

ACT ESOL

# LANGUAGE RESISTANCE THEATRE



# INTRODUCTION

Voice exists in an in-between space; located neither purely in the body, nor the social, nor the political. It is constantly in motion, resonating through, from, and past us. What happens when we try to take ownership of our own voices? Where are we when we are in silence? What does it mean to 'speak out'? As the logic of capital increasingly governs our lives, how can we imagine and create a space which challenges the profit-driven motives of the neo-liberal discourses we inhabit and perpetuate? We are implicated, and so are you.

—Implicated Theatre

How can the arts effect social change? How do we address and navigate the immigration policies affecting thousands of people in the UK today? What would a theatre project or an ESOL classroom aimed at social change or community organising look like?

Through the commissions that have been developed by Serpentine Projects in the last decade, we continuously question the complex power dynamics within the contexts and conditions that we are working in. One such project is Implicated Theatre, which began in 2011 as a series of experimental theatre workshops in response to an increase in immigration raids on the Edgware Road, London, where our project space, the Centre for Possible Studies, was based. Exploring the relationships between political speech and action, the self and the collective, the workshops invited migrants accessing services at the Migrants Resource Centre to work together with theatre director Frances Rifkin and artists from no.w.here, Noor Afshan Mirza and Brad Butler. The workshops are based on Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed and consider the ways that language, political theatre, and action can be used to assemble individuals for the purposes of transformation and resistance.

Initially focusing on personal experiences of migration, Implicated Theatre has since grown into an ongoing research collective, developing relationships and techniques that support investigations into the everyday struggles that shape its participants' lives. Forming close relationships and alliances with migrants' rights groups, labour unions, academic researchers and most recently ESOL teachers, Implicated Theatre creates theatrical interventions, toolkits and pedagogical films inspired by real-life struggle. Through these collaborations different communities fighting for migrant justice have come together to use theatre to think through problems collectively and articulate their ambitions, challenging the dominant culture and established ways of thinking and doing.

Emerging through the last seven years of workshops was a mapping of the increased immigration controls embedded into every part of UK society. Immigration checks are now imposed when people access public services, work, bank accounts, or housing. Social workers, teachers, doctors, charities, and landlords are expected to play a part in this regime of border controls. The existence of educational provision for those affected by this new landscape is also contested. This was the case with Paulo Freire's work in developing literacy in Brazil in 1960's, as it is in the UK today with ESOL. The impact that cuts to social services and aggressive

immigration policies have had on mainstream ESOL provision has been devastating, with a reduction of 60% of funding since 2009. ESOL teachers and programmes are often a direct line to some of the people who are most in need of improving their English language. Despite institutional constraints, ESOL teachers still have scope to make choices about what is taught in their classrooms, how it is taught, and by whom.

ACT ESOL is an ongoing project where participatory ESOL teachers, English for Action (EFA) and Implicated Theatre work with language learners to develop a more political ESOL approach that combines language with a focus on resistance. The project was established in 2015 after a pilot workshop series led by Becky Winstanley from EFA, where ACT ESOL explored ways in which radical ESOL and radical theatre could come together in a single project to develop new methodologies for the ESOL classroom. Following the success of the pilot, Implicated Theatre worked with EFA to establish a participatory action research project involving nine ESOL teachers as researchers in a two-year programme of theatre training, research and the development of this learning resource. The teacher-researchers tested methodologies in their own classrooms all over London and in Bristol supported by theatre practitioners Frances Rifkin and Nelly Alfandari. The research process was documented through illustrations by Nic Vas, who has illustrated the resource and authored the comic *Speaking Without Words*. In these experimental workshops, the theatre exercises provided an opportunity for stories from the students to emerge, disclosing experiences of racism and language-based discrimination, including negative attitudes to different languages. Students would drive the content of the classes by being the storytellers of their own experiences of confronting oppressions in their daily lives. Through forum theatre, the students then would rehearse new language and share strategies for change. The collectively developed methodologies are part of a radical ESOL education that is interested in transformation as opposed to inclusion. We believe ESOL classes, with the correct focus, can enable migrants to access the social, economic, and political benefits that would be out of reach without a politicised language training.

