



Fluency and the Role of Drama in Language Classes is an excerpt from *Stage by Stage: A Handbook for Using Drama in the Second Language Classroom* by Ann F. Burke and Julie C. O'Sullivan.

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Chapter One

Fluency and the Role of Drama in Language Classes

All teachers of a second language want their students to be fluent, but true fluency in language production doesn't happen all at once. For almost everyone, it takes a long time and much practice. In most language classes—even very small ones—teachers can rarely give each student the time to speak aloud more than a few sentences (and those sentences may or may not be part of a connected stream of thought). How then, do we as teachers encourage students to develop an easy flow of language? A teacher can affect students' progress to fluency by: 1. being enthusiastic, 2. being flexible, 3. making sure that students speak as much as the teacher does, 4. creating an atmosphere where students are not afraid of making mistakes, and 5. setting up a goal for the group.

Teacher Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm is catching. Some exercises may suit your personality and others may not, but the students should never be able to detect the difference. Sometimes the way we present an exercise tells the students that we don't really think it will work. Never, never be tentative! Believe in yourself and what you are asking the students to do.

Teacher Flexibility

In one class at any level, one approach may work fine; at the same level with another class, that approach may not. Basically, we suggest

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that you remain flexible and that you do not become discouraged when an exercise that you had liked on paper was not a roaring success. The next time you try it, it probably will be.

Teacherspeak Versus Studentspeak

To become fluent, students must have a lot of speaking time. Fluency has to do with confidence in speaking, so you must let them speak. Like the old joke about how musicians can get to Carnegie Hall (they must practice), your students can't practice if you are speaking. Either you must get them to speak along with you (in chorus) or you must cut down on the minutes of time that you are speaking. Concentrated use of pronunciation exercises, choral repetitions, small group student interactions, pair work, as well as memorization of dialogues are essential elements in a drama class. Even students who can only produce very simple sentences can gain fluency (at that very simple level) if they practice those sentences enough.

Relaxed Classroom Atmosphere

The teacher can help to create a relaxed atmosphere for everyone in the class. Students who fear making mistakes and feeling foolish in front of friends create a huge barrier to their own progress in second language learning. We have found that if the teachers join in the exercises, are not afraid to look silly while demonstrating, but are earnestly expecting the students to shed their inhibitions and imitate what the teacher is doing, most students will join in. We teachers can laugh at ourselves (Look what I'm willing to do in this class!) and explain that we are doing these things (maybe exaggeratedly) for instructional purposes.

Performance: The Role of a Goal

Giving the students a goal of a performance of some sort is another important ingredient. Even at very beginning levels, the goal can be student memorization and performance for the teacher of practical phrases and sentences, such as where the student lives and what the student's telephone number is. Performing on a

weekly basis helps the students feel that they have mastered some small aspects of the language; in turn, students retain sound flow and syntax in their mind's ear. In intermediate classes, groups can perform short skits for their classmates and at more advanced levels, students can carry off a full production for an invited audience. To illustrate the importance of such a goal, whenever we have staged a play or recorded radio plays, we have noticed that the students knew that they had to pay more attention than usual to pronunciation. They knew that they had to change faulty vowel or consonant sounds in order to be understood by an audience of their peers. The goal of being understood was always in the back of their minds and as a result, they were willing to work much harder than if they had had no such goal.

Here is another illustration of the importance of a goal. An actor from Eastern Europe married a local woman and came to this country before he learned English. Since his profession was acting, he longed to be active in theater again. He undertook a principal part in a local theatrical production within the first few weeks of arriving in our community. Coached by his wife, he memorized an enormous stream of English. He learned the structure of English grammar by countless repetitions of grammatically complex sentences. His wife assured him that he was communicating at the highest level, even though he did not thoroughly understand every phrase that he had memorized. His performance was exciting. The audience was aware that he spoke with an accent, but most people were totally unaware of his linguistic difficulties. He did not start at an easy level and build on it; he started by jumping into complicated structures and forcing them to come out of his mouth, much like opera singers learn an opera in the original language. Although he may have been uniquely motivated and gifted, we feel there is something to be learned from observing this actor's experience.

