



Original Oratory: Public Speaking Lesson Plan

Overcoming Fear of Speaking/Performing: Actor-Audience Activity

Purpose/Background

A colleague shared this activity after hearing about its application at an inner-city community center for reformed former street gang members. Since the young people used to running with gangs did not have what we would consider appropriate social skills, this activity was a pathway toward a more formal way of interacting with others.

Outcomes & Objectives

- Students will engage in active listening and understand the responsibility of being an audience member.
- Students will understand the basics of poise in front of an audience.
- Students will understand the importance and dynamic of meaningful, sustained eye contact.

Materials: any hardcover book, poster board, magic marker, 5-7 chairs

Duration: any number of class periods, depending on how many students: each group should take about one-half of a 45-minute class period.

Sequence:

1. Write the following on the poster board:
 1. My name is. _____.
 2. I want _____.
 3. Point to a body part and name it
(e.g., point to elbow and say "this is my elbow")
2. Affix the poster board to the wall, about five feet from the floor. Arrange 5-7 chairs in front of it, facing away from the wall in a semicircle, so someone facing the semicircle can read the poster above the heads of a seated audience.
3. Divide your class into groups of 5-7 students apiece, and schedule them in 20-30 minute blocks of class time to do this activity. Have some meaningful independent work scheduled for the rest of the class, while each group works (e.g., worksheets/chapter outlines related to initial textbook content they would need as you begin the semester. This ensures students are actively reading and understanding the text content).

4. As each group convenes, explain the process they will follow: each student must take her/his turn as the "actor" (one who completes an action) and at all other times, s/he is an active member of the "audience," showing the courtesy of listening they expect of their peers when they are speaking. The teacher explains that when each student is an "actor," s/he will do the following:
 - a. Close her/his eyes, stand up straight, shoulders relaxed and down (the teacher gently helps the student find this posture by easing her/his hands on the student's shoulders).
 - b. With eyes still closed, takes deep, slow breaths. The teacher should model diaphragmatic breathing (perhaps even exaggerating movement of the abdomen as this happens). The teacher will place a book flat against the front of the abdomen to illustrate to both the student (in a tactile manner) and to the audience (visually) when the student has successfully mastered relaxed breathing.
 - c. With eyes still closed, the teacher will gently place her/his hand under the student's left wrist (announcing s/he is doing so, to avoid startling the student), and lift the wrist outwards, toward the student's left side. There should not be any tension in the student's arm. If there is, the teacher should coax the student to relax her/his muscles and allow the force of gravity to pull the arm downwards, without any tension, and repeat this process with the student's right wrist.
 - d. Opening her/his eyes, the actor will make two seconds (in the student's mind, s/he should count, "one-one thousand, two-one thousand") of direct eye contact with each member of the semicircular audience, alternating left to right, right to left, stopping at each audience member and "connecting" eye contact. If any member of the audience is not paying attention, the actor must patiently wait until s/he can make two seconds of meaningful eye contact together.
 - e. Continuing the pattern of moving from audience member to audience member, the actor will orally say/do each one of the three statements/actions written on the poster board, sustaining eye contact with one different audience member for each item (eg. the actor says "I want a sports car" while looking at the second audience member from the left).
 - f. Once the actor points to a body part and names it, s/he switches place with an audience member, and the process starts over.

Despite the actor facing the audience against the wall, it helps if the teacher has a secluded area of the classroom, a rolling chalkboard or screen to separate the activity participants from the rest of class, to make the "audience" seem less threatening. Alternatively, the teacher could conduct the activity in the corridor, with the door open to monitor the rest of the class.

Assessments

As a debrief to the activity, the teacher can have students write a short journal entry, or even lead a class discussion on the merits of the activity, and how it builds confidence and an understanding of the dynamics of communication. This activity is an excellent complement to early textbook chapters on the communication process and building confidence (such as found in Glencoe Speech)

Creating a Personable Classroom Atmosphere

Getting to Know You

Purpose

The lesson lays the foundation by which skills inherent to both the speech and theatre content areas rely on: listening and feedback, and being comfortable in public speaking/presentation situations. It forms the groundwork for outlining speech information, interviewing techniques, and extemporaneous delivery style.

Outcomes & Objectives

- Students will engage in a question-and-answer interpersonal conversation with their peers, actively listening and summarizing what they hear in writing.
- Students will organize the information they have written in an outline that includes 3-4 main ideas and 2-4 supporting points for each.
- From the outline, students will present to the entire class a brief, 1-2 minute extemporaneous speech about their partner.
- Students will demonstrate basic proficiency (9th grade level) in their use of language.

Materials

- Students must have paper to take notes on and a writing utensil.
- The teacher will write cues for questions to be used in the conversations on the chalkboard, overhead transparency or on a poster:
 - Name, Grade level
 - Birthplace
 - Background on family
 - Favorite school subject
 - Favorite food, color, movie, etc.
 - Hobbies
 - Travel experience
 - School activities involved with
 - Something this person feels strongly about
 - Future plans

Duration: One or two class periods

Sequence

1. The teacher will ask students to partner with another student in the class with whom they are not acquainted (if this does not work out in all cases, teacher will suggest finding additional

information out about those partners). If there are an odd number of students, a group of three will all work together.

2. Students will be allotted 15 minutes in which to question each other (7:30 each) and take notes. Suggested questions visually displayed by the teacher will include asking about personal background, interests and hobbies, and a clever way of remembering the partner's name.
3. Students will return to their original seating positions and will be given 5 minutes to organize and outline the information they've assembled.
4. The teacher will ask for volunteer students to present first; otherwise he/she will proceed in an order of his/her choosing.
5. **Closure**. The teacher will explain purpose of the activity through the students' discovery of those techniques by doing them (i.e. dynamics of communication through human interaction, the social function of communication, the conventions of speech (language)).

Assessments

The teacher must engage in authentic/informal assessment and observe behaviors of the students while they participate in the various phases of the activity. Emphasis is on how engaged students are via three intelligences: interpersonal conversations, sharing intrapersonal information, and communicating via verbal means. As speech courses stress oral participation as a benchmark for meaning-making, the teacher should record the extent to which students are participating. This could be done with a check, check-plus and minus type system or be recorded with a Likert-type scale of 1-6 points.

- The extent to which students were active participants in the conversations.
- How well students listened, exhibited by both nonverbal and verbal feedback and thoroughness of notes taken on their partners.
- The degree to which students followed directions by including certain details (name, backgrounds, interest).
- The extent to which the words chosen reflected correct language elements of grammar and usage.

Bibliography

Tanner, F. A. (1996). *Creative Communication: Projects in Acting, Speaking, Oral Reading*. Logan, IA: Clark Publishing.