—Amal Khalaf

# HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This learning resource was written as a result of collaborative action research by participatory ESOL practitioners (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and participatory theatre practitioners, exploring how to implement Theatre of the Oppressed in the ESOL classroom. We have tried both to share our experiences and learning as well as to explain the work to the different practitioners and participants who might be interested in participatory ESOL.

There are three different modalities you can engage with: a comic that depicts our experiences in narrative form, step-by-step instructions to use in the classroom, and pedagogical and political reflections. Whether you are planning on using this resource directly in the classroom, as an inspiration for your own practice, or on a theatrical or theoretical level, this resource can be used in a number of different ways above and beyond our suggestions.

## MODES OF ENGAGEMENT

### The Comic

'*Speaking without words*': *A Journey Through ACT ESOL* gives an insight into how an ACT ESOL session might feel from the inside. The images and storyline are a combination of the many different shared experiences we went through during our action research. For us, learning happens on many levels, and feeling oneself as part of a story is crucial in order to start imagining an ACT ESOL learning space.

### The Cards

The cards aim to give detailed instructions, as well as to pick up on important questions that frame the practice. They are structured like this:

#### What

Gives a short overview of the practice described, in writing and as an image.

#### Why

Outlines the political and pedagogical frame of the activity and how it can be applied to language learning.

#### How

Step-by-step instructions that can be used during the session as notes for the facilitator or displayed on the wall for everyone, along with an image to help visualise the work.

#### Tips

The tips are based on our experience of applying this practice in the classroom. They share issues or useful variations we came across, and also give ethical guidelines where applicable.

There are three types of cards: framing cards, games and exercise cards, and Theatre of the Oppressed cards. The framing cards outline our overall approach. The games and exercise cards are more practical and

are to be used for concrete planning and teaching. The theatre cards describe the different elements of the practice. Each set has a different focus and we think it is important to work through all of the cards in order to get a deeper understanding of ACT ESOL as a whole.

### Framing Cards

#### Boal, Freire and We

Contains a brief overview of the theories of Critical Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed on which the work is founded. It provides an insight into the basis of the work.

#### Developing Language

Contains an overview of why and how to use the theatre practice in a language classroom, and how this work enhances language learning. This card outlines key ideas behind this approach.

#### Ethics and Ground Rules

Explains and frames creation of a safe space for learning for everyone: teacher and student. It explores and helps to define ground rules and issues that are important for participatory practitioner to reflect on.

#### Making and Breaking the Space

Explores the shift from a regular classroom to an ACT ESOL classroom, covering the practical work that needs doing as well as the shifts of awareness that students and practitioners may go through.

### Games and Exercises Cards

There are six games and exercises:

- Occupy the Space
- Zip Zap Boing
- 1-2-3
- Mirror
- Crossing the Circle
- Follow the Sound

Each game or exercise has a description of what it may be useful for. You can use them in any order you feel appropriate. With some groups, a lot of exercises work really well, with others, one or two exercises are already rich enough. You can repeat the exercises and develop a routine in your classroom for each session.

### Theatre of the Oppressed Cards

- Joker
- The teacher/facilitator is called the Joker. This card explores important questions and ways of facilitating an ACT ESOL class.

- Image Theatre
- Describes a key element of this practice: body-based images or pictures that give rise to language. Theatre-based ACT ESOL works with images and pictures, which offer a different mode of learning.

- Forum Theatre
- Forum is the main technique we work with. The games and exercises prepare for the Forum. Through the Forum the main substance of work will be explored.

# FOR WHOM

## ESOL Practitioners

When writing this resource, we focused on how an experienced and critical ESOL practitioner might be using this in their classroom. We tried to make the instruction cards easy to use for planning, and live in the classroom. We have also shared various thoughts and questions that came up during our training.

## Education and theatre practitioners

We hope that this will be of interest to education and theatre practitioners, for whom this resource can throw up useful pedagogical and political questions. In particular, we hope this resource will be useful for

practitioners working with migrants who want to develop their English or who are interested in the theme of language.

## Everyone who is curious!

We would love for this resource to be inspirational for students, or anyone curious, who would like to get an insight into an ACT ESOL classroom.

