

Exploring learners' perceptions towards collaborative work through drama in foreign language learning: A view from a mandatory Italian high-school curriculum ¹

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Abstract

This article focuses on learners' perceptions related to the collaborative work through a drama project undertaken as part of a rather rigid high-school mandatory curriculum. The project aimed to offer a dynamic and safe learning environment in which learners could acquire language in an interactive and collaborative way and to help the learners to develop their oral skills and increase their motivation towards learning a foreign language. A class of final year Italian students (n=10) with a level of language ranging from low intermediate to upper intermediate took part in the drama classes which were implemented longitudinally over two academic terms (20 weeks): self-standing play excerpts combined with drama games in the second term followed by a full-scale performance of a single play in the third term. Data were collected through a semi-structured questionnaire, follow-up interviews and researcher's field notes. Findings revealed that learners perceived that collaboration and interaction through drama were important elements for promoting a positive attitude towards learning a foreign language and their oral production despite the challenges that a full-scale production may pose when subjected to the various constraints of time and the syllabus requirements of a compulsory curriculum.

1 Introduction

Cooperative learning and interaction are key aspects of acquiring communicative competence. 'Interaction' has been central to theories of second language learning and pedagogy since the 1980s. Talking about the interactive perspective in language education, Rivers (1987: 4) acknowledges that "students achieve facility in using a language when their attention is focused on conveying and

receiving authentic messages (that is, messages that contain information of interest to both speaker and listener in a situation of importance to both)". Likewise, Hulse and Owen (2017: 19) assert that effective language learning requires opportunities for verbal interactions which allow students to learn through active cooperation and to progress from familiar to unfamiliar contexts. As the Russian psychologist Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory regarding the importance of interaction in L2 acquisition advocates students learn best when they work with other people, that is, when they engage in meaningful interaction with others. However, within the traditional teacher centred foreign languages class in which learners are mostly working on decontextualized written grammar exercises the possibility for learners to do this is diminished. Starting with the premise that drama is "communication between people" (Via, 1987: 10) and an "inextricable part of all social interactions" (DiNapoli 2003: 17), one way to address this deficiency is by working with dramatic approaches which would engage learners in purposeful cooperative communication.

Educational theorists such as Bruner (1996) and Vygotsky (1978) contend that dramatic activities facilitate learning because they provide opportunities for co-constructing knowledge by expanding and deepening understanding of the topics being explored. Undeniably, drama offers multiple opportunities for social interaction and feedback which are certainly necessary for internalizing new knowledge. Through cooperative learning, drama brings into play the *zone of proximal development (zpd)* as theorized by Vygotsky (1978: 86) which offers possibilities for scaffolding, so that, learners can perform linguistic functions at a much higher level than would be possible on their own. He defined the *zpd* as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving, and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" and postulated that within the *zpd* there is an ideal level which instruction should aim to meet. Whilst engaging in dramatic activities, games and theatrical techniques learners are encouraged to present, use and learn language in and through interaction situated in social contexts, which are sensitive to learners' potential development. Therefore, cooperation between peers can be a powerful tool to promote the co-construction and hopefully, internalization of L2 knowledge. It is often the case that a class comprises learners of different levels of oral English proficiency. Gill (2013: 37) reports that it has been found that learners who struggle benefit from the presence of more capable learners in their class when working collaboratively. This is because the latter assist as scaffolds, "providing guided support to their peers during collaborative L2 interactions" (Donato 1994: 51).

Gill (2013) upholds that compared to the quantity of English in conventional classes, cooperative work results in more speaking time which, in turn, generates more spoken language. In a similar vein, Kagan (1995) sustains that the greatest advantage of cooperative learning over traditional class setting where the learners are called upon one at a time is the increased quantity of learners' language output; an interactive session in class results in more language output

in two minutes than in a non-interactive one in an hour. Moreover, “drama allows learners to participate in wide-ranging oral interaction with a variety of language forms” (Gill 2013: 31) and “offers a social context in which to use and learn language” (Bournot-Trites et al. 2007: 11). Bournot-Trites et al.’s (2007) study of grade six and seven French learners shows that the opportunity to explore a foreign language within a social context through drama-based strategies increased students’ motivation, as well as fluency in the target language. Foster (1998) upholds that collaborative work benefits students through giving them L2 speaking time, and because such an activity does not entail giving individual presentations in front of a whole class, they avoid ‘negative effects’ (a term introduced in the early 20th century in the field of psychology) such as anxiety and self-consciousness. In a similar vein, Heitzman (2009), as cited in Gill (2013: 34), advocates that the greater the cooperation between learners, the more conducive the environment for learning. His findings showed that using cooperative learning through drama the class atmosphere went from “relatively quiet, with limited verbal involvement by the participants”, to “an increasingly greater quantity of speech and greater interaction between participants” and concluded that this increased output “appears to point to the influence of drama strategies” (ibid.).