We learned that students can memorize structures they don't yet understand; they can recognize the situation that calls for that structure and they can connect the structure with the underlying meaning because the drama in which they encountered the structure has supplied them with that context.

In second language classes, we rarely ask students to memorize, even though many of our students come from cultures that

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have demanded memorization throughout their school careers. In the past decade or so, memorization has actually been discouraged. The process of memorizing a part in a play for performance is different from rote memorizing for language classes. A theatrical rehearsal process requires students to use both their minds and bodies in a holistic way to convey the meaning of the words that they speak. They feel that they have experienced the words. Dramatic memorization can assist acquisition of complicated language structure and the “music” of a language (see Introduction for more details about memorization).

Developing Fluency at Differing Levels

Beginning Levels

In classrooms, learners of a second language usually begin by hearing and mimicking the sounds of that language while they make new connections between sound and meaning. Drama techniques such as choral repetitions or jazz chants are particularly good because everyone is speaking and no one is embarrassed in front of the class for not sounding good. Even though it is natural for teachers to worry that they may not be able to judge how each individual student is progressing, or that some students may not always be participating, our experience has been that students eagerly take part in choral work and that everybody gets lots of practice. Repetitions and memorization of material at this level are good ways to familiarize students with sound combinations of the new language. It gives the students a chance to work their tongues and lips around new combinations. It also helps internalize new grammar structures. For example, in English, adjectives come before nouns. Having students memorize sentences with many adjectives in front of nouns will help them internalize this structure. Putting these sentences into a dialogue will add context and something interesting for the students to hold onto.

Students need incentive to practice speaking when they are not in class. To encourage beginning-level students (who cannot sustain a conversation easily) to practice speaking outside of class hours, we have asked our students to memorize phrases, sentences, or dialogues that they have been saying in class. We set aside a

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time in class each week to hear the students orally “perform” memorized structures.

For practice, we ask them to say the sentences they wish to memorize before a mirror. They can watch how their lips, teeth, and tongue behave when they speak their “lines.” We instruct them to try one of several methods that actors use to help themselves memorize

1. Recording cues on a tape recorder with blank spaces for responses, playing the cues over and over until they can supply the correct responses easily.
2. Writing the first letter of each word of the “line” that they want to remember—L b i f d = London Bridge is falling down.
3. Writing the first word and a series of dashes for the number of words that follow—London B___ i___ f___ d___.

As long as you do not ask them to memorize too much for any one homework assignment, this does not demand a lot of time and gives them a reason to review the work of the day (the grammar as well as the sound combinations they have encountered during classroom hours). In addition to familiarizing students with sound combinations, memorization helps students retain simple syntax. Consequently, students are less confused when a new phrase is introduced because they have an earlier one under control.

Intermediate Levels

At the middle levels the students begin to shift from simple mimicry and classroom exercises to attempting to express ideas of their own. Because we teachers wish to encourage students to talk and to interact with other students, we do not always call attention to hesitations or to pronunciation faults in these attempts to express themselves so long as everyone in the class can unscramble meaning. We are very aware that the time to spend on each new phrase or sentence is limited. How do we give our students the necessary practice time to become familiar with new structures? Drama exercises can be a big help here. Students can use old structures

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and try out new ones in role-play. For example: teaching the present perfect and how it differs from the simple past can sometimes be a challenge. Let us assume that students have worked with the simple past and they are comfortably using it. We tell students that we use the present perfect in questions when the questioner is uncertain of the answer he will get. For example, if the questioner knows that his partner did something last night (saw a movie), he uses the simple past (“What movie did you see last night?”). However, if the questioner doesn’t know if his partner saw a movie or when, he is more likely to use the present perfect (“Have you seen a movie lately?”).

You could have students make up a small play working with the starting instructions:

Student 1: Ask Student 2 if he or she has been to New York. (*You don’t know.*)

Student 2: Answer negatively and ask Student 1 if he or she has been to New York. (*You don’t know the answer.*)

If Student 1 answers “No,” then the questioners must continue asking about different cities until one of the students gets an affirmative answer.

