

Bringing English Alive through Improvisation



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Goal

Use improvisation to build confidence and generate relaxed spontaneous communication among your students.

Session One Objectives

You will learn how to:

- Initiate, encourage and invigorate student improvisations.
- Incorporate course content into improvisations.
- Adapt classroom improvisation to different levels of English ability.



What Is Improvisation?

Improvisation is life!

We don't wake up with a script in front of us.

We go shopping, to work, out to dinner . . . we live our lives without preparing reactions, interactions and dialogs before they happen. We have to think on our feet.

Life is improvisation.



**Classroom improvisation
is just role play
without a script.**

For example . . .



Let's Review - Love It, Hate It

- What did we do?
- How did we do it?
- Was it improvisation? (yes and no)
- Why did we do it?
- Why begin silently?
- What is the benefit to our students?
- Can you do this with your students?



Preview of Agenda

- ① **Breaking the ice with charades ✓**
- ② **Giving and receiving an unexpected gift**
- ③ **Communication in Finnish**
- ④ **Shaking it up**

BREAK

- ① **Review Part 1**
- ② **Building scenes from scratch**
- ③ **Review scene building**
- ④ **Writing a script – or not**
- ⑤ **Incorporating the content**
- ⑥ **Your assignment**

Action!

➤ **Gift Exchanges**

➤ **Shopping in Finland**

➤ **Shaking it up**

Let's Review - Gift Exchange

- What did we do?
- How did we do it?
- Was it improvisation?
- Why did we do it?
- What is the benefit to our students?
- Can you use it with your students?

Let's Review - At the Store

What did we do?

How did we do it?

What were the steps?

- ① Begin with silent improvisation – Why?
- ② Learn only very limited vocabulary – Why?
- ③ Supplemental vocabulary – why?*
- ④ What level class is this suitable for?
- ⑤ Can you use this with your students?

Let's Review – **Shaking It up!**

- What did we do?
- How did we do it?
- What was the result?
- Can you do this with your students?

Agenda

- ① Breaking the ice with charades ✓
- ② Giving and receiving an unexpected gift ✓
- ③ Communication in Finnish: Let's go to the store! ✓
- ④ Shaking it up ✓

BREAK

- ① Review Part 1 ✓
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Choosing a Topic

Is the story interesting?

Is the type of experience common to the participants?

- Getting lost in a new city
- Misunderstanding directions
- Unable to communicate
- Your first day at a job

Select topic ideas from your repertoire of experiences shared by present or past students.

Creating the Scene

Share a story about your first day . .

- At a new job
- Arriving in a new country in which you didn't speak the language
- Meeting your partner for the first time
- Meeting your in-laws for the first time
- In a new and confusing situation

Action!

- **Sharing stories**
- **Setting the scene**
- **Casting the characters**
- **Bringing it to the stage**

Let's Review - Scene Building

- What did we do?
- What were the elements of the activity?
- How did we arrive at the following?
- What were the steps?

content

scenario

characters

dialog

story

Building Scenes from Scratch

The Sequence

1. Offer the choice of “accessible” **content**.
2. Share **stories** in small groups - START TALKING!
3. choose one **story** that’s easy to perform.
4. Review the story and set the scene (**scenario**).
5. Identify and assign **characters** - then STOP TALKING!
6. Get on your feet and go!
7. SHOW us (don’t tell us) the **scenario**.
8. Talk on your feet – the **dialog** happens.



Reflect

- How were we forced to think on our feet?
- If we did this in another language, would we do it perfectly?
- Would it be useful anyway?
- Will your students' English be perfect?
- How will they benefit?
- **Can you do this with your students?**
- **How can you modify it for your students?**

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Writing a Script and Performing It

➤ Build a scene from scratch.

◆ **STOP** or **GO to the next step.**

➤ The ***student team*** will write a plot outline of the scene. (No dialog!)

◆ **STOP** or **GO to the next step.**

➤ The students will give it to another group to improvise. (optional)

◆ **STOP** or **GO to the next step.**

➤ They will improvise it again together a few times.

◆ **STOP** or **GO to the next step.**

➤ They will write a preliminary script with dialog.

◆ **STOP** or **GO to the next step.**

➤ They will perform it and adjust it as needed.

◆ **STOP** or **GO to the next step.**

➤ The teacher can make adjustments to the script:

To facilitate pronunciation, tighten it the dialog, introduce idioms, correct grammar.

➤ The teacher or volunteers will work on pronunciation.

◆ **STOP** or **GO to the next step.**

➤ They will practice their individual dialogs.

◆ **STOP** or **GO to the next step.**

➤ They will practice their individual scenes.

◆ **STOP** or **GO to the next step.**

➤ They will walk through the whole thing together.

◆ **STOP** or **GO to the next step.**

➤ They will rehearse it.

◆ **STOP** or **GO to the next step.**

➤ They will perform it for other students, staff, etc.

* **Celebrate** *

Incorporate the Content

Teach your classmates about . . .

- Going to the bank
- Learning to drive and getting a license
- Communicating at the doctor's office
- Shopping
- Taking public transportation
- Renting an apartment, etc.

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- ⑥ **Your assignment!**

Your Assignment - Part A

- Look at the improvisations we did today.
- Choose one or more to adapt to your students' level.
- Try both silent and verbal improvisations to get your students comfortable with spontaneity and improvisation.
- Choose a topic from your course content or . . .
- Have the students choose a topic of interest.*
- **Start the story sharing groups and see where it goes!**

Your Assignment – Part B

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- Make a note of your questions and comments coming out of this session and email them to me today or next week.
- Make a log of any questions and comments coming up during your improvisation projects and email them to me before the next meeting.

These issues will be addressed in the next meeting.

May 17th Workshop Content

- Come prepared to share a 5 minute summary of your improvisation project and what you learned from it.
- We will have open discussion based on these summaries.
- I will address the questions and comments you email me between workshops.



End of Session One

See you May on 17th!