Fleming (2006) points out that drama promotes a social activity, and therefore, it can only operate through active cooperation. Advocates of drama pedagogy in the language classroom believe that students tend to become more involved and, in this way, they also get more opportunities to experiment with the language and thus enhance their oral production than would be the case in a traditional class arrangement. Given that one of the most distinctive features of drama is the cooperation and interaction with others in a mutually supportive language learning environment, this paper aims to contribute to this ongoing discussion by providing insights from a drama project carried out within a compulsory curriculum in an Italian context. The drama project students involved learning English using contemporary self-standing play excerpts combined with games in a first phase followed by a full-scale performance which was implemented in a second phase during the third term. Data collected from various perspectives and sources are essential in order to see the potential of dramatic approaches and enrich the literature on the topic (see Beliveau & Kim 2013; Schewe 2013) especially when drama is implemented in a rather rigid compulsory curriculum in a high school context where the requirements of the syllabus allow little flexibility.

2 Methodology

2.1 Context of the study and participants

An experimental group formed by a class of ten final year high school learners in a private school in a small town in the northern part of Italy were involved in the project, with the researcher taking the role of the teacher during this period.

The learners were between 18 and 20 years old with their spoken English level ranging between low intermediate and upper intermediate with most of them having a mid-intermediate level. All of them were either professional sportsmen or they were working part-time. The English language course was based on a grammatical syllabus around which the drama-based lessons were designed. The learners worked with plays scripts combined with dramatic games in the first phase (10 weeks) and towards a full-scale production in the second phase (10 weeks) with two 60 minutes lessons per week taught consecutively. From initial informal interviews held with the learners and their teacher it emerged that the learners were unacquainted with drama-based approaches. They were mostly taught English through a teacher-centred approach with very little opportunity for collaborative work or peer interaction.

2.2 Research design – instructional intervention through drama

In the first phase which took place during the second term learners were taught grammar and acquired new vocabulary by using a variety of self-standing extracts from contemporary plays which were purposefully chosen in line with the institutional grammatical syllabus. Excerpts selected from plays such as *The Patient* and *The Hollow* by Agatha Christie, *Skirmishes* by Catherin Hayes, *Little Brother*, *Little Sister* and *Us and Them* by David Campton or *Blood Brothers* by Willy Russel were studied. These illustrated past tenses, present perfect, types of conditionals and future tenses.² The plays were deemed to arouse learners' interest. Dramatic games and activities to facilitate a safe low-anxiety atmosphere and to practise the grammar point learnt were also creatively implemented. A lesson in this phase would generally comprise the following key elements:

- A drama game or dramatic activity as a starting or ending point which would reinforce a point of grammar either taught on the day or in a previous lesson and help learners to practise the new vocabulary and their oral skills to a greater extent. Some games were creatively invented whilst others adapted or taken from various teachers' resources (See Appendix for some examples).
- Set of induction questions to activate learners' schemata and prepare them for the reception of the new text
- Presentation of the play extract which would usually illustrate a point of grammar to be taught according to the school syllabus requirements. In order to maintain the learners' interests this phase was done in various ways: occasionally it was listened to, other times read aloud or directly read in role.

² For an example of an excerpt from *The Patient* by Agatha Christie that was used to teach Past Simple Tense please see Appendix 1 in Bora (2018).

- Explanation of a grammar point was done either deductively or inductively within the context of a self-standing play extract and then reinforced through a game or an activity.
- Discussions and a variety of activities such as gap-fill exercises based on the text, matching exercises or ending the story creatively were also implemented. The focus was on characters and plot with a view at promoting language practice in a collaborative and interactive way.

Related to this phase, an important point to emphasise is that whole class discussions, pair work and group work were the main way of conducting the classes.

