Appendix 1: Starter drama exercises

To start a drama group, it is best to expose students slowly to the basics of drama and gradually build their confidence rather than throw them in at the deep end. These starter drama exercises provide a progression from non-verbal team-building and physical expression to a combination of verbal and physical expression. Groups can vary in size between 10 – 40 students. For groups of less than 10 students, some of these exercises (e.g. ‘Exercise 1: Huddle’) may be less exciting and may need to be adapted.

Other drama exercises can be found online on various websites. The following website is a good place to start: http://www.bbbpress.com/dramagames/

Exercise 1 (warm up): Huddle

Purpose: This is a basic level, whole-group, ice-breaker and team-building exercise to encourage familiarity and collaboration among all group members. It may also be used as a way of assigning participants to different groups.

Resources needed: A reasonably large open space is needed, as participants will be moving/walking in role and will then move quickly into groups.

Time required: 5-10 minutes

Procedure:

- The first step is to ask the students to walk around the space. At first, students may walk around the room with their friends. Encourage them to take risks and walk around the room freely using all the space available.
- When the leader calls the name of the exercise plus a number, e.g. ‘huddle 4’, participants have to make groups of 4 as quickly as possible. The leader should praise the students who get into groups with the people closest to them rather than their friends across the room.
- The exercise continues with the teacher calling out different numbers, e.g. ‘huddle 2’, ‘huddle 6’.
- The leader can vary the exercise by asking the students to walk in different ways. From the many alternatives, you could choose different feelings (e.g. angry, tired), jobs (e.g. a police officer), characters (e.g. an old man), animals (e.g. an elephant), weather conditions (e.g. a typhoon), or pace (e.g. really slowly).

Exercise 2 (Warm Up): Clap, Clap, Clap, Slap

Purpose: This is a basic, whole-group, team-building and physical and verbal expression exercise. Students introduce themselves and practise a movement and voice warm up. It can also be used as an icebreaker.

Resources needed: A reasonably large open space

Time required: 10 minutes

Procedure:

- Participants think of their favourite hobby or pastime and an action that goes with it.
- Demonstrate the rhythmic ‘clap, clap, clap, slap’ pattern that will be used. Clap your hands and then slap your hands on your thighs.
- Demonstrate the basic script that goes with this pattern. Repeat the ‘clap, clap, clap, slap’ action for each line and add an action with your whole body for your hobby. For example:
    - Clap, clap, clap, slap.
    - My name is *Mary*.
    - I like to dance.
    - It goes like this.
- As the leader demonstrates, the students copy.
- Each student takes a turn going around the circle.
- Encourage confident, fun movements and voices.

Exercise 3: Helicopter Letters

Purpose: This is a basic, whole-group, team-building and physical expression exercise.

Resources needed: A reasonably large open space

Time required: 10 minutes

Procedure:

- Tell students to imagine that they have been shipwrecked and they are marooned on a desert island and need to signal to a rescue helicopter flying above them. They need to spell out the word ‘help’ in big letters by lying on the ground.
- Divide students into teams of 5 – 6 and assign them an area of the room to work.
- Ask teams to make the letters one by one.
- Judge the most effective team each time, by speed, clarity of letter shape and team communication. Give feedback to the whole group.
- Make it more complex each time by shortening the time allowed (start with 15 seconds and reduce from there) and asking students to complete the task without talking.

Exercise 4: What Are You Doing?

Purpose: This is a basic level, whole group exercise, which can also be used as an ice-breaker. Students practise miming skills (and the present continuous tense).

Resources needed: A reasonably large open space

Time required: 10 minutes

Procedure:

1. Students make a large circle.
2. One by one each student mimes doing an action and the group asks, ‘What are you doing?’
3. The person doing the mime does not say what they are actually doing, but says another action, which the next person must do. For example, if I am miming digging a hole and the group asks, ‘What are you doing?’, I say ‘I’m washing my face’. The next participant then mimes washing their face, but says a different action when the group asks what they are doing.
4. The game continues until everyone has had a turn.

Exercise 5: This Is Not a Pen

Purpose: This is a basic level, whole group exercise, which can be used as a warm up. Students practise miming skills.

Resources needed: A reasonably large open space; a pen

Time required: 10 minutes

Procedure:

1. Students make a large circle.
2. One student takes a pen and mimes using it in a way that is not as a pen. For example, they might use it as a violin bow.
3. Others in the group guess what the ‘pen’ is.
4. Go around the circle and each student mimes using the pen, but each time the action should be a different one.
5. The game continues until everyone has had a turn.

Exercise 6: The Clapping Game

Purpose: This exercise is a slightly more advanced whole group exercise that familiarises students with working with objects.

Resources needed: A reasonably large open space; objects

Procedure:

1. Place a dozen or so random objects in the centre of a circle and ask one student to leave the room.
2. Once the chosen student is out of the room, the other students must decide on which 2 or 3 objects the chosen student should interact with in order to win applause from the group. For example, balance a cup on your knee and tuck a teddy bear under your arm. You should start by choosing a relatively simple task.
3. The chosen student then returns to the room and tries to work out what they must do.
4. The audience must not talk. They can only applaud if the student gets something right. For example, if the student picks up a pen: no applause. If they pick up a cup: applause. If they place the cup on their knee: big applause. The chosen student continues until they complete the full scenario at which point the audience gives a standing ovation.

Exercise 7: Object Infomercial

Purpose: This exercise is a more advanced pair or whole group exercise in which students start to combine objects.

Resources needed: an ordinary classroom or an open space; objects

Procedure:

- Place a selection of random objects on a table.
- Do this exercise in pairs first and then as a whole group.
- Students choose 2 objects and put them together to create a ‘product’. For example, a set of keys and a spoon could become the ‘keyspoon’, or a shoe and a tambourine become the ‘shoebourine’.
- Students then ‘sell’ the product to each other or the rest of the class as if they are on a TV shopping channel.

More drama materials and training:

The NET Section offers schools various professional development opportunities in the area of drama. Please see our school-based support brochure on the NET Scheme in Hong Kong e-platform:
https://nets.edb.hkedcity.net/page.php?p=267

Participation in co-curricular drama activities is encouraged through the NET Section drama competitions: https://nets.edb.hkedcity.net/page.php?p=36

Professional development opportunities in drama are also provided by the NET Section through our Centralised Professional Development programme, which is posted on the EDB Training Calendar System each year.

More drama exercises are available in *NETworking: Using Drama in the English Classroom,* available online: https://nets.edb.hkedcity.net/individual.php?p=25.