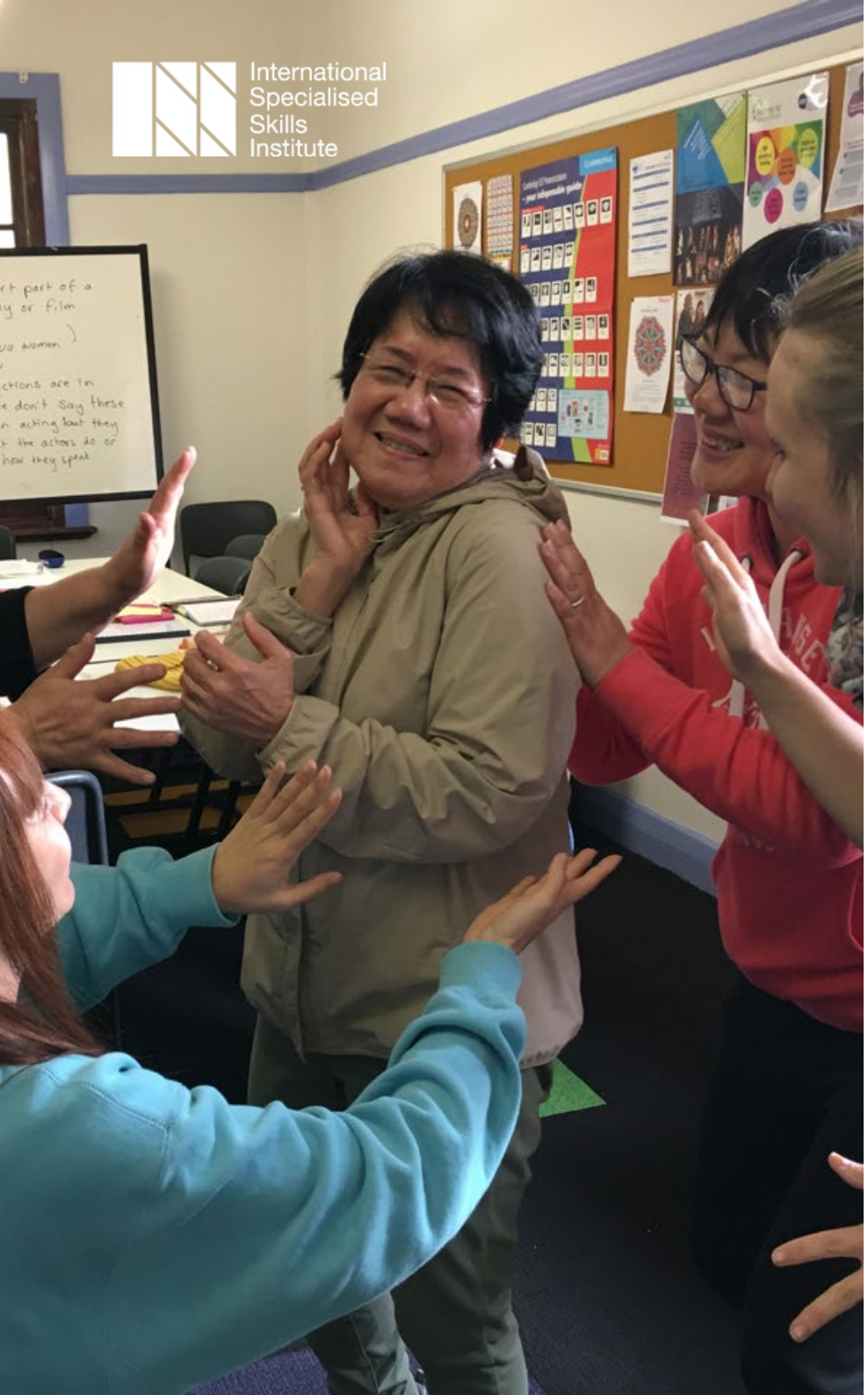

International
Specialised
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Institute

LANGUAGE ACTS:

The benefits and best practice of using drama techniques in the adult EAL classroom.

An International Specialised Skills Institute Fellowship.

JODIE WHITEHURST

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State Government Victoria
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1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Fellow (Jodie Whltehurst) would also like to thank the following people, organisations and peak bodies for their support, encouragement and mentorship:

In Australia

ISS Institute

» Wendy Draayers
» Nick Johns
» Brianne Keogh
» Theresa Vu
» Ofelia Royo

The management and staff of **Williamstown Community and Education Centre**, in particular:

» Mark Brophy
» Lynne Hewet
» Anne Douglas
» Lara Janka
» Penny Dean

Sue Christophers **(VET Development Centre)**

The committee of **VALBEC**, in particular:

» Linno Rhodes
» Meg Cotter
» Lynne Matheson
» Rhonda Raisbeck

Dr Julie Choi **(Melbourne Graduate School of Education)**

Carmel Davies

Margaret Corrigan

Liz Keenan

Adult Learning Australia

» Jenny Macaffer
» Catherine Devlin

ACEVic

» Tamsin Rossiter

VicTESOL
» David Kezilas

» Ian Whitehurst

» Austin Whitehurst

» Toby Whitehurst

Overseas

Florence, Italy (TESOL Drama)
» Dr Marisol Santana

» Dr Jose Angeles Santana

Zug, Switzerland
» Dr Stefanie Giebert

» Eva Göksel

Grenoble France
» Dr Fiona Dalziel

» Dr Filippo Fonio

» Prof. Manfred Schewe

» Dr Erika Piazzoli

» Dr Anna Santucci

Canada
» Dr Angelica Galante
» Dr Art Babayants

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Formerly a secondary school Drama, Theatre Studies and English teacher, Fellow, Jodie Whitehurst, has taught English as an Additional Language (EAL) in the Adult Community Education (ACE) Sector in Victoria since 2012. Upon entering the adult education field, inspired by her prior observations of the emotional and social benefits of drama on her secondary students, she became interested in exploring the positive impacts of drama pedagogy on adult additional language learners. Furthermore, she was motivated to examine the potential of such methodology to reduce disadvantage for English language learners in the VET sector and promote employability skills. Thus, her focus question for this Fellowship was: What are the benefits and best practice of using drama techniques in the adult EAL classroom?

In order to explore these benefits and best practice methods, Jodie embarked upon a one-month research trip through Europe and Canada. This allowed her to participate in a range of professional development opportunities and to engage in conversations with researchers and leading educators in the field of drama in language education, also known as performative language teaching. Her itinerary took her to five different cities, where she engaged in the following events:

- Florence,Italy- a 5-day TESOL Drama Workshop
- Zug, Switzerland- the Drama in Education Days Conference (3 days)
- Grenoble, France- a 5-day Summer School on *The role of drama in higher and adult education: teacher training and the challenges of inclusion*
- Montreal, Canada- Meeting with researcher, Dr Angelica Galante
- Toronto, Canada- Meeting with expert, Dr Art Babayants and observations of 'Embodied English' classes at the University of Toronto.

Fellowship learnings

Throughout the Fellowship research trip, the Fellow garnered a wide range of new knowledge, techniques and skills which addressed her research question by highlighting the following benefits and methods of best practice:

- **Benefits:** engagement, confidence and trust building, development of supportive communities, empowerment, improvement of paralinguistic communicative features (e.g. tone, stress, intonation, rhythm, body language), targeted practice of language structures, creation of authentic contexts for meaningful communicative practice, development of employability skills.
- **Best practice**
  - changing the classroom space to invite collaboration and creativity
  - gently warming the class up into drama activities
  - giving learners choice in the roles they play
  - designing drama-based activities to incorporate the language structures students need to be practising
  - giving students opportunities to share personal stories through drama, while creating a protective distance between the actual experience and the performance
  - utilising process-based drama techniques to promote fluency, creativity

and spontaneity

- » providing opportunities for learners to participate in rehearsed performances through both acting and production roles, e.g. costume designer, publicist, director
- » focusing on the learning rather than the acting skills
- » incorporating written tasks into the context of the drama
- » eliciting regular reflections from learners about their skill development and feelings about participation and progress
- » injecting a sense of tension into the drama to give learners a genuine motivation to use the language.

Personal, professional and sectoral impact

The personal and professional impact of this Fellowship has been significant, as it has enabled the Fellow to develop her skills and expertise as an educator, presenter and workshop facilitator in this specialised field. She has so far disseminated her learnings throughout the sector, by facilitating numerous workshops through professional organisations and universities, writing a feature article for VALBEC's Fine Print Journal, writing and publishing a blog, *The Language of Drama,* and being interviewed for a story published online through ACEVic. In addition, she has founded a community of practice called DiALLA (Drama in Additional Language Learning Australia) to help interested teachers connect, share resources, ideas and opportunities for professional development. She is also in the process of making plans for collaborative projects, action research, curriculum and resource development, and the facilitation of future workshops, seminars and longer courses for teachers in the sector.

Considerations and recommendations

The Fellowship research trip highlighted the importance of providing local hands-on interactive professional development opportunities in this field. Through such structured learning opportunities, performative techniques can be made accessible to EAL teachers across the VET sector, regardless of whether they have any drama teaching experience. It is vital that EAL teachers are reassured that they do not need to be drama specialists to teach performatively, as the aim is to use drama strategies to teach language, rather than to train actors. Additionally, the Fellow recommends that performative language teaching units be incorporated into all undergraduate and graduate TESOL courses, as teachers are far more likely to be open to using such methodology if it has been part of their initial training. It is also recommended that funding is provided for drama resources aligning with the EAL and SEE curricula to be created and made available to teachers across the education and training sector.