In the second phase spreading over the third term until the end of the academic year the learners worked towards staging *Over the Wall* by James Saunders (1985) which is a short one act play. Its peculiarity was that any number can participate and thus, learners could decide themselves if they wanted to be actors or take other roles in the production of the play. In order to be understood the script was read for content, analytically discussed and only those words and expressions with which the learners were not familiar were translated. Subsequently, all learners willingly took on a role and started working towards the staging of the play. In this phase, instead, a variety of warm-up exercises and theatre techniques were carried out which often combined the linguistic goals, such as learning new vocabulary and grammar, with acting goals. During rehearsals the learners performed in turn scenes in class whilst the other peers acted as an audience. The later was expected to critically comment on the way the scenes were played and to give feedback for improvement both in terms of acting and language. They were also encouraged to use the target language. The learners took part in some production-related activities such as deciding on the costumes and the props, the music and preparing an improvised stage in the classroom. The learners did not manage to learn all their lines by heart due to time constraints, nonetheless, a performance was staged in the last English lesson of the term attended by a few students from the school. However, an important point is that the emphasis during the staging of the performance was on learning the target language through active cooperation and interaction and not on their acting skills.

2.3 Data collection and analysis

Data came from a questionnaire containing open-ended questions and individual interviews which were completed at the end of the whole period of instruction. Suitable individual one-to-one interview slots were arranged to take place a few days later in a quiet room in the school. The interviews were digitally recorded, immediately transcribed and translated into English by the researcher for later analyses. The questionnaire data were used for triangulation purposes. The answers to the open-ended questions were analysed thematically along with the interview data by using clusters and pattern coding with the help of Nvivo

software, for managing coding and cross-referencing all data sets. All data were coded using first- and second-level, or pattern coding. Miles & Huberman (1994: 69) describe pattern coding as a way of grouping the first-level codes into a smaller number of similar clusters of “sets, themes, constructs” or analytic units in which the codes are explanatory or identify common emergent themes, causes or explanations from the data (ibid.). According to Saldaña (2011) such codes operate as a way of patterning, categorizing, and later rearranging each datum into new categories for further analysis. The codes that shared the same category were then classified into similar clusters.

3 Results and discussion

In the following section quantitative results from the learners' questionnaire and interview findings, which are focussed on learners' perceptions related to their experience of working collaboratively and interactively through drama are presented and discussed. The themes which emerged from data analyses were (i) positive affective responses, (ii) language enhancement and (iii) problems and difficulties.

3.1 Positive affective responses

Many of the learners found it very engaging working on a variety of play scripts, confronting and discussing the content of the authentic self-standing extracts with other people, as well as sharing ideas and doing activities, which they also found highly motivating. They repeatedly reported that working in pairs or in small groups improved the class atmosphere and provided greater opportunities to use the language. All of them were willing to take part wholeheartedly in the dramatic activities and games, which they found stimulating and fun, since they did not always know what to expect:

“The period we were learning English with these types of texts was very nice because I could learn new things, vocabulary and grammar in a new way: livelier, more engaging and motivating for us, the students, by having a lot of fun together through drama games and different activities at the same time.” (St 3)

Also, when faced with the challenge of expressing themselves verbally or non-verbally in the dramatic exercises, learners became skilled in observing and learning from their classmates' behaviour. The students enjoyed working collaboratively because, apart from creating a relaxed atmosphere, it made them more attentive to each other's performance.

“It was very funny only seeing what others were doing. I enjoyed it so much.” (St 8)

Along with the enjoyment, discussions carried out in groups or with the whole class on the play texts were also a powerful tool for increasing and building

students' motivation. The learners appreciated that they could genuinely use the target language when negotiating the meaning of the texts:

“I was motivated to talk more because of the discussions arising from what was happening in the texts we were studying, and which pushed us to participate in these debates. In the normal lessons, there were only grammar exercises and we did not talk a lot in English.” (St 7)

Students interacted with each other as they discussed issues, voiced personal opinions of agreement or disagreement, negotiated solutions and provided explanations or expressed points of view by participating in the sort of effective learning environment in which the learner was at the center of the whole leaning process.

Working together towards the staging of the performance, taking on roles and interacting with peers when rehearsing was deemed particularly engaging by some of the learners for various reasons. Students could experience being in someone else's shoes and make mistakes in a safe environment without the fear of being ridiculed:

“I love acting and it was great fun. I do not have any problem in acting or making language mistakes in front of others. I am an extroverted person. I believe the important thing is to take a risk and only by making mistakes can one improve. I really loved doing these little scenes together in class.” (St 5)

Learners felt positive about working with other students as a whole group, as it seemed that the process of interaction for negotiation of meaning made the practice of acquiring the language more meaningful, as well as being full of amusement:

“This experience was very enjoyable... I have learnt at the same time because we did a lot of silly and amusing things while reciting lines and working as a group.” (St 4)

Another insight to emerge from the data was that students learned about socio-cultural differences, by interacting in the culture of the language. To master a language means to know the social conventions and the language used in specific situations and not only the grammar rules. These would come naturally from an authentic play script from the stage directions and the way the characters talk. Students appreciated being able to explore, experiment and acquire an understanding of the target culture both from analysing the plays together with other peers or from the process of interaction with others when acting. Moreover, the rehearsal provided a useful stage for learning both the spoken and the body language within a specific culture, which could be easily transferable and used in the real world:

“I have learned how to approach others.” (St 5).