Scenario: *Students form questions based on the instructions given them.*

Student 1: “Have you been to New York?” (*Questioner is uncertain of the answer.*) *Student 2 should answer in the negative, and then ask if Student 1 has been to New York:* “No, I haven’t; have you?” (Student 2 is also uncertain of Student 1’s response.) *Student 1 answers in the affirmative, and tells when:* “Yes, I went last weekend.” *Then the dialogue can continue in the simple past.*

Student 2: “What did you do? Where did you eat? When did you return?”

Student 1: “I saw the Statue of Liberty and I went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and I ate hot dogs from a seller on the street. I came back on Friday.”

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We encourage our pairs in their role-plays to ask questions of their partners that the questioner truly doesn't know the answer to and we encourage them to improvise on topics that they are interested in.

Other possible starting questions include:

Student 1: Have you ever eaten octopus (or something unusual)?
(*Student 2 must choose to a. answer in the positive present perfect and then use the simple past tense, or b. answer in the negative present perfect, with a corresponding question in the present perfect.*)

Student 1: Have you ever climbed a mountain (something difficult)? Possible responses of Student 2 are, "Yes, I climbed Mt. Fuji . . ." or "No, I haven't. Have you?"

This is not unlike hundreds of other grammar lessons we have done. Here is the added zest of the drama technique: Borrowing from Carolyn Graham's idea of jazz chants, or more recently rap songs, expands the grammar lesson into a choral chant. Divide the class into two sides. One side will be Student 1, chanting "Have you ever climbed a mountain?" over and over, to the rhythm you establish. The other side will be Student 2, chanting, "No, I haven't. Have you?" over and over when you direct them to respond. After each side has practiced questioning and answering, you can point first to Student 1 and then to Student 2 to make the chants into a conversation. Then you may introduce, "Yes, I climbed Mt. Fuji." You, the teacher, keep the rhythm going by pointing to the side you want to speak and giving them a cue word. You may then reverse the questioners and answerers, so that everyone gets a chance to practice asking and answering.

Advanced Levels

At advanced levels, students feel that they should do more interacting with native speakers. For some students, this is a happy challenge; they are not discouraged when they make "mistakes." They keep trying and manage to work around any misunderstanding

that occurs. On the other hand, we have seen students who begin to lose confidence at this critical point. When they are not understood, or are impatiently interrupted, they retreat from the front lines of interaction with native speakers and they lose enthusiasm for the new language. At this level, it is impossible for students to arm themselves with memorized conversations—interactions with native speakers are too unpredictable and complicated. But if we give them classes that compel them to use the language in a safe environment, that pull them into interactions with other class members, they will gain confidence to risk using the language outside the classroom.

We also like to use dramatic literature at advanced levels to introduce the great variety of forms the language uses to express emotions and ideas. There are some modes of expression that are almost never touched upon in a second language classroom, such as anger or great elation. But if a class enters into a piece of drama, to prepare it for performance, the students can explore how to say words in a more expressive way. At this point in the language learning curve, we want to encourage in-depth conversations on all kinds of topics. We want our students to think on their feet, so to speak, responding to unpredictable questions and answers from their classmates. Improvisations based on readings, like dramatizing a short story, or based on real-life problems of the students, like getting a parking ticket and arguing their way out of having to pay, or like simulating an exchange with a teacher about a late paper, are all helpful exercises and may help the students cope with life outside the second language classroom.

The Best Environment for Speaking the Second Language

We feel that in drama and role-play classes students have the best chance to speak the second language at length (an explanation of what we mean by *drama* and *role play* is in the Introduction). We teachers can set up situations and we can fade into the background. Students speak many structures, familiar as well as new, in exercises and role-play and even memorized parts in a play. If the class' atmosphere is relaxed, they discover that they can make mistakes without losing face. If we give them a goal of perform-

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ing for peers in our program, the actors aim at perfecting pronunciation because they know they have to communicate the ideas and emotions of a play with people who are seeing and hearing the work for the first time. In rehearsals we can tell them that no one will understand them the way they are saying a line. This is far more bluntly honest than we would be in a regular class. We can ask them to repeat over and over again an unintelligible word or phrase, to focus on improving pronunciation or phrasing *for realistic reasons*.