3. FELLOWSHIP BACKGROUND

Fellowship context:

Jodie Whitehurst (the Fellow) applied for this Fellowship with the aim to research the benefits and best practice of using drama as a teaching method for adult learners of English as an Additional Language (EAL) in the Adult Community Education (ACE) sector. The proposed Fellowship was founded on a combination of extensive study of research literature and the Fellow's personal experiences as a teacher, both of which demonstrated a wide range of benefits afforded to learners of additional languages, who are taught through drama-based pedagogy.

The Fellow was interested in investigating the potential of drama methodology to break down the perceived language barrier which places many migrants to Australia at a disadvantage in their pursuit of employment, further education or community participation. In her role as an EAL teacher in the ACE sector, she had frequently observed learners appearing anxious about pursuing such outcomes, often attributing this to a fear of being judged negatively if their English was not fluent and accurate enough.

In line with these observations, an online fact sheet published by the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia (FECCA, n.d.) indicates that Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) individuals often face barriers to employment for a variety of reasons including:

» language barriers

» low literacy levels

» pre-migration trauma

» discrimination and racism

» lack of local work experiences and qualifications

» limited understanding of local workplace cultures.

The report also indicated that low employment rates in CALD communities can lead to:

» mental health issues

» social isolation

» exclusion

Furthermore, through responses to questionnaires, one-on-one interviews and group discussions, students at the Fellow's workplace had consistently identified the following factors as putting them at a disadvantage when pursuing work, further study or involvement in community activities:

» insufficient English-speaking practice

» anxiety about making grammatical, lexical or pronunciation errors when speaking

» uncertainty about appropriate body language

» lack of confidence with telephone skills

» anxiety about appearing nervous in an interview situation.

Low confidence and anxiety about speaking in a new language may also stem from negative experiences in previous educational contexts or other life traumas prior to migrating. According to many of the Fellow's students, the nature of education in Australia is profoundly different to that which they have experienced in their home countries. Where speaking up, asking questions and expressing opinions might have been discouraged or frowned upon in their previous classroom environments, students are often surprised to find that in Australia, these actions are not only permitted, but encouraged. In light of this, the Fellow was motivated to seek the optimal pedagogical practices to help learners overcome such obstacles.

Though the Fellow's previous experience as a secondary school drama teacher, she was aware of drama's capacity to build confidence, trust and a strong sense of community. Whilst conscious that the adult community EAL classroom was a different context to a secondary drama classroom, she felt instinctively that teaching English through drama techniques had the potential to address some of the disadvantages and concerns outlined above. She began to introduce and adapt drama strategies previously used with her secondary students as well as new ones sourced from Drama in EAL teaching resources. The impact of the drama techniques on the engagement, confidence and motivation of her students was immediately evident. Inspired to learn more, the Fellow consulted the research of experts, finding extensive evidence that drama can bring a range of other benefits to adult additional language learners, as will be outlined below.

In addition to the challenging task of learning the grammar and syntax of English, EAL learners are frequently disadvantaged by their struggle with the prosodic elements of speaking, i.e. tone, intonation, stress and rhythm, as well as the non-verbal elements such as gesture, posture, and facial expressions. These aspects of communication naturally vary between languages and cultures and are not easily learned from books and worksheets. In the pursuit of meaningful connections within the community, further study or employment, appropriate tone and body language are essential. The physical, holistic nature of drama provides an ideal pedagogical approach to teach these skills. According to Fonio (2012), the proficiency in non-verbal traits afforded by dr ama, distinguishes its learners from those who learn English solely from books. Thus, in creating this distinction, drama-based language learning may provide EAL learners with an advantage when seeking employment.

Another positive effect of drama's whole-body approach is that it "offers unequalled opportunities for catering to learner differences" (Maley & Duff, 2005, p.1). Such claims align with the Fellow's observations as a teacher, that the chance to communicate using non-verbal elements such as facial expression, movement and gesture, empowers less confident learners to move from the position of a spectator to that of a participant in the learning. Moreover, Sambanis (2016, p. 51) asserts that this whole-person approach leads to greater retention of new language, as we are less likely "to forget something that was learnt with the body and the mind".

Communicating verbally in a new language can be a daunting task for anyone. Many adult language learners experience particularly high levels of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) when required to converse in the target language (Piazzoli, 2011; Horowitz, Horowitz, & Cope, 1986). Those who may be confronted with self-consciousness and fear of judgement about their level of competence, are often reluctant to take risks and therefore may avoid speaking in class (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). According to Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, such emotional responses can create a barrier to language learning. Research findings published by Galante (2018 indicate that participation in drama-based programs increases the comfort levels of language learners when speaking, while studies by Atas (2013) and Piazzoli (2011) suggest that drama has the potential to reduce learner anxiety. Additionally, Winston (2012, p.3) states that drama encourages students to "experiment safely with alternative identities", enabling them to take risks with the language. Thus, if teachers in the sector have access to appropriate performative teaching strategies, they can help to alleviate learners' anxiety and create opportunities for students to gain the practice they

need in safe, fully-contextualised social or work-related scenarios.

Drama in the EAL classroom creates a learner-centred environment in which students can be creative and collaborative. As the teacher tends to take a "less dominant role" (Boudreault, 2010), the opportunities for all students to gain English speaking practice is significantly increased. Within this interactive environment, students gain confidence by learning social rules of conversation and developing communication strategies (Kao & O'Neill,1998). This is important, because an understanding of such strategies as turn taking, asking open questions, or politely declining an offer, is invaluable within the context of community involvement or in the pursuit of further study or employment.

Prior to her Fellowship journey, these findings had convinced the Fellow of drama's potential to address a range of needs of disadvantaged adult EAL learners in the education and training sector of Victoria. In addition, she began to observe how closely drama pedagogy aligned with the Employability Skills Framework connected with the EAL curriculum and pre-accredited A- Frame. Clearly, in order to work towards greater levels of employment and industry productivity, teachers need to create opportunities for learners to develop these skills. The Fellow was determined to examine this correlation in greater depth, which was one of the key reasons she applied for the VET Practitioner Fellowship. She wanted to meet with some of the experts whose work she had studied to further explore the positive impact drama could have on EAL learners.

Another motivating factor for the Fellow's application was to experience some hands-on professional development that specifically combined drama pedagogy with the teaching of additional languages. In addition to understanding the benefits, she felt the need to undergo relevant training in order to enhance her knowledge of the best practice of working with drama techniques in this context. Through a joining a 'drama in language teaching' Facebook group, she became aware of numerous specialised conferences and workshops in Europe, but despite extensive searching, was unable to uncover similar events or groups locally. This cemented the Fellow's goal to obtain a Fellowship for two reasons:

» to travel overseas and take part in the wealth of professional development available to develop her own skills and expertise in the field.

» to enable her to create opportunities for other EAL teachers in the vocational education and training sector in Victoria to participate in professional development in performative language teaching.

The Fellow identified the following key areas she wished to investigate through the research Fellowship:

» the impact of drama on learners' emotional state

» communicative outcomes

» employability skills development

Fellowship Methodology

Prior to the Fellowship journey, the Fellow:

» contacted Melbourne-based adult educator, Carmel Davies, having learned that she had received a Churchill Fellowship in 2007 on a similar research topic. They met several times to discuss potential future collaborations, one of which was to meet in Switzerland and co-present a session at the Drama in Education Days conference in Zug.

» made numerous connections with other teachers internationally, via a Facebook page called 'Drama in Language Teaching'. Through this page, she began to develop a network of like-minded practitioners and gained deeper insight into how drama methods were being utilised in language education around the world, particularly in Europe. In addition, through this forum, the Fellow was able to access information about international professional development opportunities, two of which became the focal points of her Fellowship journey.

» conducted a systematic literature review (for her final Master's research project), on the impact of drama pedagogy on the oral communication skills of adult additional language learners. This involved a thorough analysis, synthesis and evaluation of fifteen recent research studies.

» established a local forum via Facebook called DiALLA (Drama in Additional Language Learning Australia) to enable local interested teachers to become part of a community of practice and to build momentum about the Fellowship research and the dissemination to follow.

» began writing a blog, *The Language of Drama,* to document the idea behind the Fellowship and promote the learning opportunities which would be available to other teachers in Australia following the Fellow's research trip. This blog which continues to be published, is distributed via a mailing list which includes colleagues from the Fellow's professional network as well as key figures of professional organisations and peak bodies. It is also posted on the DiALLA Facebook page as well as the Fellow's professional ISSI Fellowship Facebook page.

» established a Fellowship Facebook page specifically for dissemination of learnings.

During the Fellowship journey the Fellow:

» attended a 5 day 'TESOL Drama' course in Florence, Italy. This as run by Dr Marisol Santana and Dr Jose Angel Santana from New York. The aim of this course was to provide an overview of various drama techniques which can be used specifically in the language learning classroom.

