

# Expression Through Drama:

Linking Prosody, Embodiment and Emotional Awareness

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Riah Werner, May 2016, SIT Graduate Institute

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# Drama in TESOL

Prosody  
Embodiment  
Emotional Awareness

“Speaking is not only about words and structure and pronunciation, but feelings, motivations, and meanings. In other words, language brings along culture. Drama in a conversation classroom makes room for those issues to emerge.”

-Laura Miccoli (2003)

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# 12 Reasons to Use Drama to Teach English

1. Drama integrates language skills naturally.
2. Drama integrates verbal and nonverbal ways of communicating, linking the mind and body.
3. Drama uses both cognitive and affective domains, linking thinking and feeling.
4. Drama contextualizes language.
5. Drama uses multi-sensory input for whole person learning.
6. Drama develops self-awareness and confidence.
7. Drama motivates students.
8. Drama is learner-centered.
9. Drama encourages creativity, exploration and risk-taking.
10. Drama creates positive classroom dynamics.
11. Drama is fun.
12. Drama requires very few resources. All you need are people and space.

(Maley 2005, cited in Zyoud)

Arts integration is an **approach** to teaching in which students demonstrate **understanding** through an **art form**.

Students engage in a **creative process** which **connects** an art form and another subject area and meets **evolving objectives** in both.

-Kennedy Center

# Prosody

Prosody includes all the suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation: rhythm, stress, intonation, tone, pitch, speed and volume. Prosody is like the music of the language.

These aspects of pronunciation communicate meaning and intention. They also affect comprehensibility.

Students need their speech to be both believable and understandable.

Since drama contains oral practice and focuses on discourse-level meanings, drama exercises are a natural way to practice prosodic features.

Drama helps learners pronounce the language confidently, so they can be understood.

# Embodiment

## **Embodied Cognition**

- Using the body to express ideas deepens understanding and improves recall.
- Embodiment shifts the cognitive load from the mind to the body.
- Neural pathways remain in the brain, even when gestures aren't used anymore.

## **Nonverbal Communication**

- Every culture has different expectations regarding kinesics (gestures and facial expressions), haptics (touch) and proxemics (distance) in conversation.
- Drama helps students see and experience these different physical norms.

# Emotional Awareness

Emotional Intelligence is “the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.” (Goleman, cited in Darn 2008)

Five domains: Self-Awareness, Motivation, Self-Regulation, Empathy and Adeptness.

Drama allows students a space to practice naming and expressing emotions.

Six Core Emotions: Joy, Surprise, Sadness, Anger, Fear and Disgust

“Cultural Script” governs the expression of emotions (Miyamoto and Ryff)

Creating a safe space



1. Everyone participates
2. Teach students to be supportive
3. Start with low risk activities

# Drama Activities

Feelings Song  
Emotion Walk  
Voice Exercises  
Talk and Listen Cards  
Open Scenes  
Freeze, Think and Act!

“Drama is the act of crossing into the world of story....Storying provides students with a natural human process for finding essential meanings in the life experiences of themselves and others.”

-David Booth

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# If You're \_\_\_\_\_ and You Know It

If you're \_\_\_\_\_ and you know it,  
\_\_\_\_\_.

happy--smile wide

If you're \_\_\_\_\_ and you know it,  
\_\_\_\_\_.

sad--wipe your tears

If you're \_\_\_\_\_ and you know it,  
then your face will surely show it.

angry--stomp your feet

If you're \_\_\_\_\_ and you know it,  
\_\_\_\_\_.

scared--hide your face

disgusted--wrinkle your nose

surprised--say “oh my!”

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**Objective:** To develop a shared vocabulary of emotions and ways to express them.

# Emotion Walk

Choose a sentence you would like to practice.

Walk around the room, changing directions whenever you want.

Say the sentence in lots of different ways as you walk.

When I say an emotion, use that emotion to say your sentence.

When I say “freeze!” stop exactly where you are.

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**Objective:** To allow students a space to explore different ways of expressing themselves with their bodies and voices without the pressure of being observed.

# Voice Exercises

**Warm Up:** Say the sounds in order, exaggerating your lip movements.

ooh      oh      ah      eh      ee

**Pitch:** Count from 1 to 5, saying each number at a higher pitch than the one before. Then count backwards, with each number on a lower pitch.

**Volume:** Choose a long vowel sound. Start quietly and then get louder.

**Speed:** Practice saying a sentence quickly, then say it again slowly.

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**Objective:** To relax the speech muscles and prepare the voice for nuanced expression.

# Vocal Variety

Choose a sentence, poem or nursery rhyme.

Choose a single variable from one pair and focus on saying the text in that way.

**Quiet/Loud**      **Low/High**      **Slow/Fast**

Add a second variable from a different pair. Then add a third variable.

Think about what feeling is conveyed through the variables you chose. Which variables go together easily? Which are hard to combine?

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**Objective:** To practice suprasegmental pronunciation and hypothesize about the different feelings or messages they convey.

# Talk and Listen Cards

Each participant receives a card with half the dialogue.

The cards have their own lines, but not their partner's lines.

Each dialogue is 4-6 lines long.

A reads the first line and B listens. B reads the next and they continue until the end.

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**Objective:** To develop listening skills and spontaneous reactions.

# Open Scenes

Find a partner. Each pair will receive a short script.

The script doesn't specify the situation, characters, or setting.

Work together to choose a situation to express through the dialogue.

Rehearse your scene. Try to communicate your scenario using your voice and body.

Perform your scene for the group. Others will try to guess your situation.

# Open Scene Example

A: Can you believe that?

B: No.

A: What are we going to do?

B: We?

A: This is really big.

B: We can manage it.

A: Got any ideas?

B: Yes. But don't tell anyone.

(Rosalind Flynn)

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Who is A? Who is B?

What's their relationship?

What is going on?

Where are they?

What are they going to do?

What is B's idea?

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**Objective:** To focus attention on the extralinguistic elements of communication and allow room for creativity. To show how the same words can convey many meanings.

# Freeze, Think and Act!

**Freeze Frame:** a still image/tableau to illustrate a scene using body positions

Beginning students can choose a scene from a story and create a tableau to illustrate it. By assigning different sections to different groups of students, you can collaboratively tell the whole story.

**Thought Tracking:** verbally expressing a character's inner thoughts and feelings

Students choose a scene from a story and act it out. When the teacher says “freeze!” they stop in place, and the teacher asks an actor or an audience member to describe what the character is thinking.

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**Objective:** To deepen connections to literary texts through dramatization.

Questions?

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