No matter what the level of your students is, it is a good idea to establish a few “rules” in the first few days. These rules are not hard and fast, but rather are designed to give students certain base expectations: the type of class, the need for cooperation, the evaluation procedures, and some of the signals they need to know in order that the class can move smoothly from exercise to exercise.

Getting Started

In the following section of this chapter we shall set out how to organize a class that is dedicated wholly to drama and role-play. Whether the class lasts a week, a session of seven weeks, or a semester, the suggestions that we include here should help you set out the ground rules for a drama class but also allow you flexibility.

First, teachers should communicate that, although much of what is done in the class will seem like play, it is a serious class. Students will have fun, but they will work hard at using the language every day. Next, students must understand the directions and rules of the class. The teacher will be using gestures or short commands and the students must agree to do quickly what is being asked of them. Thirdly, this is an interactive class; they will be working in groups and it is essential that everyone participate. The overeager talkers must be quiet at times so that the very quiet members of the class feel that they have the opportunity to talk. Finally, cooperation is the key to the success of this kind of class.

Setting the Atmosphere

Our first task is to set out clearly for the students what kind of a class this will be. We explain to the students that this class will

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probably be different from other classes: they will not be sitting at their desks; they will be moving around the room, listening to or giving directions, and they will be doing exercises without being able to refer to their books. We tell them that they will rarely be working alone: this is a class heavily dependent on group work and we expect them to harmoniously work together. At first, they may perceive the exercises as play and not serious language teaching, but we inform them that if they attend regularly and work very hard, they will eventually feel more comfortable in this new language.

We tell them that we do assign homework. We may ask them to analyze a character, to write a character biography, to keep a journal, to listen for and learn their cues, and to memorize lines. They will see that drama is connected to other aspects of language learning, such as reading in depth, writing, listening, mastering pronunciation, and acquiring vocabulary. We explain that if they do not do these homework assignments, their grades will be affected.

We explain that we evaluate them on such things as their regular attendance, their active participation, their cooperation in group work, their language improvement, and (if there is a play performed) their willingness to attend extra rehearsals and a final performance. We do not evaluate them as good or bad actors, but on their effort to improve in the language.

Neither teacher nor students can hide behind their books, never looking up, never making eye contact with another human being. At first some students may be nervous about giving up their books and paper and pencils. They may hang back and halfheartedly join in the exercises the first day, but if we are enthusiastic and join in the exercises with them, they usually will follow along. When we have encountered a reluctant student “actor,” we proceed with optimistic caution. We don’t insist or push people to do what they don’t want to do. Each student is different and responds according to personality, and some may need longer to adjust to our methods. Rarely have we had a student who eventually did not cooperate. Teachers may want to consider having the students keep a journal (maybe on email) to record how they feel about the exercises they are asked to do. In this way the teacher has a

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finger on the pulse of the emotional reactions of the students and can change direction if it is obvious that the class as a whole is not responding in a favorable way to certain exercises.

Some teachers have told us that they cannot teach without seeing their lesson plan in front of them. For teachers who worry about this, we recommend using the overhead projector. They can list the day's activities for all to see. If they are concerned about giving up some of their authority, we remind them that the trade-off is students who use language actively, who are willing to take risks with language because they have been experimenting with it every day in class under a teacher's supervision.

In this chapter we include exercises that will help both you and your students lose some fears in working in this way. Certainly, in the first week or two, the exercises and games should be geared toward getting the students acquainted with each other and with you, their teacher. The goal is to create a nonthreatening atmosphere where the students can trust each other as they gain confidence in using the language and lose their fears about making mistakes.

First-Week Exercises

Introductions (formal)

Tell students a little bit about your background.

- Name and qualifications
- Why you are teaching this class
- What you hope to help students achieve
- If you have acted or directed before

Ask students what they expect from the class.

- Name and previous educational background
- Why did they take this class?
- What do they want (think is possible to achieve) by the end of the class?
- Have they ever acted before?

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Introductions: Alphabetical adjective game (informal)

Have the students volunteer as many adjectives as they can think of in three minutes.