» participated in and presented (with Carmel Davies) at the Drama in Education (DiE) Days Conference at the University of Teacher Education, Zug, (PH Zug), Switzerland. This conference, convened by Stefanie Giebert (Konstanz University of Applied Science) and Eva Göksel (PH Zug), was attended by approximately 60 delegates from 4 continents. The focus was on the use of drama and theatre pedagogy in language education. The keynote speakers were Patrice Baldwin (Chair of National Drama, UK) and Jonathan Neelands (University of Warwick, UK), both of whom are highly regarded leaders in the DiE field.

» took part in a 5-day summer school in Grenoble, France, organised by Fiona Dalziel (University of Padua, Italy) and Filippo Fonio (University of Grenoble). The topic of the summer school was: *The role of drama in higher and adult education: teacher training and the challenges of inclusion.* Over the course of the week, the Fellow participated in a variety of practical workshops and attended keynote presentations delivered by leaders in the field: Dr Erika Piazzoli, Professor Manfred Schewe, Dr Jean Remi Lapaire, Dr Anna Santucci, Dr Stefanie Giebert and Eva Göksel as well as the conference organisers, Fiona Dalziel and Filippo Fonio. There were also two 'show and tell' sessions in which several participating teachers made short presentations about successful techniques or projects they had worked on.

» interviewed researcher and educator, Dr Angelica Galante (Assistant Professor, McGill University), to discuss her research and ideas in the field of drama in language learning, in Montreal, Canada.

» met with expert, Dr Art Babayants (Toronto, Canada), creator of 'Embodied English' a unique performative language course, to discuss his work in the field and the methodology behind the program.

» observed and assisted with the 'Embodied English' program at the University of Toronto. Classes were run by Dr Art Babayants and Ada Demaj.

» kept a daily learning journal in which she made detailed notes about techniques and theory learnt, observations and learnings from discussions with experts. The Fellow also made notes about the presentation styles and techniques of facilitators and speakers in preparation for her own dissemination plan upon returning to Australia.

» continued to write and publish entries of her blog, *The Language of Drama*.

» made regular posts on her Fellowship Facebook page.

Fellowship period

The Travel period was for the month of July 2019.

Fellow biography

Jodie Whitehurst (the Fellow) has been teaching both accredited and pre-accredited EAL classes to adults at Williamstown Community and Education Centre since 2012. Prior to entering the Adult Community Education (ACE) sector, she was a secondary school English, Drama and Theatre Studies teacher for over 10 years and in this role, directed numerous school plays and musicals. In addition, she has taught drama classes to primary and secondary aged students for the Victorian Youth Theatre.

In June 2019, Jodie completed a Master of TESOL at the University of Melbourne. The topic of her final research project was 'The effects of drama pedagogy on the oral communication skills of adult additional language learners.' She also has a Bachelor of Education in Language, Literature and Drama, and a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

The Fellow has presented at conferences locally and internationally. Furthermore, she has run workshops on teaching EAL through drama, through professional organisations and universities in Melbourne. She has also had feature articles published in Fine Print, VALBEC's practitioner journal.

The Fellow is a member of the following professional organisations:

» Victorian Adult Literacy Basic Education Council (VALBEC)

» VicTESOL

» Adult Learning Australia (ALA).

Abbreviations/ Acronyms/ Definitions

EAL	English as an Additional Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
DiE	Drama in Education
TiE	Theatre in Education
VicTESOL	Victorian Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages
VALBEC	Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council
ALA	Adult Learning Australia
ACEVic	Adult Community Education Victoria
SEE	Skills for Education and Employment
DiALLA	Drama in Additional Language Learning Australia
FECCA	Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
RTO	Registered Training Organisation

Process drama
a process through which all the learners in a class (and the teacher) simultaneously take on roles and participate in a series of drama activities connected to a story, with no external audience. This process generally occurs over a series of lessons

and the story develops and changes through the spontaneous interactions of the learners and teacher in role.

Pre-text
a text, such as a folk tale or poem, used to launch a process drama

Improvisation
a form of drama in which there is no script or planned speech and actors are required to 'think on their feet' and communicate spontaneously

Gibberish
a nonsensical language often used in drama improvisation games

Performative Language Teaching
an umbrella term that encompasses all language teaching methods deriving from performing arts.

Freeze frames
(also known as still images or tableaux)- physical formation of a still image (like a photograph) by people using their bodies to represent characters and/or objects in a scene.

4. FELLOWSHIP LEARNINGS

Throughout the course of her international Fellowship journey, the Fellow gained a wealth of knowledge of the ways in which drama pedagogy can bring about positive outcomes for adults learning EAL. Most of the learning occurred via intensive professional development through which the Fellow also developed a wide network of international contacts in this specialised field. These learnings have been categorised under 3 headings: The impact of drama on learners' emotional state, communicative outcomes, and employability skills development

Impact of drama on learners' emotional state

It is widely acknowledged that adult learners' capacity for language learning is significantly influenced by their emotional state. Prior to the Fellowship journey, the Fellow undertook a systematic literature review of recent research studies on drama's impact of the oral communication skills of adult language learners. Through this review, it became apparent that a common focus of such studies was drama's capacity to bring about an emotional shift in learners who are blocked from language acquisition due to an affective filter (Krashen, 1982) of negative emotions such as anxiety, fear or boredom. The Fellow's international research highlighted a multitude of ways in which drama pedagogy can alleviate this filter, enabling learners to engage in meaningful communication in the target language. When teachers gain the skills and resources to make purposeful use of drama techniques in their delivery of EAL lessons, they become armed with increased potential to reduce learner anxiety and build confidence, while engaging, energising, and empowering their learners.

The importance of warming up

One of the key messages taken from this Fellowship was that if a teacher is using drama-based activities with a class for the first time, care should be taken to go slowly and gently. If the learners have come from educational backgrounds that involve a more traditional teacher-centred style of learning, it is important not to launch straight into tasks that fall outside their comfort zone. Instead, it is advisable to begin with group-based warm-ups and non-verbal tasks such as mime and freeze frames, where everyone is on an equal footing, regardless of their competence in English. This point is especially salient when teaching in the adult migrant context as learners have frequently faced trauma and may feel confronted or threatened if singled out. Learners must be encouraged to participate without feeling forced, and teachers should aim to give them agency to make choices about the roles they will take within the drama. Additionally, warm up activities should be used as they are essential for building trust and enabling learners to let go of some of their fears. They also help learners to connect with their voices and bodies, something that in previous more teacher-centred educational contexts, they may not have been asked to do. If our learners spend most of their class time sitting at a table and then are suddenly expected to perform a role-play in front of the class or as an assessment task, this can feel awkward and unnatural. The energising nature of warming up helps learners to transition more naturally into the performative learning sphere.

Freeze frame in a workshop run by Beatriz Fernández Diez at the DiE Days Conference, Zug

The starting point for many of the workshop warm-ups in which the Fellow participated, was for everyone to explore the learning space. This technique allows students to gain the confidence to move beyond their comfort zones and engage with a sense of freedom to express themselves physically. Examples of such activities are:

» learners move around the space, trying not to simply walk in a circle, but to branch out and make different shapes and lines on the floor with their footsteps. The teacher may then add instructions about moving in particular ways, e.g. running late for the bus, feeling exhausted after a late night.

» everyone starts positioned in a close group, all making eye contact with the facilitator and noting their positions. Then they are instructed to touch all four walls of the room as quickly as possible and finally return to their original positions and hold that position until all have returned.

Other warm-ups, designed to energise learners, often bring about laughter and a sense of fun. This is highly beneficial in that it can release tension, helping students to relax and feel more willing to take risks with the language. Examples of energising warm ups are:

» **Body writing-** students are asked to write words with different parts of their bodies, e.g. Write your first name with your left elbow, write the name of this month with your right foot, write the name of someone in your family with your nose, write a word that describes how you feel today with your hips. Teachers can incorporate any vocabulary they wish to focus on in the lesson.

» **10 second object-** as learners move around the space, the teacher calls out a number and then the name of an object, e.g. “four, table”. The students then have to form groups of that number and create the assigned object using their bodies. Teachers can also use this as a strategy for mixing students into working groups by ensuring that the final number called out the is desired group number.

Warming up the voice is also an important step as this can build speaking confidence, promote vocal projection and develop the expressive use of the voice. A few examples of these are:

» humming as a group and then opening into various vowel sounds, e.g. MMMMMaaah, MMMMMay, MMMMMeeeee, MMMMMoooo

» having students throw a soft ball or even an imaginary ball across the circle to nother student while saying something simple such as ‘Good morning’. As they throw the ball, the aim to ‘throw’ their voice across the circle, making it clear and audible (without shouting)

» speaking a simple neutral phrase such as 'My blue shoes' in different ways to express various contexts e.g. a lovesick teenager, an angry teacher.

Jodie running a vocal warm up in a workshop she co-facilitated with Carmel Davies in Zug

With Stefanie Giebert and Eva Göksel in Zug.

Warming up doesn't have to be extensive but is an important step in any drama workshop. Once learners are warmed up, they are generally more open to participating in other drama-based activities.