# FURTHER READING

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# ETHICS AND GROUND RULES

## What is it?

The ethics of participatory theatre describe the underlying practice, which aims to ensure a safe learning environment for everyone. Although, as in all critical practice, there may be moments of personal challenge and discomfort, no one should feel oppressed by the activities or content of the lessons. An ethical space is one in which someone feeling uncomfortable with the activities or content feels able to speak out and express that discomfort and if necessary suggest changing the activity.

The role of the Joker embodies the questions of how the balance between the individual, group and learning might work, for both the Joker and the students. It raises important considerations about how power is exercised and shared. The Joker must be able to accept objections from the students and anticipate difficult topics or situations. Ground rules help to create a space which can ethically and safely enable and protect the input of students with their participation and agreement.

## Ethical Aims

- To empower.
- To question, reflect and learn from experience.
- To constructively challenge accepted ideas of the students, the Joker, the society, as relevant to and arising from the work.
- Not to recreate unequal power structures during the activities.
- To be democratic and address inequalities.
- To effect change.
- To explore through theatre, to be creative, to have fun.
- To enrich teaching and learning.
- To create strong communication between people through thoughts, feelings and ideas, by using group work and supporting individual autonomy.
- To find effective speech in the world.

## Why?

The Joker as facilitator oversees and initiates the practice of a supportive ethical frame, one element of which is a set of ground rules agreed by students. The ethical approach helps to ensure confidentiality, emotional safety and respect for ownership of the material. In creating ground rules together, students are agreeing to respect the ethical approach. Use of theatre techniques can reveal material which students may feel is confidential or specific to the group or individuals. There may be personal stories, possibly past trauma including: family issues, migration and travel issues. When students volunteer this content, the decision to use it ultimately rests with the Joker. ESOL teachers are aware that willingness to disclose personal stories might be problematic under some circumstances.

## Language focus

- Practising courteous, frank and appropriate exchanges in many contexts.
- Safely exploring effective as well as difficult, inappropriate or problematic language.
- Understanding in practice the customs and social habits of group members and of local communities.

## How?

The Joker explores with the students the issues and ideas they choose to work with. Accordingly, the Joker initiates the creation of a supportive ethical frame underpinned by the agreed ground rules.

## Ground Rules

Ground rules may follow the structure or suggestions below and the group needs to participate in defining and agreeing them. There may be something perceived by students as specific to the group that is needed in the rules. The rules are useful as a practical guide outside the learning space. Any group member can invoke the ground rules during a session if they feel that there is a problem.

## Examples for Ground Rules

- Listen to each other (don't interrupt).
- Engage in supportive, challenging debate (don't be insensitive but feel free to disagree).
- Confidentiality.
- Make sure you are happy to use your stories. Ask the Joker if you are unsure.
- Be open and helpful about difficulties with each other.
- Discussion at the agreed moments.
- You can say no.
- Have a go!

## Tips

- Encourage students to explore language and social issues that are shareable in a classroom context.
- Bear in mind that creative conflict is the basis of Forum and theatre as a whole. If a sensitive or complex story emerges, check that the originator is comfortable with sharing it.
- If you are concerned, then as the Joker it is your role to advise choosing another story. There may be a need for support for the originator of the story.
- Be perceptive and reflective about common structural power biases for example those predicated on class, ability, gender, race and/or sexuality, which can easily be reproduced in the group work, even unintentionally.
- Be prepared to challenge moments of injustice within the group dynamics, in a supportive way.

# ZIP ZAP BOING



Students pass the sounds “zip,” “zap,” or “boing” around a circle and spontaneously change the direction of the sounds to find unexpected interactions in the resulting communication between the group.

## WHY?

### Politics and Pedagogy

- This game breaks the hierarchical space of the classroom.
- It locates the group in the freshly cleared classroom space.
- It helps the class to share decision making in an equal and playful way.
- It increases the students’ confidence as a group and as individuals.
- It builds connections between students.
- It’s good for focussing collective concentration.
- It’s a playful permission to refuse to go in the same direction as others, to find and enjoy the unexpected, to stand up and work together.

### Language Focus

- The game relates sounds to the expression of feelings and then language.

- This game is good for working on sounds, pronunciation and tone.

# 1-2-3

This is a pair concentration game which gradually replaces saying the numbers 1-2-3 with sounds and actions. Students then perform their sounds and actions to the group.