- In groups—students work in small groups at the board, with one of them writing the adjectives on the board

or

- Whole class—teacher writes at the board as the class offers adjectives

Next, have the students choose adjectives from the list on the board or have them think of other adjectives not on the list that begin with the first letter of their given name (the name they wish to be called). For instance, Ardent Ann or Judicious Julie.

Then, have the students stand in a circle and ask them to introduce themselves in the following manner:

“My name is (*name*). I am called (*adjective*) + (*name*).”

When they are finished naming themselves, have them go around the room again, only this time they introduce the person next to them:

“The person next to me is (*name*). He/She is called (*adjective*) + (*name*).”

(*Tip:* It is a good idea to have at least one adjective in mind for each letter of the alphabet. A teacher once had a student whose name began with an *X* and when the student said he couldn't think of an adjective that began with that letter, she was unprepared to give him one.)

You may go around the room again having every student name all the students with their chosen adjectives, changing the exercise slightly to incorporate a different structure, and adding information about that student:

“I am Judicious Julie. I am from England. Ardent Ann is from America. Careful Claudia is from Argentina.” And so on. (And, of course, the students love it when the teacher has to name them all.)

Sometimes we will repeat this exercise at the beginning of class for several days. Each time we do it, we add new informa-

tion or change the structure. Possible additions: hobbies, last movie this person saw, favorite piece of music, favorite book, an animal that begins with the same first letter as your name, and so on. Different structures: “Ardent Ann adores anteaters.” “Nervous Nadia never does needlework,” and “Majestic Mario munches meatballs.” (We always allow students to change the adjective if they so wish. Once, a friendly, bubbly Mia named herself Mad Mia and she did not want to be known as Mad Mia for the rest of the semester.)

Introductions

Students pair off and introduce each other to the class after interviewing each other (if the class has an uneven number of students you may want to create one group of three).

- As a whole class, students decide on questions to ask. The teacher or designated student writes the questions on the board. Students copy questions on the left side of the paper, leaving room for the answers on the right side.
- In pairs, students interview each other, writing down the interviewee’s answers.
- During the interviewing, the teacher writes on the board possible phrases used to introduce (such as, “Ann have you met Julie?”) Use the following scenarios: 1. a young person to someone of the same age, 2. a young person to an older person, 3. a student to the president of the university.
- One by one, students introduce each other to the class.

Survey: A good icebreaker

In this exercise, a list is distributed to each member of the class. The list includes phrases such as:

- Owns a car
- Has a cat
- Speaks German (or French)
- Plays soccer
- Has a younger brother
- Is the youngest in the family
- Likes to get up early in the morning

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- Never eats breakfast
- Is a vegetarian
- Has read Dickens
- Has seen (movie title)
- Doesn't like classical (or rock) music

You can add whatever additional elements you would like to this list.

All students go around the room with the list in hand and find one person who can say yes for one item; they then write that person's name on the list opposite that item. They move on to the next item, until each blank has a different student's name. (They meet more students if each name can appear only once.)

Setting Up Classroom Directions

Sometimes directions will need to be given to a student without interrupting an ongoing interchange. All (students and teacher) need to agree on what gestures will convey that information silently and efficiently. For instance, how will a director of a scene indicate that someone (on stage or off) should stop talking? Or how can a director indicate that an actor should speak louder without disrupting the rehearsal?

Follow me (do what I do): Getting familiar with teacher directions

The teacher explains that the class is to watch very closely and imitate everything the teacher does. It might be wise to demonstrate with one student before you ask the whole class to follow your actions.

The teacher stands up; sits down; looks to the left; looks up; looks to the right; looks down; holds up right hand and makes a fist; points to the ceiling with index fingers of both hands; brings index finger of right hand to lips (*shhh* position); opens hands and puts them behind ears; makes a vertical circle with a hand (indicating need for speed); stretches hands far apart.

