



Activate Your Classes With Improvisational Drama Games

Part 1: 10:30-12:00

Part 2: 13:00-14:30

Tomoko Yoshida, Ph.D.

Professor, Faculty of Business & Commerce

Keio University

Email: tomokoyoshida414@gmail.com

What is improvisational drama?

- A performance in which most or all of what is performed is unplanned or unscripted, created spontaneously by the performers and often the audience.



Warm-up

- A: What are situations in which people need to think on their feet? (1 minute)
- B: What are situations in which people need to make a spontaneous speech or presentation? (1 minute)
- A: What are situations in which YOU had to make a spontaneous speech or presentation? (1 minute)
- B: How do you think improvisational drama skills will help students? (1 minute)
- Discussion (3 minutes)



Find someone sitting near you who you do not know well.



Why and how to use Improv games?

- Attended several workshops.
- After COVID
 - Students had a hard time making eye contact.
 - Students had a hard time communicating face to face.
- Trial and error
 - I will introduce the games that worked well in my classes.
- How
 - One game as an icebreaker
 - One session reserved for Improv games.

Improv games foster:

*creativity

* ability to express emotions through facial expression and voice inflections

* quick thinking

* stage presence

* impromptu speaking skills

Improv Ground Rules:



Let's Start!



ME:
PLAYERS
ARE YOU
READY?



YOU: YES!



First, line up based on how many pets you have had in your life so far.

Then count: One, two, three....

Counting with Emotions

- Count from 1 to 10.
- As you count, I will tell you what emotion to show.
- Count with emotion!



Level: All

Size of Group: Flexible

Pass the Clap

- Stand in a circle.
- “Pass” the clap.
- First person makes eye contact with someone else in the circle, and both people must clap their hands at the same time, maintaining eye contact.
- Next, that person makes eye contact with someone else, and they clap simultaneously.
- Repeat and go faster!



Counting to 20

Break up into groups of five

Please count to 20 without interrupting each other or talking over each other.

If this happens, start all over.

No planning or talking about who will go first, just watch and jump in.

Let's see which group is the fastest!

Reinvention

- I will give an object to each group.
- Each person proposes an alternative way to use the object. Be as creative as you like. You can even give it magical properties!
- Continue until everyone has had a chance to present their ideas.
- You can start the game again by picking a new object and go through the same exercise.



Level: Intermediate and above Size of Group: About 5 – 10.

Note: Great ice breaker. Can do this multiple times with different objects.

Magic Bag

Please select an object from your own bag and then share something about yourself that relates to the object.