## WHY?

### Politics and Pedagogy

- 1-2-3 disrupts habitual frames of interaction, sound and movement. It makes the learning space creative and unpredictable.
- It’s useful for working together.
- It provides a cognitive challenge but also encourages students to work intuitively.
- It allows students to make and enjoy mistakes and embrace the unexpected.
- It’s a good performance experience as students show what they’ve made to the rest of the group at the end of the exercise.
- Good for spontaneity and creative improvisation.



### Language Focus

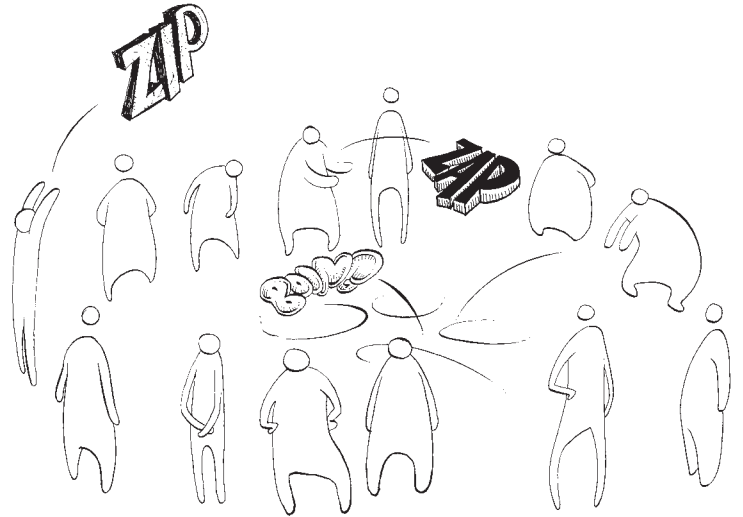
- Improves listening skills.
- Develops students’ voices.

- Pronunciation work: phonemes, words, stress patterns (all levels).
- Practising new vocabulary.

# ZIP ZAP BOING

## HOW?

- Take away all tables and chairs.
- Students stand in a circle.
- Demonstrate the game without using words, only sounds: “zip,” “zap,” and “boing”. Do “zip” first then add “zap” and finally “boing”.
- Begin with “zip”. Accompany the “zip” sound with a clap and eye contact with the person next to you. She passes the “zip”/clap to the next person and so it goes around the circle. Practice getting it continuously around the circle, without talking.
- Add in “zap”. Look across the circle, make eye contact, clap and say “zap” (not to the person next to you). Use “zip” sideways and “zap” across.
- Finally add “boing”. Say “boing” with eye contact in response to “zip” or “zap”. “Boing” returns the “zip” or “zap” back to the sender. Accompany “boing” with a hands up movement as if pushing the sound back.
- Play freely with three sounds/gestures and have fun. Keeping going until the interactions are smooth.
- You can extend the game by substituting sounds and words as confidence develops. For example, instead of “zip, zap, boing” try “this, that, these”. It’s also good to ask the students to lead on instructions and directions as the game settles down.
- It might take more than one session to get used to it.



## TIPS

- Some students might find making eye contact difficult. That’s ok so long as they look at each other. They might want to focus on the person’s hands, top of head or shoulder. Let them choose.
- Ask students to reflect on why this game might be useful.
- Keep it short and sweet, don’t let it drag on for too long.

## HOW?

- Group students in pairs: A and B.
- Pairs face and look at each other.
- A and B take turns to count 1-2-3. Each person says one number at a time, repeating it until it is a smooth exchange.
- The Joker then demonstrates replacing number 1 with a sound and gesture, for example a wave and a sound.
- The student whose turn it is to say 1 spontaneously invents the first sound/gesture—no discussion!
- The pair play 1-2-3 again, this time both replacing 1 with the sound and gesture but still saying 2 and 3.
- When they are comfortable with sound/gesture 1, they replace the number 2 with another sound and gesture, still saying 3 as a number.
- Finally, the pair replace the number 3. There is now a dialogue of 3 sound/gestures.
- Practise them in different volumes, moods and rhythms. Take turns to perform the sequences to the group.