Divide the class into two groups. Have each group choose a leader. The groups will decide for themselves the gestures for the following situations:

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- Stop talking
- Speak louder
- Speak softer
- Speak more slowly
- Speak faster
- Turn around
- Back up
- Come closer to the edge of the stage (or to the audience)
- Move closer to the actor you are talking to
- Repeat
- Not clear

After the groups decide, they can share their group's gestures with the class as a whole. The class should practice using all gestures and then decide which they prefer to use. The teacher, or whoever directs a scene, is then obligated to use these selected gestures to communicate these ideas for the rest of the semester.

To make sure that everyone is clear about each gesture and its meaning, the teacher can perform a gesture and the class can guess which action is called for.

Directions using language: Follow me (do what I say)—more teacher directions

The teacher explains to the class that, in order to use the rehearsal time efficiently, everyone needs to be clear about what to do when they hear an oral direction. These commands will be used throughout the semester, not just this hour, day, or week.

- Form a circle so that everyone can see everyone else. (Circles work very well for most of our exercises.) The teacher asks students to listen very carefully. Students must do what the teacher *says* to do. They will hear the command, but will not see the teacher executing it. Students must decide what the actions should be.
- The teacher says: “Stand up,” “look left,” “sit down,” “look at the ceiling,” “stand up again,” “walk to your left,” “turn right,” “turn around and face the person behind you,” “breathe in,” “take two steps and let your breath out,” “breathe in again and, as you walk forward, say ‘aaah,’” “when you are out of

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breath, stand still,” “bend over,” “stand up straight again,” “put your right hand over the head of the person nearest to you,” “pick up your books,” and whatever else you can devise to challenge the students to pay attention to what you say and to follow the directions easily. (Don’t allow a lot of time for them to figure it out. You want them to respond quickly.)

Alternatives

- Ask a student to call out the actions for the class to follow. That student may then ask some other student to issue the commands, and the second student may select another student to follow him or her.
- Or divide the class up into small groups and tell them that the leadership of the group will change when you whistle (or clap your hands); they should choose a “commander” to give the marching orders and the commanders must tell the group what to do. (It might be wise to suggest that they forget about ordering their group to leave the class—there’s always some bright creative creature who would like to try the teacher’s patience!)
- If it would make you feel more comfortable, you can control the commands by putting a list of them on the board. The students would not have to follow them in any particular order.

What to Do When Problems Emerge?

First, we suggest that if you perceive that there is a problem, you try to get to the bottom of it immediately. Don’t ignore it hoping that it will go away on its own. Small problems have a way of getting bigger if they aren’t addressed right away. Types of problems include between students; teacher to student; cultural clashes within the class.

Student to student

When we have had two students who are not getting along in our classes, we have used several tactics: talk with the students sepa-

rately so that we understand each person's perspective; have the students talk to each other with the teacher acting as a mediator; ask the students if they would like to talk with someone outside the class about their problem; separate the students, assuming that you have more than one class at that level.

Teacher to student

When we have had a student who was intentionally dominating the class, not allowing anyone else a chance to participate, we have taken that student aside after class hours and explained that that kind of behavior would not be tolerated. We tell them that we understand that they are eager to show what they have learned, but so are all the other students. We ask them to cooperate and allow others to speak. If the behavior persists, we have sometimes asked the student to be a group leader—to work with other students to get them to speak. Someone within that group is to keep track of the number of minutes that each of them speaks and if anyone dominates, that person has to be quiet during the next exercise.

Cultural clashes

What do the students perceive as a problem? Once we had a class that was equally divided between Asian students and students from Latin America. Together we had read an essay that explained that in polite Asian society, it was common for people to wait until the speaking person stops before offering their opinions. This was a revelation to the Latin American students who talked whenever they perceived the least little pause (as we native English speakers frequently do). During the discussion of this reading, they listened as their Asian classmates finally admitted that they felt that they had been silenced by the constant interruptions of their Spanish-speaking classmates.

What could be possible solutions to the problem(s)? We asked the students how they felt. Both sets of students felt that just being aware of a cultural difference was an enormous step in the right direction.

In addition, we teachers offered language to defuse what might have been an explosive situation. (For instance, use *I* rather

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than *you*. Examples: “Excuse me, I would like to add my opinion.” And, “Excuse me, may I speak now?” rather than “You never let me speak!”)