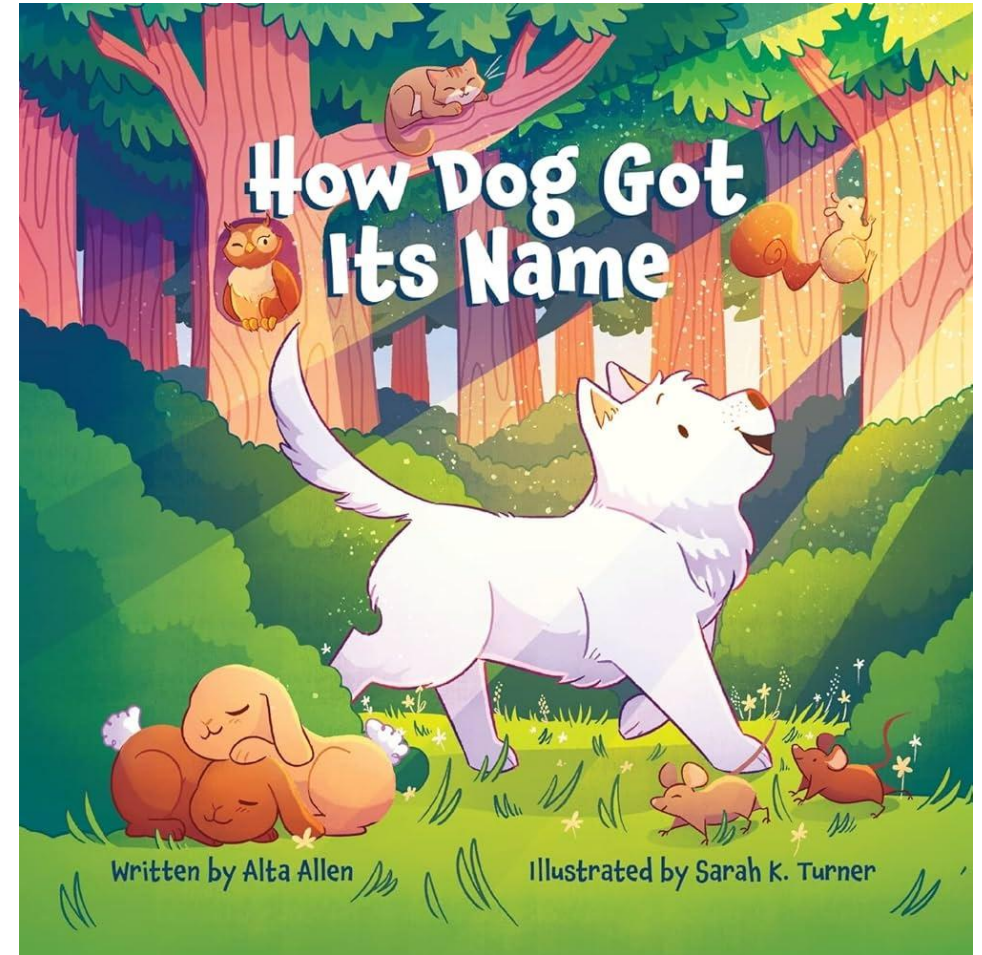
Make it fun and exciting!



Level: Intermediate and above. Size of Group: About 5 – 10.

How it Got its Name

- I will give you an item and you need to create a story about how it got its name.
- Be creative!
- Try to make it sound plausible!
- You have **THREE** minutes to prepare.



Level: Intermediate and above Size of Group: About 5 – 10.

Sell it to us!

- Please select an object from my bag.
Please sell it to us! Use your imagination and be creative



Level: Intermediate and above. Size of Group: About 5 – 10.

Fortunately, Unfortunately



We will tell a story together. The first person will start with the word “Fortunately” and the next person will start with “Unfortunately.” We will keep alternating until the end.