As Byron (cited in FitzGibbon 1993: 272) points out, a large amount of the vocabulary used normally in the classroom is informational, whereas in drama, most of the vocabulary will be expressive and interactional in mode. Perhaps that was because “subjective responses and feelings may be articulated and shared on an interactional basis, whilst expressive language offers students more opportunities for abstract thinking and more complex language use than an informational one” (ibid.), which was the case for most of the class activities. Furthermore, Ronke (2005) found that rehearsals, in particular, create a genuine need for intensive and longer-lasting-interaction as students tend to be highly motivated to work together when learning their lines, creating scenery and costumes, or putting on make-up, in order to achieve their goal of producing a good quality performance. In this sense, it is therefore unsurprising that memorizing lines, which was often cited as a not very pleasurable activity especially when done individually at home and not always entirely successfully, was found to be a pleasant and amusing activity when practised with the whole class through suitable group activities and games:

“I tried hard to memorize my lines at home but what really helped me was the game we did for memorizing the lines together in a funny and easy way. I loved that.” (St 2)

Some of the learners also commented that when activities were done together, in an interactive way, it made them laugh which also helped to reduce their anxiety.

3.2 Language enhancement

There is no doubt that interaction and collaboration involve understanding what other people are saying and the ideas they are expressing, which should lead to oral skill growth. In fact, students reported that by interacting with others they improved their speaking skills because they made a conscious effort to listen and to speak as accurately as possible, both from a grammatical and a pronunciation point of view, so as to be able to reply effectively and make themselves understood. In addition, they frequently reported that, in the process of interaction, they learned vocabulary and expressions used by other people or by their interlocutors in the games, debates or the decision-making process:

“I feel the games helped me a lot to improve my language skills. We learned so much language through games.” (St 9)

“I feel these texts and discussions we had together improved my level of oral production not only from the accuracy point of view, but I have also learnt so much (new) vocabulary.” (St 6)

Particularly, during the work on the production of the play and in relation to the scenes acted out in class, the learners were likely to have retrieved a wide

range of vocabulary and expressions repeatedly uttered by the other student actors. Clearly, they needed to understand what their classmates were saying so they could deliver in the correct place the appropriate lines in response as the following quote reveals:

“I could learn words from other people’s behaviour, and it was good listening practice too. I could understand the meaning of the words from other people’s attitude. I have learnt so many (new) words as well as expressions.” (St 8)

From the data it emerged that meaningful interaction during the production of the play increased learners’ motivation and consequently their level of fluency because it involved them in a more spontaneous and natural way of acquiring the target language which they also found very rewarding:

“I think I achieved more fluency in speaking given the fact that we had to immerse ourselves in matters of daily life This made me also more motivated.” (St 10)

Kagan (2005) states that students become fluent if they have the opportunity to speak repeatedly on the same topic and certainly drama offered this type of opportunity especially through rehearsals. Weaker students had the chance to both actively take part and be helped by the more proficient or creative students, as well as offering their support to others as the project advanced, something which certainly increased their self-esteem:

“I could learn so much from others and I felt I was never left on the sidelines.” (St 7)

The learners were willing to work with each other in sharing ideas and helping one another and playing scenes together which surely increased the amount of individual talking time. As Jarfàs (2008: 50) points out “when cooperative learning occurs, students get just the input they need from their peers, which truly helps them to achieve, which gives them safety and confidence and a sense of motivation”. What’s more, some students raised different and, sometimes, unexpected ideas. As they continued to participate in the activities, learners not only learned new vocabulary and grammar rules, but they also practised their pronunciation and accent by repeating the lines and correcting each other, all of which seemed to have a positive effect:

“I loved the fact that finally, I could improve my pronunciation so much because I could have never done it by myself.” (St 9)

Students were increasingly aware that they had to pronounce their lines correctly in order to make themselves understood by their peers and, consequently, they felt that their pronunciation improved:

“However, I think I improved my pronunciation a lot through performance. I needed to make myself understood and I had to pronounce correctly; and I have to admit it was lot of fun anyway.” (St 1)

The production of a play stresses the 'ensemble-like' nature of the classroom and emphasizes cooperation to a higher degree than in a traditional language learning environment. The literature suggests that most of the language acquired during a full-scale project will stem from the preparation and discussions of the production (see Wessels 1987). Learners found the rehearsals and problem-solving activities very useful because they engaged them in meaningful interaction which added to their motivation: they were a single group who took part in the decision-making process by sharing information and helping each other, which appeared to be highly conducive to the enhancement of their receptive and productive skills. In line with previous studies (see Jarfàs 2008, Lutzker 2007, Miccoli 2003), the findings of this study, which emerged from the learners' interviews, revealed that cooperative learning promoted the positive group dynamics essential for successful learning and there is no doubt that, a play production permitted a higher level of student participation than conventional language learning exercises.

3.3 Problems and difficulties

An interesting finding which emerged from the data was that problems and difficulties when working together, especially with uncooperative students were raised in relation to the staging of the performance; yet, this was never the case when working on the play texts or when taking part in the games. First of all, acting in the play was perceived as a less comfortable experience for some of the introverted students because they had to deal with performing in front of others as shown in the extracts below:

"I do not like to perform in front of other people; thus, I feel more relaxed when working on the texts or play games." (St 6)

"Yes, because I am embarrassed when I have to act in front of other people. I prefer to read rather than act and for this reason I felt more at ease when engaging with the texts because I do not really like acting too much." (St 3)

However, even those feeling uncomfortable with performing admitted that they were very much aware that they improved their speaking skills considerably, precisely through this type of activity.

Apart from their shyness when working on their scenes, problems with uncooperative students was also cited as a hindrance. In fact, one student expressed feelings of frustration with uncooperative classmates during the rehearsal of their scenes, especially when the "actors" failed to learn their assigned part by heart hindering the successful completion of the final product on the stage:

"I had the impression that sometimes we were wasting our time when doing rehearsals because of those students who did not care too much about learning their lines by heart properly." (St 3)

Proponents of preparing a play as a full-scale project in language learning (Fonio 2010; Marini-Maio 2010; Moody 2002) warn that insufficient preparation on the part of some student actors would negatively affect both the process and the final product, if carried out in a compulsory curriculum; however, this would not be the case if such a project is implemented as an extracurricular activity in which students take part voluntarily and where the level of motivation is very high. Everyone's commitment is crucial for the success of the final product.

During this project, most of the students took the production of the play seriously by learning their lines assiduously. There were only a very few who, despite participating actively in the class rehearsals by reading their script and trying to memorize their part because it was fun, failed to adhere to the high level of commitment expected for such projects. The less committed learners may have regarded the play production more as a means of learning the language in an amusing, exciting way, whilst those who were more committed would have liked them to take it more seriously, reporting the above as a negative issue. As Carson (2012: 56) rightly points out, much of what is described above regarding students' experience of group work aligns with the "real-world" reality of collaborative activities which "at times is full of frustration, with difficulties in assigning roles and activities, but also enjoyable and enabling".

4 Concluding discussion

As has been already outlined, one of the most distinctive features of drama in language learning is the meaningful and purposeful cooperation and interaction with others that it involves. Overall, qualitative findings showed that either pair work or group work increased learners motivation because they found working this way livelier, more enjoyable and more meaningful than learning individually, and consequently, they perceived they were able to improve their level of language to a higher extent than in a traditional classroom setting. However, they also encountered obstacles and constraints to overcome. Both phases of drama approaches appeared to be successful in encouraging learners to communicate and to improve their oral production in the target language: when working on a variety of authentic play scripts and games, improvements in vocabulary and grammatical accuracy were among the aspects most frequently mentioned by the learners, whereas better pronunciation and increased fluency were most frequently cited in the full-scale production phase.

As for the performance, the findings revealed that students greatly enjoyed working together, and even though some of them were shy to start with or others did not fully commit, it was rarely mentioned as being problematic and never perceived as a wholly negative experience. Nevertheless, this phase called for a higher degree of cooperation and interaction as compared to simply analysing the play scripts and taking part in the games, which is paramount for achieving the common goal of putting on a performance, and which students deemed very useful for improving their language skills. They practised their lines together and gave each other language support and acting advice, and it may

be that these activities led to increased fluency and accuracy (see Bora 2017) as perceived by learners. It appeared that peer interaction and collaborative work on the performance offered the unique opportunity to improve learners' pronunciation. What is more, as the participants expressed, they learnt a lot from other people's behavior during the rehearsal process.