1-2-3



## TIPS

- This game aims to disrupt the daily habits of communicating. You can decide when it’s useful for the group to work with depending on their needs.
- Make it short, keep trying it, it usually develops over time.
- You can change the sound to a word with a connected gesture or action. This works well with emotions: happy “Hi!!”, sad “Ohhhhh” etc.

# FOLLOW THE SOUND

This is a pair trust game. All students simultaneously lead their blindfolded partner around the room by making a sound. The partner has to listen carefully for their sound and movement in the same direction.

## WHY?

### Politics and Pedagogy

- This game builds trust between students.
- It creates a sense of nurturing as the leader must care for their partner, making sure they feel safe and don't bump into anything.

### Language Focus

- It refocuses the senses on listening carefully.
- You can explore adjectives for feelings after the game. How does it feel for the blindfolded person? How does it feel for the leader? "It made me feel..."



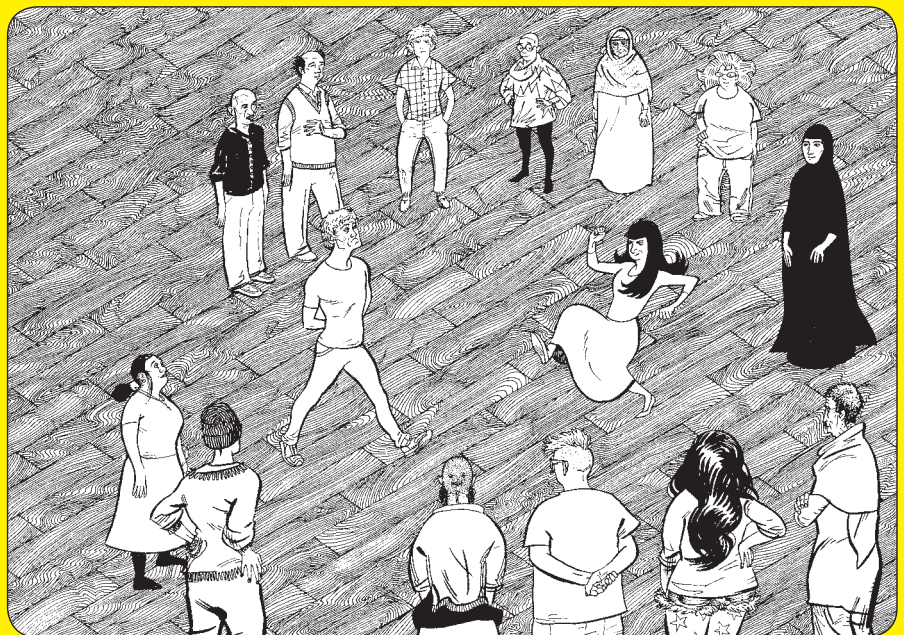
# CROSSING THE CIRCLE

This game warms up the group and develops group interaction and trust. It breaks down the space by removing the furniture and leaving the space clear for people. It begins in a circle and develops as pairs step into the circle, crossing over to take each other's place on the other side. As they enter the middle of the circle they can carry out simple performances.

## WHY?

### Politics and Pedagogy

- This game opens up space and restructures the classroom. It's a good starter.
- It challenges the expectation that activities will be led by a teacher, as students have the freedom to initiate.
- It introduces eye contact as non-verbal communication.
- It gives a gentle introduction to performance by creating a simple performance space at the centre of the circle.
- It allows students to be comfortable watching each other, being watched and working on impulse.
- It can be helpful later, for example, when building characters for Forums (see Forum Theatre card).



### Language Focus

- This game can be used and expanded in many ways. Students can exchange words, greetings and dialogues in the centre of the circle, drawing each other into conversations.