Level: Upper Intermediate and Above

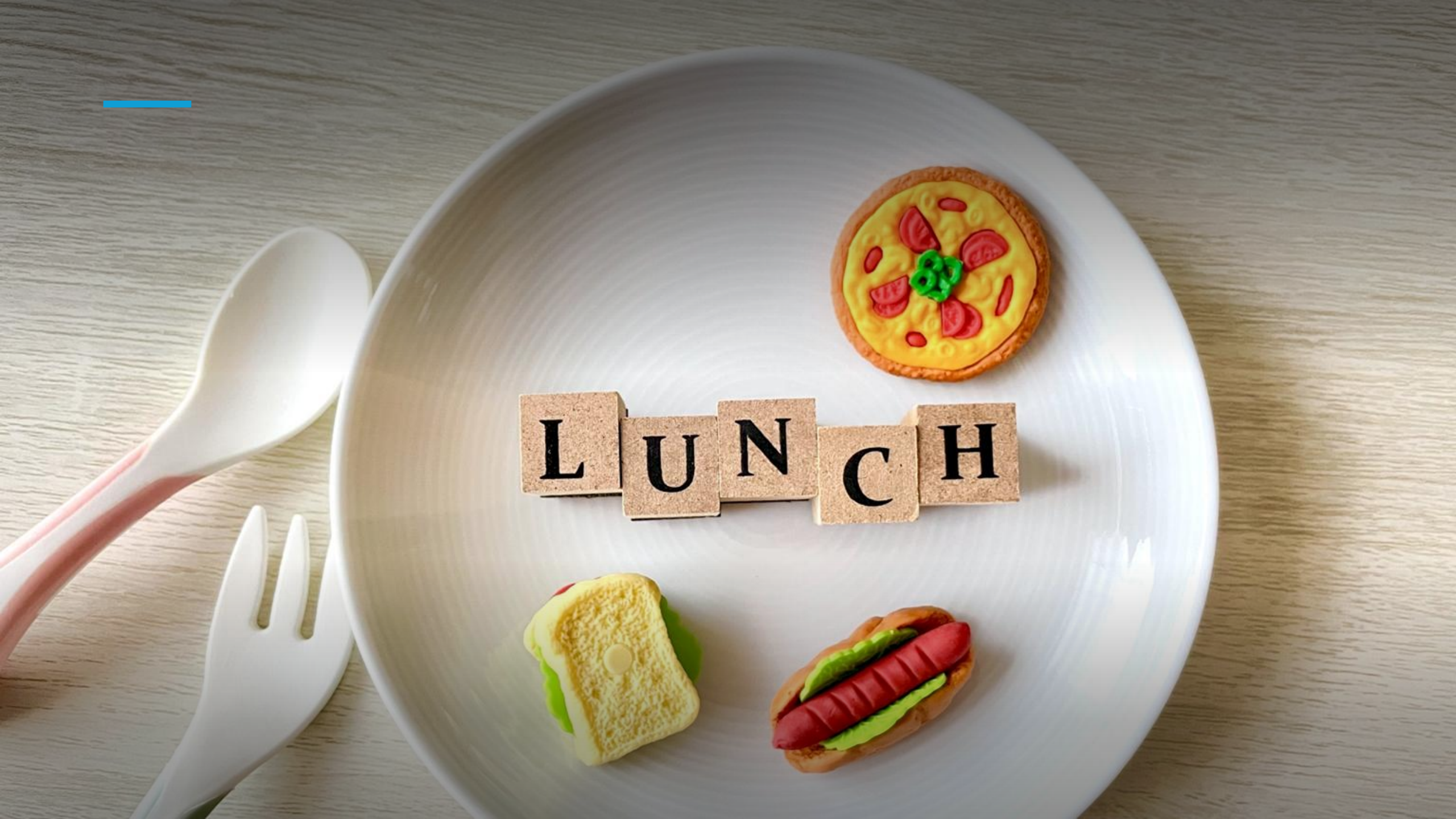
Size of Group: About 5 to 10.



Directions:

- I will start the story.
- The person next to me will continue it by saying “yes, and...”
- Keep repeating.
- The last person finishes the story.

- Level: Upper intermediate and above
- Size of Group: About 5 to 10.

