activity to be effective: a chair and a stop watch. This activity takes about 30 minutes with 10-15 participants. The duration of activity can be increased depending upon the number of participants.

PROCESS

1. Place a chair in the middle of the class and ask the participants to imagine that a celebrity is sitting on an empty chair. The celebrity can be someone who is dead or alive. Let them consider the empty chair for some time.
2. After a while, ask them to imagine that the celebrity can talk to them. Suppose that they want to talk about something - what might they tell you? Give them time to ponder.
3. Ask participants one by one. “Who was sitting in the chair and what did they say to you?"

REFLECTION

After the activity ask a few reflection questions to the audience:

- Did you enjoy this activity? If not, then why?
- Why did you choose this celebrity?
- How easy or difficult was it to imagine a celebrity sitting on a chair and talking to you?

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

1. Plan the timeframe well and inform the participants in advance to make the activity more effective.

2. Initiate an imaginary situation if any participant struggles.

ACTION 

POWER

IMAGINATION, CREATIVITY, IMPROVISATION, VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT, USE LANGUAGE TO THINK AND REASON

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The activity will allow the participants to analyse their classmates' behavior to determine which role they represent.

By the end of this activity, participants will:

- Be able to use strong emotions vocabulary to describe their actions
- Be able to use the simple present in an effort to describe their role's daily routine

RECOMMENDATIONS

For this activity, no materials are needed, but it's a fun touch to add props to give life to the characters. This activity takes about 45 minutes (15 minutes for preparation / 15 minutes for performance / 5 minutes for presentation / 10 minutes conversation (role reveal)) with 20 participants. The duration of activity can be increased depending upon number of participants. The facilitator can support the activity by showing a few videos of people in power (Presidents, politicians & Kings etc.) to the participants to provide them an insight into acting techniques/ to identify some of their characteristics.

PROCESS

1. Gather the participants and ask them to stand in a circle.
2. The facilitator will then ask 5 participants to exit the room and assign them a role. Each role has a different level of power (ex. king, general, courtier, soldier, worker).
3. Thereafter, these five participants enter the room again and begin to enact according to their roles (the king must walk standing tall and fiercely, displaying an authoritative persona, while on the other hand, the worker must look weary, might be carrying a burden and be submissive to those higher up, etc.).
4. After the role play, participants will be asked to briefly describe a day in their life without revealing their role.
5. The group needs to find out which role each of the 5 participants was performing.
6. The activity ends when all roles are 'revealed'.

REFLECTION

After the activity participants are asked the following questions to reflect and share any additional comments or insight.

- Did assuming a role so different to your personality challenge you in any way?
- Which skills do you think this activity helps to develop?
- What inspired your performance and how did you select what characteristics you need to exhibit while preforming?

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

1. Props can be used as supplementary materials to enhance the role play

2. Ensure that enough free space is available to manoeuvre.

ACTION 

GRANDMOTHER'S STEPS

DICTION, LISTENING, VOCABULARY

LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this activity, participants will hone their diction and listening skills.

By the end of this activity, participants will:

- Recognise different sounds in English
- Enhance their active listening

RECOMMENDATIONS

This activity can be done with any number of participants and does not require materials. Make sure that participants have enough room.

PROCESS

1. One participant stands on one side of the classroom with his back to the other participants, all the others stand on the other side.
2. While the leader of the game recites some fast-talking exercises, for example “Four fine fresh fish for you”, the other participants walk towards him slowly and quietly.
3. When the fast-talking exercise is said, the leader turns to the others, the one who moves goes back to the starting line.

REFLECTION

After the activity, participants can reflect on the following questions:

- How many times did you reach the destination?
- Did you prefer being a leader or participant?
- Which emotions did you feel during the activity? Why is that?

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

1. Participants can move like fish, bears, jump like bunnies, etc. by using the words they have learned.

2. Participants can walk on the tips of the toes, heels, outer/inner edges of the foot, etc. to make the action more challenging.