

# Power-Up: Drama Games for Language Teaching

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## Oracy content

The use of drama in language teaching encourages an exceptionally wide range of speaking skills as students can be transported to a vast array of situations calling on different communicative functions and needs. Learners are not limited to only talking about themselves or situations that are remote from their lives. Students who may be shy in real life often find their voice as they take on the roles of different characters or enjoy themselves so much that they become keen to join in with their peers.

Those who are keen to speak English are provided with rich opportunities for creative expression through improvisation and performance. Teachers are sometimes unaware of how they can stimulate their learners to speak and need tools to help them try out some drama techniques at a level at which they feel comfortable.



## Design, Presentation and Usability

Because *Drama Games for Language Teaching* is delivered on NILE's bespoke online teacher development platform which has been running successfully since 2014, the design and usability have been finely honed to suit the working patterns and needs of teachers around the world. The platform is based on Moodle but NILE commissioned extra digital tools to fully exploit the interactive affordances of online learning, such as the Community Wall which allows participants to share and see each other's ideas side-by-side in one space. (NILE Online courses were ELTons Award Finalists in 2015 and Power-Up courses were Finalists in 2017)

34 Uses of Freeze-Frames by David Farmer



*I liked the idea of units explaining precisely what was in each and how much time each one would take. I really enjoyed the videos as it made me feel that I was nearly there in person!*

Participant, February 2018

*I taught this class this past Thursday morning. I had planned a few drama games ahead of time, but was not certain how they would turn out – trusting the process was a huge lesson for me!*

Participant, May 2018

The videos used on the course have been devised and produced by David Farmer to a very high standard, illustrating drama techniques far more effectively than written explanations could alone. The multimedia aspect not only makes the course fully engaging but also gives teachers confidence to try out activities themselves.

Most of the work is asynchronous so can be done at times to suit the participants. They are also encouraged to join the live webinars, available as recordings for those who cannot attend.

A fundamental aspect of NILE Online courses is the active and personal encouragement that participants receive from tutors to engage fully and interact with peers. This has led to a very satisfying completion rate of 85% over the three *Drama in Language Teaching* courses we have run so far.

### **Educational Value**

As specialists in the field of language teacher education, NILE has worked with David Farmer, an expert in drama in education, to produce a very successful collaboration. David also works on face-to-face courses at NILE and feedback from these gives him a sound and up-to-date understanding of English language teachers' needs and interests. This online course frequently refers teachers to their own contexts to ensure that the learning will be relevant and practical for them and their students. Much of the course focuses on the application of drama techniques to course book study, especially the final assignment which encourages participants to focus on cross-curricular topics.

*Now I've changed my thinking about teaching - every time I look into my course book I have lots of ideas of what I can do connected with drama.*

Participant, March 2018

### **Potential and Innovation**

Although this is a highly practical course, the choice of the activities is supported by reference to theoretical principles presented through extracts from David Farmer's own drama books, links to authoritative web sites and interviews with other contemporary drama experts. So participants not only add to their repertoire of drama games but also gain deeper understanding of the benefits and challenges of teaching English oracy skills through drama. As course feedback shows, the mixture of a teacher-friendly course design from a top teacher development organisation, a well-respected expert in the field of drama in language teaching, an effective platform and practical input has produced a very engaging, innovative and useful course for teachers globally.

*The course is inspirational – it encourages teachers to be more imaginative and creative during the lessons in a way to make them more fun and enjoyable.*

Participant, February 2018

*David is very experienced in the field of drama, and very passionate about it. Even though this was an online course, I think we could all see that through the videos and the messages in the forum.*

Participant, March 2018

*I have really enjoy learning about the games and creating ways to use them in my classes for adults. It takes a bit of courage to get students to move out of their comfortable chairs to the imaginary stage – and courage for the teacher to make this happen in a safe and fun way for the students!*

Participant, May 2018