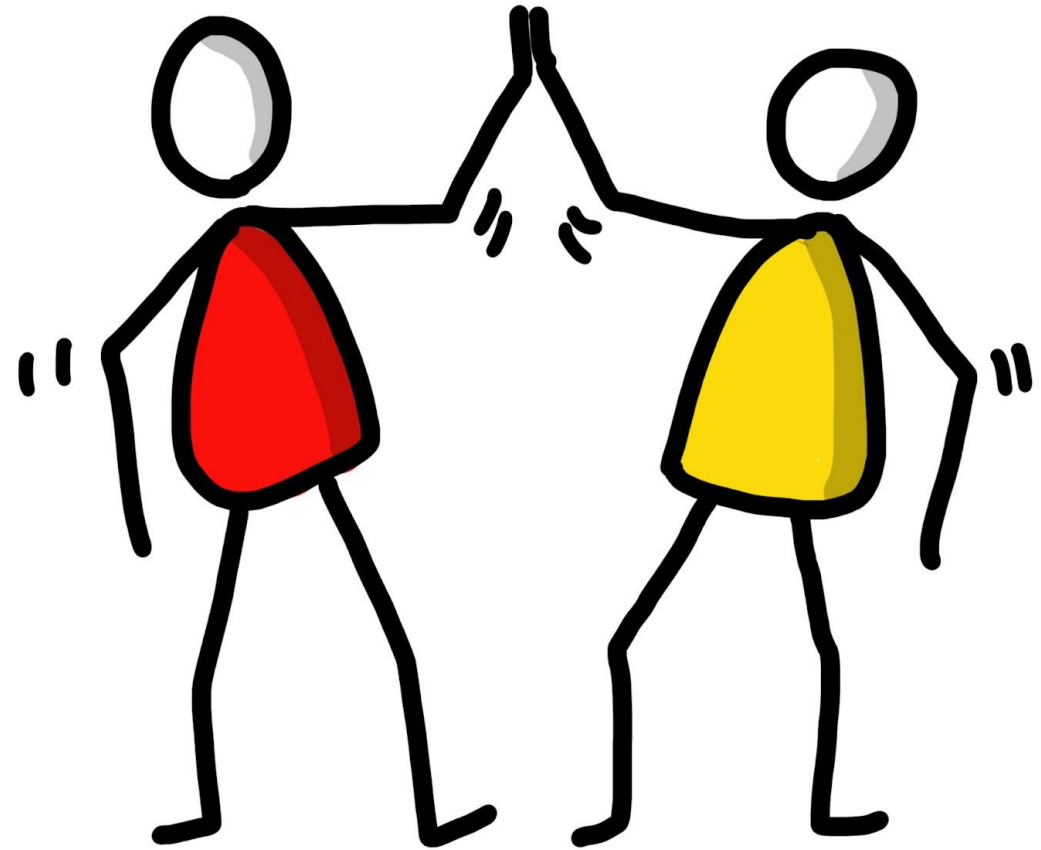




First, line up based on how many countries you have visited so far.

Then count: One, two, three....

Find someone
within your
group who you
do not know
well and form
a pair.



Warm-up: Improv Game “Mirror”

- One of you will be the mirror while the other will be the person.
- The mirror must reflect all the movements of the person.
- Switch!

Level: All

Size of Group: Pairs





Problem and Solution

- In a group, pair up two people. Assign a 'Person A' and a 'Person B'.
- Person A starts by stating a problem (any problem is welcome).
- Person B grabs the nearest object and presents it as a solution to the problem.
- Person A accepts the object and explains how it will help with the problem.
- After that, pairs can reverse roles and do the same exercise again.

Level: Intermediate and above
Size of Group: Pairs

Gibberish Interpreter

- One student speaks in made-up sounds (gibberish) with high emotion, while another student "translates" it into English, fostering conversational flow and emotional tone.
- The interpreter should mimic the gestures and "translate" one line at a time.
 - Possible scenarios: A scientist explaining her recent discovery of a 2nd moon.
 - A pop singer giving a press conference after falling asleep during his concert performance.
 - A child describing what it was like getting her first cavity.
 - A chef explaining how to cook his favorite meal, candy spaghetti (or anything else!)
 - A farmer explaining how to milk a cow in record time.