This was a research informed study which tried to bring changes into a mandatory classroom setting in an Italian context by introducing authentic play scripts and drama elements in the English as a foreign language classroom. This intervention offered new insights into the impact of cooperative and interactive learning through drama as expressed through learners' voices. The project also brought to light the challenges of carrying out a full-scale production within such a context. Future qualitative language studies could usefully explore further the potential of drama to add depth and diversity to the findings of the present study so as to enrich the landscape of recent scholarship on drama in L2 especially when implemented longitudinally in a relatively rigid mandatory language class.

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A Appendix

A.1 Switch If . . . (7-10 min)

Purpose: Practise the imperative form of verbs in various tenses, work with vocabulary words, energize group and improve agility

The chairs are arranged in a circle; one for each student. Standing in the middle of the circle, the teacher gives the students one command: switch places if . . . (i.e., switch if you are wearing a red shirt, switch if you are wearing white shoes, switch if you are wearing a beaded necklace, etc). Students who meet the given criteria must get up and run to find another seat. The teacher, as well, runs to find a seat, leaving one student standing. Now it is the students turn to give a command. Students will often be very creative in singling out one classmate by coming up with a criterion that only one person meets so that s/he can take the only seat left free.³

A.2 The Chain Game (10-15 min)

Purpose: to reinforce previously taught grammar point (*Past Simple Tense*) and vocabulary

The students sit in a circle. One of the students starts by saying a sentence in the past tense, the student next to him has to repeat the sentence and add to it a new one, the next student has to repeat all sentences and add a new one and so on.

Example: I went to town and I bought a car. I went to town, I bought a car and I had a coffee. I went to town, I bought a car, I had a coffee and I ate a sandwich...

If a person makes a mistake, s/he is out of the game. Continue until there is one overall winner or when you have gone around the group at least once.

A.3 The Envelope

Purpose: to consolidate the third-type conditional (*if*- clause), memorize new vocabulary

A sentence in the third type conditional is written down on cards (one word per card) which are simply mixed and put in an envelope. Make sure new vocabulary from the play is used. Prepare as many envelopes as the same number of students in the class. Ask students to arrange (on the floor) the sentence in the correct order. Once they have finished, they will have to check and, if necessary, correct the neighbouring student's sentence. Cards are mixed again, put in the envelope and exchanged between students. They will have to form another sentence and go through the same process again.

³ Game adapted from Ryan-Scheutz & Colangelo 2004: 374-389.

A.4 If: The Circle Game

Purpose: to practise the second type conditional, to practise new vocabulary

The teacher starts the game with an initial phrase as an example, then, in turn, each student will create a new conditional phrase by transforming the main sentence into a conditional one and adding a new main sentence. The game ends when all students have formed at least one conditional phrase. Learners will generally be very creative in making funny sentences.

Example 1: “If I had a car, I would take you into the mountains”, “If I took you into the mountains, I would show you the forests and the rivers”, “If I showed you the mountains, and the rivers you would realise how beautiful they are”....

Example 2: “If I had known their secret, I would have told you”, “If I had told you their secret, you would have accused me of being dishonest” . . .

A.5 A jumbled story

Purpose: to reinforce previous taught language, enhance the memory, and introduce the grammar point of the day

A story is cut into small pieces (two or three sentences at the most) and given to students to be memorized. The parts into which the story is cut depend on the number of the groups you form in class. Students may work individually or in groups depending on the size of the class. The students' task is to reconstruct the story. The students/groups are told that each of them has a fragment of a story; they have to read and memorize the fragment, then, by *talking* to the others in their group, try to find out where it fits into the story. The story can be mimed at the end if there is time.⁴

A.6 Bingo

Purpose: to practise with present perfect and new vocabulary, energize group.

Each student is provided with a piece of paper which contains 6 different activities in a grid (teachers can be creative and use words from the play studied or add more activities). They will have to mill around the room and question their classmates using the present perfect: “*Have you ever lost your credit card?*”, etc. They will have to tick a box every time they have found a person who has done the activity for real. The game is over when all boxes in the grid have been ticked. At the end, learners can be asked to report what they have found out.

ride a horse	break a leg
go to Paris	lose the credit card
have an x-ray	take part in a demonstration

⁴ Game adapted from Maley & Duff 2003: 111.