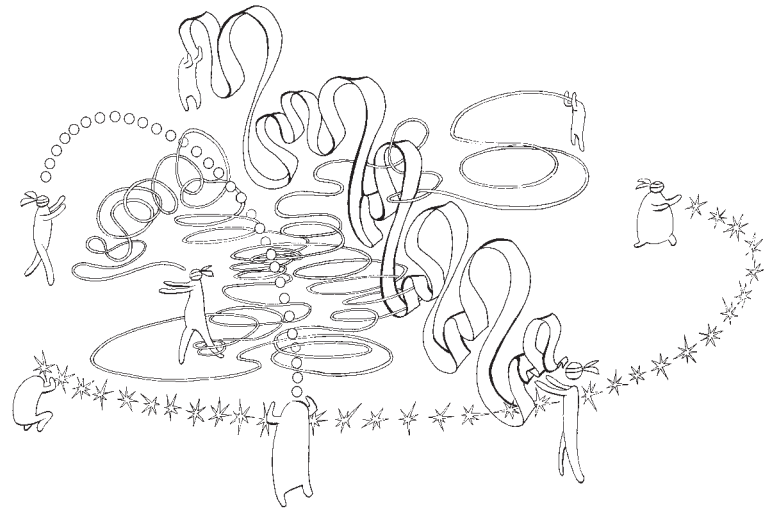
- The circle can also be used as a multilingual space with greetings and dialogues in different languages.
- Communicating with the body can take the pressure off using words.



# FOLLOW THE SOUND

## NOW

- Ask students to get into pairs.
- Partners agree a guide sound to follow and who will lead first.
- One shuts her eyes.
- The leader makes the sound and the partner follows, eyes closed.
- If the leader stops making the sound, the partner who is following the sound stands still until she hears the sound again and moves.
- The leader can change the volume and tone of the sound (louder/softer) and can move away from her partner in silence to make the sound from afar.
- The leader must take care of the follower. Prevent collisions and gauge the nervousness of the follower so that, while challenging them, they are not frightened or stressed. This will be different for different people and leaders need to be encouraged to be aware and careful. This is one of the points of the exercise: trust, empathy and fun.



## TIPS

- Each pair's guide sound needs to be different. It's a good idea to check each pair's sounds before starting to make sure they are distinct.
- An introduction to this can be to use the blindfolded partner's name before inventing a sound.
- Students can feel nervous about being blindfolded. This needs to be a nurturing activity, not risky. Leaders need to be clear about this. They are helpers, not leading their partner into danger.

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# CROSSING THE CIRCLE

## NOW?

- The Joker tells everyone to stand in a large circle.
- The Joker demonstrates looking at, acknowledging, and smiling at someone opposite, for example by waving.
- The Joker demonstrates keeping eye contact and then exchanging places across the circle.
- The Joker asks everyone to change places across the circle:
  - Look across the circle, greet someone.
  - Keeping eye contact, change places with them.
  - Choose other partners, greet, and cross.
  - Choose a new person each time.
- The Joker keeps it going so there are overlapping crossings and greetings, not isolated moves.
- Depending on student's confidence, repeat freely and add words or sentences. This dialogue can be adapted as the Joker decides, or the group suggests, by:
  - Crossing the circle as a character: a child, a policeman, a teacher, or a boss for example.
  - Crossing the circle, meeting the other characters and talking to them.

## TIPS

- Some groups might prefer to start seated but ideally this is done standing.
- This can be repeated regularly as it's good for development of language and interaction.
- Use it to practise words and interactions students are struggling with.



# MIRROR

## WHY?

### Politics and Pedagogy

- This exercise builds trust by introducing bodywork and collaborative physical improvisation.
- Students are actively listening to and observing each other's movement while copying each other.
- It helps the group to connect and collaborate non-verbally.
- The communication works inclusively regardless of language levels.
- It encourages people to feel acknowledged and gives a non-verbal structure to open up to each other.
- It introduces an exploration of power dynamics.

### Language Focus

- The focus is on non-verbal communication and interactive skills such as turn-taking.
- After the game, students can explore adjectives for feelings, based on the shared experience of playing the game.

This is a silent communication and trust exercise, in which students work in pairs, facing each other and mirroring each other's body movements.



# OCCUPY THE SPACE

A good opening activity which engages the body and changes the relationship between the students, the teacher and the space.