Level: Intermediate to advanced

Size of Group: Pairs perform in front of their group

LANGUAGE INTERPRETER



Customer Service

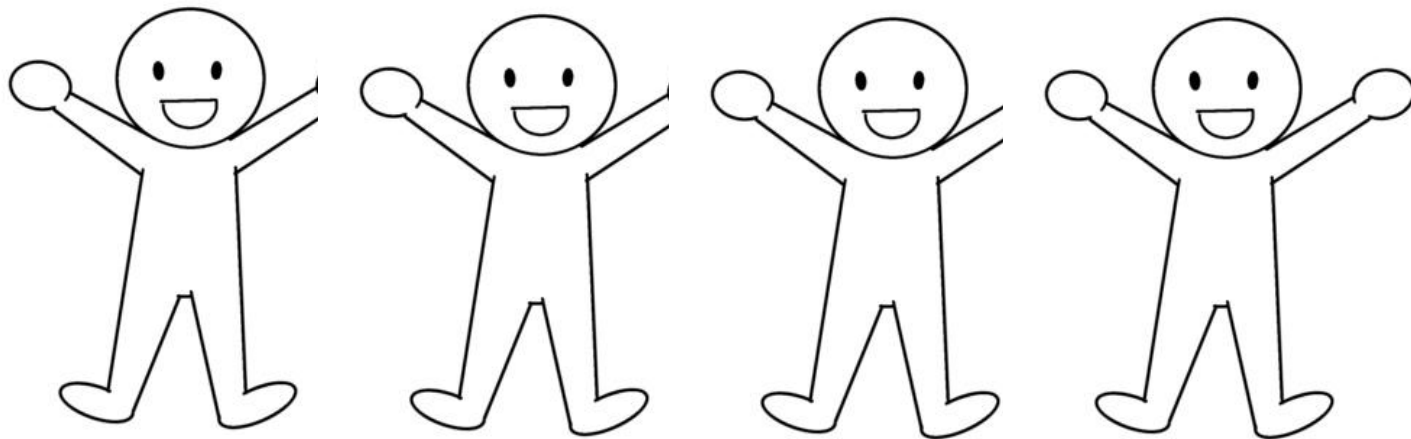
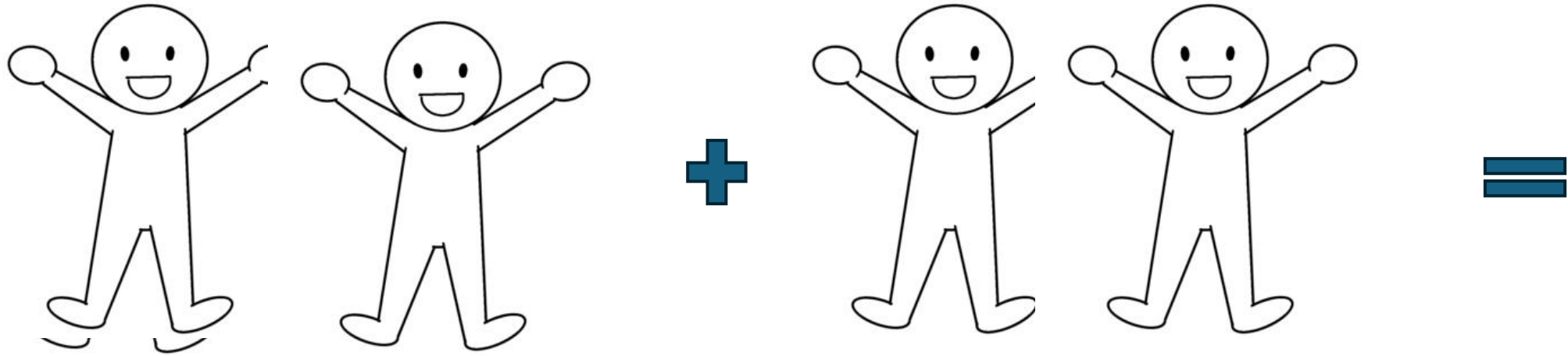
- One of you will be the customer service representative and the other will be the disgruntled customer.
- The customer service agent should try to appease the customer.
- You can bring in other members to the stage as necessary.
- Rotate. Now the customer will become the customer service agent. Keep rotating until everyone gets a chance to perform.

Level: Upper Intermediate and above

Size of Group: Pairs perform in front of their group



Making Groups



Family Portrait

Groups of four or five. One group goes up to the stage. I will give you a theme (e.g., “Family of Dentists. Family of Cheerleaders. Family of Lost Librarians.” You can even get more specific. “Right after grandma’s big announcement” or “The Dentists Convention” or “Cheerleaders Lose the Championship.”)



Groups have ten seconds to form a portrait based on the title. Think about the characters involved in the picture and to talk to each other so that there are no repeat characters. They have to tell a story, even though they are frozen in place. Count them down and at the end of 10 seconds yell out FREEZE! The end result should be a cohesive picture.