Empowerment

In her interview with Angelica Galante in Montreal, the Fellow was reminded of how disempowered migrants can feel when arriving in a new country. In addition to the deep level of sorrow and trauma that may come with leaving one's home and family members, there is often also a sense of loss of identity and voice upon arrival in the new country. Not being able to secure employment due to language barriers and their qualifications not being recognised can lead to low self-esteem of adult migrant EAL learners. Learning English through drama has the capacity to help learners find their voice and increase their confidence, leading to a sense of empowerment. One such strategy is to encourage the sharing and performing of the learners' own stories within a safe environment. This can be done in several ways as the Fellow learnt through the aforementioned meeting with Dr Galante, as well as her participation in the TESOL Drama workshop (Florence), The DiE Days Conference (Zug) and the Summer School (Grenoble):

» creating short scenarios to be performed within the safety of the class environment that reflect key issues which create a sense of disempowerment or disadvantage for the learners, e.g. being discriminated against because of their accent. There are several ways in which such scenes can then be reworked in order to give learners a sense of empowerment and control, including:

  a. students performing a scene as it happened in real life and then performing a second version as it should have happened.

  b. working with the Forum Theatre method (created by Augusto Boal in the 1970s). This involves one group performing a scene in which the protagonist of the scene is being oppressed and is ultimately overpowered by the antagonist. The scene is then performed for a second time, during

which audience members (known as 'spect-actors', an amalgamation of the words 'spectator and 'actor') can call out 'Freeze' to make the actors hold a still image with their bodies. The 'spect-actor' then moves into the performance space and, taking the place of the protagonist (the oppressed character) in the scene, performs a different response to the oppressors to bring the scene to a more empowering conclusion for the main character.

The Fellow with Dr Angelica Galante in Montreal

» creating a larger scale group devised piece of theatre to be performed to an external audience. This may be inspired by the stories of the learners themselves.

In working through such issues in this way, learners are able to find common ground and make connections with classmates. Fiona Dalziel (Grenoble Summer School) shared her observation that becoming part of such a safe community is of great importance to migrants who may have fled danger. Furthermore, through the techniques outlined above, learners are afforded a sense of agency to change unwanted situations and may feel able to find a stronger voice within the new language and culture. As Jonothan Neelands stated in his keynote speech at the DiE Days conference, 'Theatre is the first form of activism.' Sharing stories performatively creates potential for addressing social justice and bringing about change.

At the University of Grenoble, France

The Fellow with Anna Santucci and Fiona Dalziel at the Grenoble Summer School

It is, however, important to note that when encouraging learners to share their stories through drama workshops, we should ensure that there is a suitably safe layer of distance between the learners' actual experiences and the scenes being performed. As Erika Piazzoli explained during a workshop in Grenoble, some distance is created by the very fact that the learners are speaking in a language other than their mother tongue. This can be enhanced by having students take on roles of fictional characters (rather than playing themselves) and changing the settings for scenes. In this way, while a performance might deal with personally relevant issues, the experience is less likely to be traumatic. Fiona Dalziel (Grenoble) proposed that this distance is also an important factor in avoiding a constant reinforcement of the role of victim for our learners. On the other hand, Piazzoli stressed the point that if there is too much distance placed between the learners and the subject matter, this may lead to a sense of detachment and a lack of engagement with the drama. In other words, it is important for the learners to be able to connect in some way to what they are performing. Guided by Bolton's (1984) theory, Piazzoli demonstrated that when we deal with sensitive topics indirectly rather than directly, we are able to protect our students *into* emotion, rather than protecting them *from* emotion.

The Fellow with Dr Erika Piazzoli in Grenoble

Motivation

Using drama in the EAL classroom can be highly motivating for learners. By its very nature, drama is interactive, physical, often entertaining and memorable. Furthermore, if drama activities are thoughtfully structured, they can provide a clear motivation for learners to communicate in a meaningful way. A key message gained from this Fellowship was that in order to create this motivation, a dramatic scene must be driven by an element of tension. When deciding the context of a simple roleplay, for example, you could add tension by identifying a problem that will be present in the scene, e.g. At the end of year office party, a manager and employee are having a conversation by the food table. The employee, struggling to support a family knows he is entitled to more pay, but the boss insists that the pay is lower because business isn't currently going well. Without such an element of tension, scenes can fall flat, and it may feel as though the students are simply 'going through the motions' or as Erika Piazzoli (Grenoble) suggested, falling onto the "Zombie trap". As Jonothan Neelands (Zug) highlighted, from the time we first start to use language, a key motivation for communicating is to "get what we want." Hence when we create a situation in which there is a significant problem providing a barrier to what is desired, learners are more likely to dive in and use the language, both verbal and non-verbal to communicate their intended meaning.

Motivation can also be engendered by the involvement of the class in the rehearsal and production of a play to be performed to an external audience. As the Fellow learnt in presentations by Stefanie Giebert (Grenoble) and Alison Larkin Koushki (Zug), through being involved in a longer-term performance project, learners generally feel a sense of motivation and pride about showing the results of their work to family and friends. The sense of playing an essential role within a community of practice can also motivate learners to attend classes regularly. In addition, it can inspire them to put in the effort required to develop their character, learn lines and take responsibility for any other assigned production tasks, e.g. collecting costume and prop items.

Scene from a workshop facilitated by Patrice Baldwin in Zug.

With the TESOL Drama Group in Florence, facilitated by Marisol Santana (third from left) and José Angel Santana (centre).

The participants, organisers and volunteers of the DiE Days conference in Zug.

Communicative outcomes

When using drama techniques in the EAL classroom, it is vital that we consider exactly how it will help our students achieve their communicative goals. This is an important step in ensuring that drama does not simply become a light-hearted filler that learners may view as entertaining but a waste of their learning time. In defining communication, teachers should consider the development of verbal, non-verbal and written language skills. In addition, we need to help our learners gain an understanding of the pragmatics of language use, e.g. how to politely refuse an invitation or how to ask for a favour. When these language learning benefits are made explicit, students are more likely to be open to trying new techniques and view them as relevant and useful. Through the purposeful use of drama pedagogy, teachers have the capacity to address the entire realm of their learners' communicative needs.

Creating contexts for spontaneous use of language

There are many performative approaches to creating contexts for meaningful, spontaneous use of language in the EAL classroom. With these techniques, there is a greater focus on helping learners achieve fluency and natural speech rather than concentrating on accuracy. Such skills are then transferable to a variety of real-life contexts beyond the classroom. While grammatical accuracy is of great importance for many learners, it should not always be the key focus when working with drama in the EAL classroom. In order to equip students with the confidence to think on their feet when communicating in English, teachers can introduce unscripted, improvised drama strategies to the classroom. Throughout the Fellowship trip, the Fellow participated in a range of workshops, which equipped her with such strategies.

Spontaneous communication workshop in TESOL Drama course, Florence (photo credit- José Angel Santana)

One such approach is the implementation of process drama within the language classroom. Process drama, an educational approach developed from the ideas and work of practitioners such as Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton (Johnson & O'Neill, 1984), was first promoted as a valuable method of language teaching by Kao and O'Neill (1998). A process drama generally spans across several lessons, taking the learners on an interactive journey through a story. The students and teacher all participate in the drama simultaneously and there is no external audience, rather the audience is made up of the participants themselves. The teacher sets the drama in motion using a pre-text, (a text or artefact providing the story context), such as a folk tale, photograph, news article or You Tube video. Once the story has been launched, all members of the class become immersed in it, taking on roles and actively participating in the drama. When working with process drama, the teacher and students shift in and out of role. The teacher can make this clear through the addition and removal of costume items or some sort of ritual or sound (such as the shaking of a maraca) that is recognisable to all. The drama evolves using a series of performative conventions such as:

» **Teacher in Role-** the teacher assumes the attitude and persona of a character in the story and interacts with the learners who are also in role. Through this technique, the teacher can gently steer the drama whilst still leaving the story open for the learners to navigate. Additionally, a teacher in role may inject the essential dramatic element of tension into the drama. Adding a simple costume item such as a hat or jacket can help to clearly indicate when the teacher is in or out of character, which is important to avoid confusion for the learner.

Note: It is not important for the teacher to be a brilliant actor when using this technique. Focusing on using the language and attitude matching the character is far more important.

» **Mantle of the Expert-** the students are assigned roles as experts in order to help a character (generally the teacher in role) to solve a problem, e.g. the teacher takes on the role of a parent concerned about her distracted child, asking his/her child's teachers (played by the students) for advice on how to get the child to be more focused. One of the key benefits of this strategy is that it flips the typical hierarchy of the class, giving the students a higher status than the teacher by placing them as experts. This can be really motivating and affirming for learners

» **Conscience Alley-** a student takes on the role of a character who is facing a dilemma and takes a slow walk between two lines of students, facing each other. These other students become the two sides of the character's conscience, calling out opposing thoughts and advice as the character walks through the 'alley', created by the two lines. At the end of the walk, the main student, still in role, comes to a decision.

A group of local teachers experimenting with the Conscience Alley technique in a VicTESOL workshop facilitated by the Fellow in October 2019.

Such process drama strategies provide learners with motivation to use language in a way that is meaningful and contextualised rather than simply reciting isolated examples from a textbook.

That is not to suggest that textbooks and grammar sheets don't have a place in the EAL classroom; they are valuable tools for explaining and giving initial drilled practice of language structures. However, if this is the only way our learners get to practice the target language, a sense of authenticity in the language use is missing. Through process drama, students are provided with situations in which language use is necessary in order to solve a problem. The following quote from Patrice Baldwin, (keynote speaker at the DiE Days Conference in Zug) articulates this point: "The amount of vocabulary you have becomes unimportant and irrelevant if you are not using it in a meaningful context". In addition, she notably asserted that when our students are engaged in drama activities, "although the contexts are imagined, the learning is real."