The Asian students in that class learned to speak up with “I am not finished yet” rather than to sit quietly fuming at the perceived rudeness of the Spanish-speaking classmates. The Spanish-speaking students learned to ask, “May I speak now?”

Role-play: A Follow-up to the Discussions over Problems

The teacher writes on the board phrases that can be used:

- Excuse me, I didn’t understand. Could you please explain that?
- Excuse me, I think I disagree.
- Excuse me, I didn’t hear you. Could you please repeat that?
- Excuse me, but I think that (*name*) wasn’t finished speaking.
- Excuse me, I would like to finish my thought.
- May I add something?

The teacher divides the class into groups of three or four. In a small group each student may choose one of the following roles: one student who always enthusiastically interrupts; one student who is very quiet; one student who is a student leader, responsible for seeing that everyone talks; one student who is giving a talk (the student gets to choose the topic); or one student who constantly comments to a neighbor.

The teacher directs students to practice using these phrases in an imaginary situation where one student is annoying the others. Students may eventually write up their dialogues so that they can perform them in front of the whole class.

Beginning Each Day

We find that it is a good idea to begin each class with a couple of warm-up exercises. Inasmuch as we do not like to work at our desks in this class and we may or may not be entering a classroom that is our own for all five hours of the intensive program

day, we set up our physical space. We move the desks to the edges of the room, maybe while reciting some small thing that was part of the previous day's activities or repeating some nonsensical phrase, like "I push, she pulls." We might ask that our students move the desks in a particular manner, that is, slowly or speedily, or as a teenager who wishes to get the attention of someone of the opposite sex, or of someone who is trying to avoid being seen by a designated other person in the class, or as someone whose right foot is hurting, and so on. When the desks are out of the way, we form a circle. It is a good idea to do a few physical exercises, such as touch your toes or reach for the sky or twist to the right or left. (See Relaxation Exercises in Chapter 2.) As the students enter, you can assign someone to call out the exercises. Allow no more than five minutes for these setups. It is wise to specify to anyone who arranges room assignments for your program that you prefer a room that does not have fixed seating, that is, tables and chairs that are anchored to the floor.

Next, you may want to do a few vocal exercises, to work on particular sound combinations—for example: "Today's sound is *bl* as in blonde." We go around the circle and, face to face, watch how students form the sound and then demonstrate directly in front of each how we form that sound. The students sometimes laugh at our exaggerated demonstrations, but we are always amazed at how willingly they will attempt to conform to our examples. We usually don't have to ask students to continue to practice even if we have passed them in the circle; they just love the practice time and voluntarily continue on their own. (See Chapter 2 for more pronunciation exercises and vocal exercises.) After a few physical and vocal exercises, we are ready to start the rehearsal for the day.

End of Class Wrap-up and Other Signals to Ward off Chaos

It is a good idea to set up for your class a signal for them to stop what they are doing. There may be times when they will be working in groups and you will need to get their attention. You might find it handy to flash lights or to have a little bell and when they notice the lights going on and off or hear that bell, they know that all action and vocalization should cease. In drama classes, where

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there may be three or four groups working at once, the noise level can be high; when the students are very focused in their own group, it may be difficult to get their attention. If you set forth a time or a signal when all activity is to halt, your students won't be able to get away with saying they didn't hear an announcement at the end of class because there was too much noise. They will know that at five minutes before the end of class or at the flashing of lights or the sound of the bell, they must be still and give the teacher full attention. Review what you have done and remind students what is to come.

You may set up your own segments of the class and your own rules that make the class more comfortable for you, but keep in mind what we said at the beginning of this chapter: your enthusiasm for what you do is very important. Be flexible and keep your students talking at the expense of your own precious pearls of wisdom. Join in with your students—this puts them at ease. And last, but certainly not least, we encourage you to set various goals for your classes. At beginning levels, these goals should be simple and practical. At higher levels, we think your students will thank you for giving them a goal of performing—whether for a public audience within the institute or just for other members of their class is not important. Literary texts by great playwrights will expand their vocabularies, and texts of their own making will make them search for ways of expressing ideas they are interested in. What is important is that you will have given them the opportunity to feel fluent, and that is very important indeed.