Level: All

Size of Group: About 4-5.

The Ad Game

(A variation of the Yes and game)

- **How to play:** This game is played in groups of 3 or more. Please decide on what to sell (e.g., a chair, a phone, a shoe) and then decide on what makes this product revolutionary. For example, someone in the group makes a statement about the object (“This shoe has well-supported arches”). Everyone enthusiastically yells “yes!” like this is the greatest idea in the world. Then, another person says “and” and contributes another detail (“And its laces are magnetic so they never come undone when you’re running”).
- Repeat this process, building on and enthusiastically agreeing with everyone else’s contributions until you have a fleshed-out product and identified a name for your product, a tagline, and a celebrity who endorses your product. Now, create a commercial for you new product.

Level: Upper Intermediate and above

Size of Group: About 3-6.

Large Group Discussion:

- How might you use some of these games in class?
 - Can you think of a particular activity or activities you might use?
 - Can you think of a variation that might work well in your class?



References:

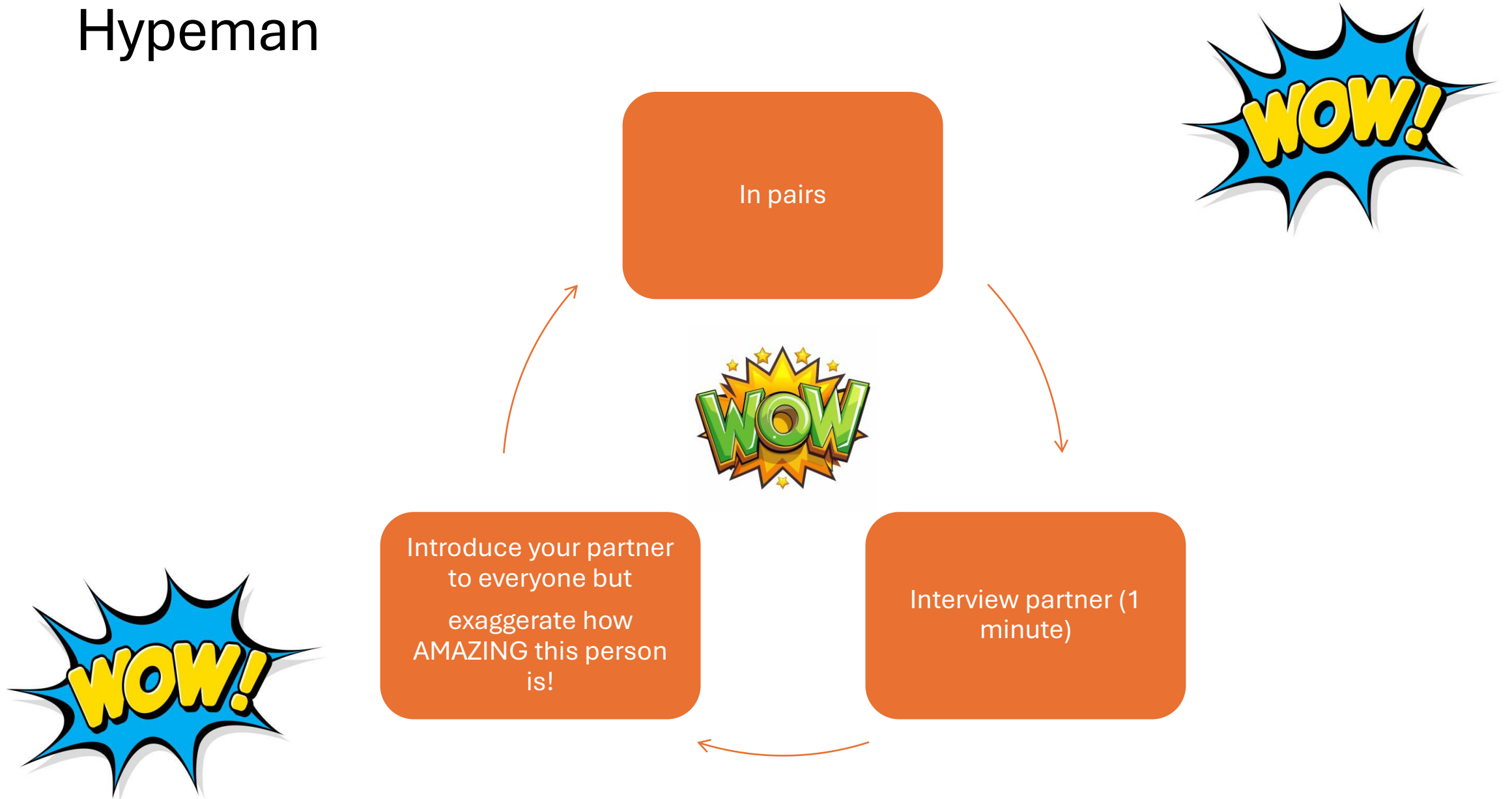
- <https://www.fm-magazine.com/issues/2018/feb/improv-class-helps-develop-business-skills.html>
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesleadershipforum/2014/06/27/why-improv-training-is-great-business-training/#557a5c9d6bcb>
<https://www.fastcompany.com/3055380/why-top-companies-and-mba-programs-are-teaching-improv>
<https://www.npr.org/2012/12/05/166484466/it-s-improv-night-at-business-school>
<https://www.startupinstitute.com/blog/2016-08-11-benefits-of-improv-in-business>
- <https://www.theatrefolk.com/blog/improv-games-for-collaboration/>
- <https://onsite.fun/blog/improv-games>
- <https://improvisationalcomedy.com/11-easy-improv-games-for-beginners/>
- <https://www.tefl.net/esl-activities/improvisations.php>