Another drama approach that promotes the fluent and spontaneous use of the target language is the use of **improvisational games**. As part of the TESOL Drama course in Florence, the Fellow had the opportunity to explore improvisational techniques created by American academic and educator, Viola Spolin. Through these games, contexts (the who, what and where of the scenario) are negotiated and students then improvise a short scene within the structure of a game. These techniques, although originally designed for the training of actors rather than language learners, have enormous potential to help EAL learners develop natural, spontaneous speech. While they are generally intended to be improvised in front of an audience, a teacher may wish to alleviate potential learner anxiety by having students simultaneously perform the tasks in pairs or small groups. After students become more comfortable with this approach, they may wish to show their previously improvised work to the class, or even improvise directly in front of the class. As mentioned in the previous section, however, it is always best to go slowly and gently when using these techniques so that the experience builds confidence rather than inducing fear. Explanations and video demonstrations of these games are freely available on websites as listed in the reference section of this report. One example of Spolin's Improvisation games, experienced by the Fellow on her journey, is:

Gibberish/English: Note- Before playing this game, students must first be taught the concept of speaking in Gibberish and have plenty of practice using it with various partners. Gibberish, a nonsensical language made up of random combinations of vowels and consonants, is a great equaliser, as anyone can speak it (especially once they are well warmed up). It also a highly effective technique for drawing physical and vocal expression out of learners, because the absence of recognisable words compels speakers to express meaning using all their other communicative resources. Hence there is a strong focus on gesture, facial expression, tone, rhythm and intonation.

In the Gibberish/English game, learners are grouped into pairs and the context for a scene is decided upon by asking the questions: Who are they? Where are they? What are they doing? The teacher then acts as a 'side-coach' asking them to begin the scene in Gibberish. As the scene progresses, the teacher side-coaches them by alternately calling out "English" or "Gibberish at semi-regular intervals. The aim for the learners is to sustain the flow and meaning the dialogue, even as they switch between Gibberish and English. Beginning in gibberish can alleviate the pressure some learners may feel to stop and think about grammatical accuracy. Thus, once the side-coach instructs them to switch to English, students are already invested in the meaning of the scene and this promotes oral fluency.

Working in this unscripted manner can be liberating for learners whose desire to be grammatically accurate might hinder them from participating in conversations outside the classroom. Thus, providing students with regular opportunities to communicate spontaneously can have a significant impact on their confidence to speak more naturally in a variety of social, transactional and workplace contexts.

Targeted practice of language forms

While focusing on fluency is enormously beneficial, it is naturally also important to continually help our students to achieve grammatical accuracy. For learners looking to find work, pass an IELTS exam or apply for further study, using English accurately is a high priority. In planning lessons involving drama, teachers may consider which language structures they want their students to practise and embed these into the lessons.

One simple way to do this is to begin with non-verbal activities such as mimed scenes and freeze frames. As a starting point, these techniques are non-threatening and inclusive for the students because they do not require the immediate use of verbal language. Once a group shows their work to the class, the other learners can bring in oral language by describing what they observe. For example, if the class has been studying the present continuous tense, this can be practised as students describe a freeze frame presented by another group, e.g. *She's leaning against the wall; He's vacuuming the floor.* The same could easily be done using other tenses such as the past simple: *She leaned against the wall; He vacuumed the floor.* In describing another group's mimed scene, learners can be instructed to make verbal observations about the way an action is being performed, using previously learnt adverbs, e.g. *Hannah is opening the box suspiciously.*

For more intensive practice, specific language structures can be worked into a longer process drama, run over a series of lessons. Before working with certain strategies such as Teacher in Role, the students can be asked (out of role) to brainstorm for phrases or structures that could be used in the context of the scene they are about to enter. For example, if the scene will be a staff meeting held by the office manager (Teacher in Role) and the students will play the role of unhappy employees, the students could first construct a list of useful phrases for making requests or suggestions, e.g. *May I suggest? ; It would be great if…..; Could we request?* This not only prepares the students for the forthcoming drama scene but reinforces the language outcomes. Ideally, these outcomes should be revisited and reflected upon at the end of each lesson, highlighting for learners the value of their participation.

On a larger scale again, linguistic accuracy can be addressed through the rehearsal and performance of scripted drama, from short scenes to full scale productions. Stefanie Giebert (Zug) explained that scripts give learners access to dialogue that you may not find in other text types such as novels or short stories. Whilst a teacher might choose to work from an existing published scene or play, original scripts can also be devised allowing for the specific inclusion of language forms requiring practice. The repetition embedded in the rehearsal and line-learning process can aid learners to retain and recall a range of linguistic structures. In Grenoble, performative language education expert, Jean Remi Lapaire, emphasised that once students have learned the lines from a script, they can explore the meaning in a lot more depth. This deep exploration of the language is often motivated by the fact that in order to bring the language to life, learners need to truly understand what it is the character is trying to convey. Additionally, if learners have previously had the opportunity to work with improvisation and process- based drama techniques, they are more likely to be able to improvise if scripted lines are forgotten in a performance.

Practice of written language through drama

Although much of the focus when teaching performatively is on oral communication, there is also a range of possibilities for the exploration of written language. One example is the use of the technique known as 'Writing in Role'. This highly motivating convention can be used during a process drama workshop in which the students have already taken on roles of characters within the story. At a given point within the drama, whilst still in character, they are instructed to write something from that character's perspective. This could be a letter, email or journal entry in which the views or feelings of the character can be expressed. Doing (or at least beginning) such a task during class, while the learners are still engaged in the context and mood of the story, is a really effective way of providing a meaningful context for writing.

Another form of writing that can be exercised within a performative context is the writing of scripts. During the TESOL Drama course in Florence, Dr Marisol Santana set a task for all participants to create a script for a short scene involving characters inspired by 3 different stimuli: an artwork viewed while in Florence, a stranger observed in a public space and a subject chosen from a series of photographs. The scripted scenes were later performed to the rest of the class and the creative outcomes were inspiring. Such an exercise could be used as an effective way of inspiring empathy, perception and creativity in learners, by prompting them to make connections with the world around them and use these as inspiration for monologues or dialogues. Alternatively, students could be set the task of taking an existing text such as a short story and adapting it into a theatrical script for performance, as one summer school participant in Grenoble, Giulia Andreoni (Cornell University, New York) proposed. This could be done individually or as part of a group and would involve learners making considered creative and linguistic choices.

Other written tasks that may emerge from a drama-based curriculum are:

» writing reflections on learnings in a journal

» writing a detailed character profile

» writing a plot synopsis for the program of a play to be performed.

» writing scenes for alternative endings of a play

» writing a review of another group's performance

Thus, drama can provide a multitude of opportunities for learners to develop writing skills, essential for increasing confidence as well as potential for further study and employment.

Paralinguistic elements of communication

In order to help learners, become truly competent communicators in the target language, it is vital that we create opportunities to explore the paralinguistic elements of communication, such as tone, intonation, rhythm, gestures and posture. The holistic nature of drama methodology provides learners with limitless scope for developing these skills. The shift in recent years towards communicative language teaching (CLT) has certainly led to learners having a more active, student-centred learning experience. However, according to Professor Manfred Schewe (Grenoble Summer School Keynote), drama goes one step further than CLT, by including the body, enabling our students to experience learning with their "head, heart, hands and feet."

With Professor Manfred Schewe in Grenoble

Throughout the travel component of her Fellowship, the Fellow garnered a wealth of techniques for helping EAL learners to connect with their physical and vocal communicative resources. The examples below would best be done after students are well warmed up and familiar with the notion of learning through drama:

» having the students communicate their intended meaning in gibberish. As explained above, this technique creates a situation in which learners must utilise non-verbal and prosodic cues in order to make themselves understood. Note: For any students who are initially uncomfortable with speaking in gibberish, an alternative is to allow the repeated use of a single word, e.g. Person A can only say 'Banana', and Person B can only say "Pineapple'.

» getting the students to experiment with extreme versions of body language

and facial expressions. In a workshop facilitated by teacher, Nadine Saxinger, in Zug, participants were invited to sit on seats facing a blank screen as though watching a film. A series of musical excerpts were then played to signify various film genres such as horror, romance and comedy. Participants were then instructed to react to the "films" they were "watching" in an extreme manner, first, non-verbally and then with the addition of vocal responses. Once learners feel comfortable being freely expressive in an exaggerated manner, non-verbal expression can then be scaled back to a more natural level.

» instructing learners who are positioned in a circle to cross the circle and greet another student in a specified manner, e.g. enthusiastically, nervously, confidently, suspiciously.

» teaching the students a series of hand gestures to match the intonation required in a variety of pragmatic contexts. In Dr Art Babayants' Embodied English class, the Fellow observed learners being taught such gestures to accompany the words denoting the intonation patterns such as: rise, fall and level. Students practised these combinations of words and gestures in an exaggerated manner and then applied the gesture and tone to appropriate utterances within a context. For example, in pairs, Student A asks Student B a question and Student B gives an answer that is clearly wildly inaccurate. Student A then responds with the word 'Really?", accompanying this with a rising tone and rising hand gesture.

» reading a poem or Jazz Chant along with a metronome to help students find the strong beats created by stressed words or syllables, when speaking with a natural rhythm.

