

Drama techniques which focus on getting across meaning with body, as well as words, are very useful for the language classroom. These techniques:

- Encourage creativity of thought
- Appeal to reluctant speakers
- Appeal to the more 'physical' learner
- Reinforce understanding of language as a way to communicate meaning

Words with mime and movement (all levels)

This is an activity to revise recently learnt vocabulary. Follow these steps.

- Students sit or stand in a circle with you in the centre.
- Say a word from a pile of word cards.
- Indicate the first student to start the game. This student steps into the circle and either mimes the meaning of the word with body/hand movements or says the word with a voice reflecting the meaning of the word.

For example:

- Slow = said very slowly or a slow swaying movement of the arms.
- Frightened = a look of fear on the face or a tone of terror.
- After the first player mimes/says the word they must step back into the circle. Then each student in the circle must step in and repeat the meaning of the word until the whole group has mimed or said it.
- Continue round the circle in a clockwise fashion, giving a new word for each student to try out. Keep the movement around the circle fairly rapid.

Lost for words – mime to get your message across (all levels)

It can be helpful to put students in the shoes of a foreigner who has to get their meaning across with mime, gesture and sound effects!

This practises communication survival techniques. The game can be played in 2 teams.

- Put a pack of cards at the front. Each card contains a sentence or question a foreigner needs to say.
- Ask the first student to come to the front and pick a card. They must then use the sentence to try and make themselves understood to the rest of the class. They are not allowed to speak but may do sound effects if necessary.
- Invite suggestions from students:
For example:
 - He wants to say "Have you got the time?".
 - No, he is asking if the bus is coming'.
- You could use these sentences: I'm thirsty/ You mustn't smoke in here/Where is the nearest telephone?/ Have you got any change for this note?/ How does this machine work?/ Where's the nearest hospital?/ Can I have some sugar for my coffee?/ Is this the queue for bus tickets ?/ Your loud music is disturbing me, please turn it down.
- With higher levels you can lead in to a discussion on how people react to foreigners who cannot speak their language. Do people tend to shout at foreigners? Do they think volume makes a difference to understanding?

Shadowing the video – mime to get in to 'character' (all levels)

Show students a short situation on video. This could be a social situation, a conversation in a public place like a hotel reception or airport. Choose short clips with 2, maximum 3 characters. The exchanges should be brief 3-4 line dialogues.

- Students watch and study the faces and body movements of the characters.
- Ask them to look at one character or give them each a character to focus on.
- Students must watch again but try to shadow the movements of the character. This involves moving their bodies in the same way, their faces taking the same expressions and moving their lips in the same way. You might like to break this task down in to focus on body movements and then shadow the lips in a second viewing. Demonstrate this technique yourself.

- Show the clip with sound on but tell students to continue shadowing and miming the words with no sound.
- Put students in pairs/small groups and ask them to act out the situation again with their voices too. Tell them to try and stay "in character" with body movement etc.
- With higher levels you can lead in to a discussion on how important facial expressions and body language are. Someone might 'look foreign' by the way they open their mouths or use their lips or through hand gesture. Shadowing can help people begin to sound and look more fluent in a language