EXTRAS





Hypeman



Level: Upper Intermediate to advanced

Size of Group: Pairs present in front of their group

One sentence at a time story

- The goal is to create a story with each person contributing one sentence at a time.
- The theme is: The Best Birthday Ever

Level: Upper intermediate and above
Size of Group: About 5 -10.

News reporter

- Pretend you are a TV news reporter on site somewhere and provide a report.
 - Good afternoon this is Tomoko Yoshida from Keio News Today reporting from Hiyoshi campus. I just heard word a presentation class at Keio started taking Creatine and now they are lifting cars with their bare hands! Look... I see a boy lifting a car now...Look! That's it from me, back to you George.

Level: Upper intermediate and above.
Size of Group: About 5 – 10.



Last Word, First Word

- Have a conversation with your partner.
- Make sure you start by using the last word your partner used.

Player A: I noticed how much I wanted to say something **good**.

Player B: **Good** answers can drive our behavior and can often pull us out of the moment. I felt the same thing, it was **frustrating**.

Player A: **Frustrating** yes and effortful.

.....and so on...

- **Two-Headed Interview:** Two students act as one person with two heads, alternating words or sentences to answer interviewer questions, which encourages listening and cooperation.
-

- **The Tourist**: A student acts as a tourist from a strange planet or place, calling home to describe their strange experiences to a partner. [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)]

Foreign Film Dub

- A scene for a group of four.
- Two players act out a scene in gibberish. The second two players are their English Language “Dubbers.” They translate the scene into English. Tips for the scene – those using gibberish should use a lot of physical action to give clues to their translator counterparts. Also, keep the sentences short. Remember, the goal here is a cohesive scene. You have to work together as a team to make the best scene possible.
- Once the scene is complete, switch roles.

Level: Advanced
Size of Group: Four

Guess what card you have



You will all pick a card and hold it up at your forehead. Do NOT look at that card.

When you see other people, treat them based on the card they have. 2 is the lowest and an Ace is the highest. You can talk but do not mention what card anyone has.

After about five minutes, I will ask you to line up based on what number you think you have.

Level: All

Size of Group: Flexible