The Fellow with Dr Art Babayants at University of Toronto

At University of Toronto

Employability skills development

The development of employability skills is an integral aspect of EAL education for adult migrant learners in Australia. Whether a student is intent on finding employment, seeking further education or becoming more active within the local community, these skills, also known as soft skills are of immense value. Throughout her journey, the Fellow analysed the ways in which these can be promoted using drama techniques in the adult EAL classroom. The Employability Skills Framework as published by the Victorian government defines these skills as:

» communication

» teamwork

» problem solving

» initiative and enterprise

» planning and organising

» self-management

» learning

» technology

Below are some examples of drama-based tasks, which align with each skill in this framework

Communication
(In addition to the numerous examples of communicative benefits outlined in the previous section)

» negotiating with classmates in the planning of a scene

» using language to persuade others, e.g. through the process drama conventions of Conscience Alley or Teacher in Role

» increased speaking confidence through vocal warm ups and voice projection techniques

Teamwork

» working within different groups of varied age, gender and cultural backgrounds to rehearse short scenes

» rehearsing an entire play as a class to be performed to an external audience- this may involve taking on various roles such as actors, directors, costume designers, etc. and supporting other team members with their roles

» giving constructive feedback on the performance of other class members

Problem Solving

» finding creative alternatives for props or costumes, such as the imaginative transformation of scarves or simple objects into the required items

» devising practical solutions to working within a limited space, e.g. mapping out a classroom to represent a town for a process drama workshop, or reorganising the classroom furniture to establish an open space

» solving problems within a dramatic context, e.g. through the process drama convention of Mantle of the Expert, in which the students take on the role of experts in order to solve a problem presented to them

Initiative and enterprise

» making creative suggestions for a mimed scene, or freeze frame of an imagined situation that could occur at a future point within a story

» offering ideas for how a set of assigned objects could be meaningfully incorporated into one scene

» finding and enacting empowering solutions for an oppressed character in a Forum Theatre style performance

Planning and organising

» establishing a rehearsal schedule for the performance of a play

» organising various aspects of a performance in advance, e.g. collecting props, designing programmes, booking a performance space, promoting the performance

Self-Management

» having learners set goals of the skills and qualities they wish to develop through their participation in the drama-based tasks

» taking responsibility for one's agreed roles in a performance, e.g. learning lines, remembering to bring props and costume items to class

Learning

» regularly revisiting learning goals and evaluating progress through a reflective journal

» expanding view of learning, by being open to drama-based learning strategies

» becoming more active in the learning process though full-body participation

Technology

» creating video recordings of each other's performances to enable learners to evaluate improvement and areas needed for further development

» creating a video trailer to promote an upcoming performance

» using recorded sound effects and music to create the mood for a performance

» creating a running sheet for a performance using a program such as Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets.

Incorporating learnings into the creation of a lesson plan with fellow teacher, Gabriella Baka in Florence. (photo credit- José Angel Santana)

5. PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL AND SECTORAL IMPACT

Personal/professional-

- the opportunity provided to the Fellow through this Fellowship has enabled her to research a subject of great personal interest by connecting with an international community of practice in this specialised field. Through this network, she has gained invaluable support, skills, knowledge and inspiration. This, in turn, has equipped her to become a confident, capable presenter and workshop facilitator.
- the opportunity to experience intensive face-to-face learning through this methodology was key to the Fellow's personal and professional growth. This is because in the same way that learners need to experience such learning kinaesthetically, so do educators.
- the Fellowship experience has inspired the Fellow to propose the running of a specific 'EAL through Drama' class at her workplace in 2020.
- in addition to developing an international network, the Fellow has also made professional connections with other experts within Australia, with whom she plans to collaborate in the future.
- since returning from the research trip, the Fellow has been contacted by three different universities, asking her to run workshops with pre-service teachers and practising teachers.
- the Fellowship has opened up the opportunity for the Fellow to have her first solo feature article published in a practitioner journal.

Facilitating a workshop with Carmel Davies at the DiE Days Conference in Zug.

Connecting with other ISSI Fellows, Suzana Stapar (L) and Linno Rhodes (R) at a VALBEC workshop facilitated by Jodie in September, 2019.

Sectoral

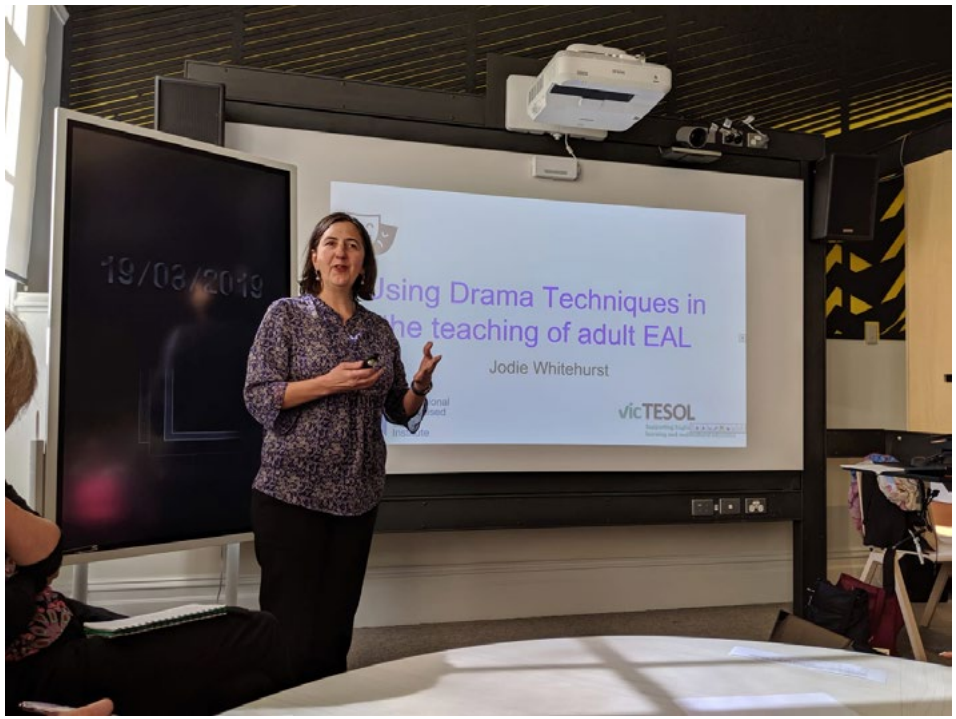
The Fellowship has already enabled the Fellow to have a significant impact on the adult community and education sector through a variety of dissemination events and activities, including:

- writing a feature article for Fine Print, VALBEC's practitioner journal (see attached in Appendix)
- presenting at the VicTESOL Symposium
- running a series of workshops, combining Fellowship overview, theory and practical activities through the following organisations and institutions:
  - Williamstown Community and Education Centre
  - VALBEC
  - VicTESOL
  - The University of Melbourne
  - Deakin University

Through the workshops run so far, the Fellow has shared her garnered knowledge and skills with over 200 Victorian teachers and student teachers.

- being interviewed by Tamsin Rossiter, EO of ACEVic about her experience of the Fellowship and plans in the future. This resulting story was published in their newsletter and on the ACEVic Facebook page. During the interview, plans for future workshops to be offered by the Fellow through ACEVic were discussed.
- attending meetings with Jenny Macaffer (CEO) and Catherine Devlin (Operations Manager) of Adult Learning Australia to discuss the ways in which ALA can support the continuing dissemination of the Fellow's learnings. These will potentially include:
  - conducting action research/ evaluation of how learning EAL through drama helps adult migrant learners in Australia to become more engaged within their communities and develop communication and employability skills.
  - running webinars and/or workshops to make drama pedagogy accessible to adult EAL teachers on a national scale.
  - developing online resources for teachers including video footage of

examples of exactly how drama techniques can be incorporated into adult EAL classes.



Presenting at the VicTESOL Symposium in Melbourne, August 2019.

Jodie demonstrating the Teacher in Role convention to teachers at a VALBEC workshop in September 2019

The Fellow plans to continue her dissemination in the following ways, by:

» continuing to publish and distribute her blog, *The Language of Drama*
» continuing to facilitate the DiALLA Facebook group to allow teachers throughout the sector to share resources and learn about techniques and available PD
» presenting a Thought Leadership Seminar through the VET Development Centre in 2020
» running more workshops for teachers in the sector, including longer courses, enabling participants to experience learning of the techniques on a deeper level and thus develop more con idence to use drama strategies in their teaching

6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Regardless of how well documented the benefits of performative language teaching are, teachers will only feel confident to use such an approach if they have the opportunity to learn the techniques. It is the Fellow's strong belief that in the same way that learners gain benefits from the whole-body nature of drama pedagogy, teachers need opportunities to kinaesthetically experience this style of learning through interactive professional development. While a short presentation at a TESOL conference can certainly spark an EAL teacher's interest in using drama, longer, more intensive PD opportunities, such those attended by the Fellow, afford greater in-depth exploration and experiential learning. When teachers have time to physically immerse themselves in drama-based tasks with other educators, they get a stronger sense of how such processes might feel for their learners. Ideally, performative teaching techniques should be incorporated into undergraduate and graduate TESOL courses, so that they become part of each teacher's repertoire from the outset. Teachers also need ongoing support through resources and opportunities to connect with other like-minded practitioners.

If EAL teachers do not have a background as drama teachers, they may feel out of their comfort zone when starting to teach performatively. As the Fellow was reminded by Angelica Galante, teachers should be reassured that the goal is to simply use drama strategies to teach language, rather than teaching students how to act. Thus the focus should remain firmly on the communicative outcomes rather than how convincingly the learners (and teacher) can act.

The Fellow recommends the following:

» that a core unit on performative language teaching is introduced into all graduate and postgraduate TESOL courses, enabling pre-service teachers to learn strategies for using a range of performative techniques derived from drama, theatre and music in the teaching of EAL.

» that funding is made available for RTOs and Learn Locals to have in-house professional development sessions for their EAL staff on performative language teaching.

» that EAL teachers in RTOs and Learn Locals have access to more extensive courses in performative language teaching. Such courses would provide teachers with the skills, strategies and confidence to utilise drama techniques in their teaching to the benefit of their learners.

» that funding be made available for an annual DiALLA conference through which EAL teachers can participate in workshops and attend keynote speeches by experts in the field of performative language teaching. The conference could also be a forum for practitioners to share their experiences of performative techniques they have successfully incorporated into their teaching.

» that drama resources are created that connect directly to the EAL and SEE curricula, so that teachers are able to immediately access relevant, useful drama-based activities connected to the units they are teaching. This would enable teachers to teach EAL performatively without the need for a lot of extra preparation, thus making drama strategies accessible to all. These resources should include video clips of techniques being utilised, so that teachers can easily gain a clear sense of what is involved in each drama convention.

» that funding is made available for RTOs and Learn Locals to have in-house professional development sessions for their EAL staff on performative language teaching.

» that provision is made for further research to be conducted on the benefits and best practice of using drama in Australian adult migrant EAL learning contexts.

» that a theatre company be established specifically to produce plays suitable for adult EAL learners to attend (performances during the day, relevant subject matter, comprehensible pace of speech) so that learners may be inspired by seeing performances and get a sense of the transformative power of theatre.

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Recommended websites

Viola Spolin's Improvisational Games: https://spolin.com/

https://spolingamesonline.org/

Drama teaching resources: https://dramaresource.com/

DiALLA Facebook Group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/2199921460063190/

8. APPENDIX 1

Fine Print Article by Jodie Whitehurst

Originally published in *Fine Print*, the journal of the Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council.
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Dramatically speaking: The benefits of drama for adult EAL learners

by Jodie Whitehurst

Teaching English as an Additional Language (EAL) to adults in the community sector is undoubtedly one of the most rewarding jobs I have ever had. What a great privilege to work with learners from so many cultures and language backgrounds, who bring such a wealth of experiences and skills into the classroom! At the end of most days, I leave the classroom feeling energised and grateful. Naturally, however, there are also days when I scratch my head wondering, 'How can I do more to ensure that I am facilitating learning that is meaningful and long lasting?' One of the key ways I have aimed to achieve this recently is by incorporating a range of drama techniques into my EAL classes.

Prior to entering the world of adult language education, I worked as a secondary school English and drama teacher for ten years, a job which I also loved. As the sole drama teacher at several schools, I became accustomed to spending countless hours with the students, rehearsing for school productions, painting sets and helping VCE students to refine their monologues. I was constantly in awe of the drama students' dedication, initiative and creativity and found great joy in seeing their acting skills and confidence grow over time. It was clear that this confidence was not limited to the drama classroom or stage, but applied to many facets of their lives. As school leavers, it was common for students to articulate how instrumental their involvement in drama had been in allowing them to grow, learn and to feel part of a supportive community.

In light of this experience, when I entered the world of adult community language education, I naturally I wanted my new learners to be afforded these benefits. I could immediately see the potential of such methodology to provide them with much needed opportunities to develop their expressive skills and confidence. However, I also realised I couldn't just expect drama to immediately make sense or appear relevant to these mature-aged, multicultural students. To most of them, drama was a foreign concept and certainly wasn't on their radar as an expected educational activity. I also suspected that many of the more physical techniques I had used in secondary drama classrooms would potentially be inappropriate and confronting. Essentially, I felt that I needed to be clearer in my own mind (and body) about exactly how drama could be used to achieve the communicative outcomes that were essential to my adult learners.

The search for inspiration

In order to do this, I decided I needed two things: resources that specifically connected the disciplines of drama and EAL, and a chance to participate in professional development (PD) in this field. While I certainly managed to find some useful books and websites, I struggled to uncover any relevant PD opportunities in Australia. I did, however, locate a vibrant, passionate community of drama in language education practitioners in Europe, which I longed to be part of. While disappointed that I could not find any workshops locally, I simply became more experimental with drama techniques that I found in books and online resources, adapting them to the adult context where necessary. Through this process, I built up a repertoire of methods that were positively received by my students. I observed quieter students contributing more frequently and taking risks, stronger collaboration and higher overall learner motivation. Encouraged by these results, I felt compelled to delve deeper.

Thus, at the beginning of 2018, I returned to study, undertaking a Master of TESOL at the University of Melbourne. One of my key motivations for doing this was to research the effects of drama on the language and communication skills of adult EAL learners. For my final project, I conducted a systematic literature review of recently conducted studies in the area of performative language teaching. The term 'performative' acts as an umbrella term (Crutchfield & Schewe, 2017), encompassing techniques which are commonly distinguished as either process-oriented (drama activities practised in the classroom with no external audience) or product-oriented (scenes or plays that are rehearsed to be performed to an audience).

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Throughout my studies I discovered a whole world of research which not only supported my convictions about the advantages of using such pedagogy, but revealed other benefits I had not consciously considered. One of the most significant of these was drama's potential to have a positive effect on the emotional state of adults learning a language by reducing the anxiety that can commonly inhibit learner engagement and progress (Piazzoli, 2011; Atas, 2014). I recognised this anxiety in some of my own students, which often seemed to stem from a fear of making errors and consequently being judged negatively. As the list of reasons to use drama methodology grew, so did my desire to gain more skills in this field.

ISS Institute Fellowship

My opportunity to experience some hands-on PD on using drama in language teaching finally came when, in September 2018, I was awarded a Fellowship by the International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute) in collaboration with the Department of Education and Training (Higher Education and Skills Group). This was nothing short of a dream come true as it allowed me to enter the international community of practitioners working in this field. I was also privileged to meet and learn from many of the experts in whose research I had immersed myself while studying. Throughout my fellowship journey, I visited five cities across Europe and Canada to attend a week-long TESOL Drama course (Florence, Italy) a five day summer school on 'The role of drama in adult and higher language education' (Grenoble, France), the Drama in Education (DiE) Days conference (Zug, Switzerland) and to meet up with experts, Dr Angelica Galante (Montreal) and Dr Art Babyants (Toronto). Through each workshop, meeting and observation, I gained a deeper insight into why and how EAL educators should consider using drama strategies in their teaching, regardless of whether they have a drama teaching background. As Angelica Galante highlighted in our meeting, we don't have to be actors or drama-trained teachers to teach performatively in this context, because we are not teaching our students to be actors. Rather, we are using drama strategies to teach language skills.

Why use drama?

To paraphrase Art Babayants, creator of a drama-based EAL program in Toronto called Embodied English, there is, in a sense, no option but to use drama if we are teaching oral communication to our EAL students.

With Dr Art Babyants, University of Toronto, Canada.

This is because, as research has shown us, an enormous portion of our communication is non-verbal. In line with this, one need only glance at a few pages of the EAL Frameworks curriculum to see that paralinguistic cues (i.e. posture, gestures, facial expressions and intonation) are repeatedly listed among the criteria against which we need to be assessing our students. Notably, these cues vary from culture to culture and learners need the opportunity to comfortably experiment with them in a safe environment. Drama adds to this sense of safety because when students are working in role, mistakes can be attributed to the character, rather than the learner. Additionally, drama is an ideal vehicle for helping our learners build the employability skills embedded in the curriculum such as team-work, initiative and enterprise, and problem-solving.

Whether or not they are consciously utilising drama, a lot of EAL teachers are naturally creative and tend to use performative language techniques, perhaps without even realising they are doing it. With the shift in recent years towards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), many EAL classes have become more learner-centred, enabling students to engage in collaboration, negotiation and meaningful social interaction. However, as Professor Manfred Schewe explained in his keynote address at the summer school in Grenoble, drama "goes a step further than CLT because it brings in the body". Such whole-body learning not only gives learners the opportunity to develop their non-verbal communication, but can also help them retain and recall new language learnt. Additionally, by bringing the body into the equation,

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With the participants, organisers and volunteers of the DiE Days conference in Zug, Switzerland

we are welcoming more of our learners' communicative resources, fostering a sense of inclusion for those who may have limited capacity to communicate verbally in the target language.

At the DiE days conference in Zug, Keynote Speaker, Patrice Baldwin, stated "The amount of vocabulary you have is irrelevant. If you're not using it in a meaningful context, it's not useful." No doubt, many of us have witnessed our students measuring their progress according to the number of grammar sheets completed or new words learnt. However, if, through drama, we can help to scaffold authentic contexts in which this new language can be used, the students become engaged in constructing more meaningful interactions.

Such authenticity is more likely to be achieved if we ensure that there is some kind of tension implicit in the drama. As Dr Erika Piazzoli demonstrated at the Grenoble summer school, if we take a simple role-play scenario such as trying to exchange an item of clothing, we can inject more meaning if we add a sense of tension. For example: it's almost closing time, the customer desperately needs a suitable outfit for a wedding the next day and the shop assistant is completely distracted by her mobile phone. Such dramatic elements increase the learner's motivation to use the language and encourage our learners to move away from simply repeating a series of standard lines learnt from a book.

Another profound impact drama can have on adult migrant learners is that of empowerment. This really dawned on me when, prior to making my overseas fellowship journey, I made contact with Melbourne-based teacher, presenter and resource writer, Carmel Davies, having discovered she had previously undertaken a Churchill Fellowship on a similar topic. From the moment we connected, I was fascinated to learn about Carmel's prior experiences of creating powerful large-scale performances with refugees to empower them to share their stories. Subsequently, during my fellowship journey I gained further insight from Fiona Dalziel (co-convener and keynote speaker of the Grenoble Summer School) and Angelica Galante (Montreal), into the ways that drama in the language classroom opens up a space for adult migrants not only to share their experiences performatively, but to work through challenges they might be facing on a daily basis.

How to start?

Change the space

A key message that I took from several presentations and workshops throughout my journey was that the first step towards creating a drama environment is to change the space. One of the wonderful things about drama is that so much can be achieved with an open space and a group of bodies. By simply pushing the tables to the edges of the room (where possible) and setting out a circle of chairs, the scene is set for collaboration and creativity. While it may initially cause feelings of uneasiness for our learners, I have found that within a short time, students generally adapt and express their approval of working together in this way. This is exemplified by the comment below, made by one of my students at the end of a recent drama-based lesson:

> It makes you confident to communicate with others, you know, especially when, you know, if you sit down there [pointing at tables], you don't know what you are doing, but with the group like that, [indicating the circle of students in the open space] you feel comfortable to express yourself.

Go gently

Another key to successfully introducing drama into the EAL space is to start gently using activities that are non-threatening. Gradually leading into the drama with breathing, physical and vocal warm-ups helps to prepare, engage and relax the whole class. This notion of the whole class should definitely include the teacher, as students will

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always be more willing to try something if they see us doing it with conviction and enthusiasm. While there are countless drama warm-ups available in books and online (see recommended list at the end of this article), here are a few that are easy to use:

- **Group sighs.** Everyone breathes in deeply then engages in a collective exaggerated sigh. You can extend this by asking students to let their bodies flop down as they let the air out.
- **What are you doing?** All stand in a circle and students take turns to walk into the circle and mime an action in detail, e.g. walking a dog. The next student enters the circle and asks '(Name), what are you doing?'. The student miming then answers with something completely different to the action they were miming, e.g. 'I'm washing the car'. The one who asked the question then mimes washing the car and so the cycle continues.
- **Columbian hypnosis.** In pairs, one person leads their partner around the space by an imaginary string that connects the leader's hand to the nose of the one being led. They can also connect hand to hand, hand to elbow, etc. This works best in an open space where learners can experiment with a variety of heights. (Boal, 2002).
- **Cup and Saucer.** Students move around the whole space in a relaxed manner (encourage them to make their own interesting paths on the floor rather than all walking in a circle). When you call out a pair of objects or elements, e.g. 'cup and saucer', 'notebook and pen', 'fire and water', students have to pair up with the nearest person and quickly create a physical representation of what you have called. This is a great way to revise vocabulary you have been working on or to connect students with elements of the drama activities to follow.

In addition to warming the students up physically, vocally and creatively, such activities tend to promote a sense of trust and an element of fun and laughter. These factors enable learners to relax and become more open to using the new language and experimenting with new concepts. Once students reach this state, we can introduce more involved performative strategies, some examples of which I will outline below.

Process drama

In both Grenoble and Zug, I had the great privilege of participating in process drama workshops run by a number of leaders in the field, including Erika Piazzoli, Patrice Baldwin, Jonothan Neelands and Eva Göksel. The term 'process drama' refers to a style of teaching in which the whole class (teacher included) take on roles to participate in a series of activities connected to a story. The teacher launches the story using what is known as a pre-text, e.g. photograph, news article, historical event, folktale or painting. From here a drama is built (often over a series of lessons) drawing upon a range of dramatic conventions and the learning occurs as the students become immersed in the world of the story. As Patrice Baldwin highlighted in Zug, 'the contexts are imagined, but the learning is real.' The more our learners become physically and emotionally invested in the story and its implicit tension, the more motivated they are to make natural, spontaneous use of the target language, leading to greater fluency. Additionally, as one workshop facilitator, Sharka Dohnalova, pointed out, process drama is a great way to enable learners with low literacy levels to experience a story in an accessible, meaningful way.

In a process drama workshop run by Patrice Baldwin in Zug, Switzerland. Photo by Stefanie Giebert

Examples of process drama conventions are:

- **Still images (also known as freeze frames or tableaux).** In small groups, students create a picture of a scene using their bodies to represent characters or objects from the story. The scene could be a moment from within the story, a prediction of a future moment or an imagined event from the past, thus creating a backstory.
- **Thought tracking.** While a group is showing their still image, the teacher taps each student in turn on the shoulder (or gently clicks in front of them), the student has to spontaneously voice what his/her character is thinking at that moment.

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- **Teacher in role.** The teacher takes on a particular role in the story in order to drive the story further, and students respond in character. E.g. the teacher becomes a king asking his subjects what is causing unhappiness in the village. While some teachers are comfortable acting (in fact many will relish this opportunity to set their inner thespian free!), others may be daunted by this idea. It is therefore worth noting that it is more important to convey the character's attitude and status than to be a brilliant actor. Donning a simple costume item such as a hat or jacket can also help to make the transformation clear.

Importantly, process drama can be designed so that it incorporates language structures you want your students to practise, e.g. making polite requests, forming questions, using the passive voice. Getting your students to identify and reflect on these language learning outcomes goes a long way towards convincing them of the value of this style of learning. There are also limitless possibilities for engaging learners in contextualised writing tasks as part of the drama, e.g. a journal entry or letter from the perspective of one of the characters.

Rehearsed performances

The idea of organising a student performance has the potential to inspire dread in many teachers, but it is important to remember that there is a wide spectrum of performance contexts. These could range from performing a short scene in front of another class during the day, right through to a full scale production with sets, costumes and lighting. In reality, most teachers in the adult sector would struggle to find the resources and time to produce the latter, but a smaller scale performance is often achievable. I learned about many of the benefits of EAL student performances through attending two presentations by Allison Larkin Koushki (at DiE Days, Zug) and Stefanie Giebert (at the Grenoble summer school) respectively, as I will outline below.

Inclusivity: Those not keen to perform can be involved as directors, costume designers, scriptwriters, program designers. Each of these tasks develops crucial language skills and employability skills.

Language benefits: The repeated rehearsal of a scripted scene or play allows significant targeted practice of linguistic and paralinguistic features (Maley & Duff, 2005) and pragmatics (Savage, 2019). In addition, there is enormous scope for students to engage in spontaneous, collaborative communication through planning, directing and reflecting.

Motivation: The chance to perform their work to friends and/or family can be highly motivating for learners and additionally foster a deep sense of pride.

Flexibility: When working with diverse groups, teachers can vary the size and complexity of roles to suit individual learners.

Depending on the needs, abilities and interests of the learners, the performance script could be:

- class-devised – perhaps stemming from a series of improvisations done in class
- written by a teacher – with this option teachers can incorporate their learners' interests
- an existing published play script
- an adaptation of a short story – the process of adapting could even be done by students as a writing task.

Reflections and plans

The extent of what I have gained so far, both professionally and personally, through the ISS Institute Fellowship cannot be measured. One of the greatest outcomes for me has been to connect with a community of like-minded practitioners both overseas and now in Melbourne, through some of the workshops I have been running. Working in isolation is never easy, but with drama in education, collaboration is essential. For this reason, I have recently created a Facebook Group called DiALLA (Drama in Additional Language Learning Australia), with the aim of providing a local community of practice for interested teachers. This forum for sharing resources, ideas and PD opportunities, is open to all language teachers, regardless of whether they have drama experience. The daily expressions of interest in this group strengthens my conviction that forming such a community is a worthwhile pursuit. Ultimately, if we teachers come together to support and inspire each other in this way, it is clear that when it comes bringing benefits to our adult EAL learners through drama, the sky's the limit!

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DiALLA (Drama in Additional Language Learning Australia) Facebook group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/2199921460063190/

Drama Resource Website: https://dramaresource.com/

Jodie Whitehurst teaches EAL at Williamstown Community and Education Centre and recently completed a Master of TESOL at the University of Melbourne. She has a passion for bringing drama and music into her English classes and loves to sing and write songs in her spare time. In 2018, Jodie was awarded an ISS Institute Fellowship to travel to Europe and Canada to research the benefits and best practice of using drama in adult EAL education. You can read more about her ISS Institute Fellowship on her blog: https://medium.com/@jodiewhitehurst73

International Specialised Skills Institute

ISS Institute
Level 1, 189 Faraday Street
Carlton VIC 3053

T 03 9347 4583
E info@issinstitute.org.au
W www.issinstitute.org.au

Published by International Specialised Skills Institute, Melbourne | www.issinstitute.org.au

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