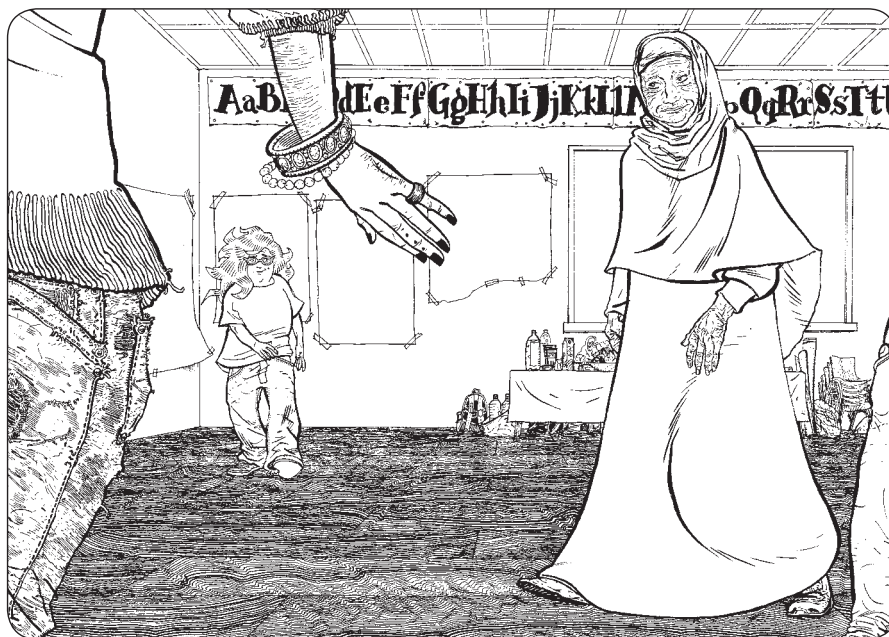
## WHY?

### Politics and Pedagogy

- Students reorganise the classroom space to work in a new way. This introduces the rearrangement of the space and breaks down expectations of what a classroom should look like, which in turn encourages the questioning of habitual actions.
- It helps the students to work both with each other and by themselves.
- Students become more aware of the spaces between each other.
- It changes relationships between the students by engaging the body and people's sense of space.
- This exercise has an open structure which can be easily adapted to a range of contexts and themes.

### Language Focus

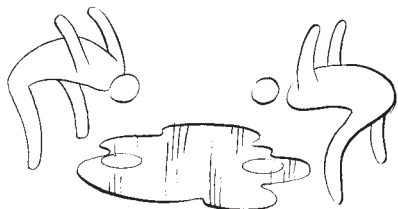
- It is good for word play and feeling words with your body and movement.
- Words can be repeated as you move around the room.



- Students can develop short interactions as they encounter different people while moving around the room.
- Students can use a variety of different languages in the interactions. This is a fun way of

developing a multilingual space and learning bits of each other's languages.

- It is a way of using sounds and words to change moods, thoughts and interactions.



# MIRROR

## HOW

- To explain the exercise, the Joker demonstrates with a partner. Verbal explanations are not necessary. Students work in pairs, facing each other, holding eye contact. Pairs explore their own movements, improvising. Throughout the exercise the Joker adds prompts to change or to help. This exercise is played in silence throughout.

Student A starts:

Student A moves

Student B mirrors

Joker calls "freeze!" to swap turns.

Student B starts:

Student B moves

Student A mirrors

Joker calls "freeze!" to swap turns.

In the last round of the mirror game, there is no leader. Students A and B move together mirroring each other, without knowing who is leading or following in any given moment.

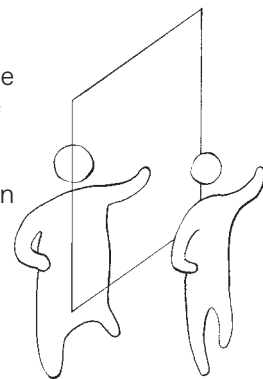
## IMAGE THEATRE

When the Joker calls "freeze!" play with the images created by the students mirroring each other. You can make other images drawn from each other's movements or facial expressions.

(See Image Theatre card)

## TIPS

- Be mindful of the intimate nature of this game—it requires developing trust.
- It develops effectiveness over time through repetition.
- This game requires judgement by the Joker on how far to go: this may change each time.
- Eye contact is useful but where it's difficult for students encourage focus on someone's shoulder.



# OCCUPY THE SPACE



## HOW

- Clear away tables and chairs.
- Invite students to walk around the space.
- Emphasise no talking.
- Tell students to look at the floor as they walk around.
- Point out gaps on the floor and encourage students to fill them evenly.
- Walk in different directions!
- Vary the pace: slower, faster, etc.
- Shout "freeze!" to stop the movement and check spaces. Repeat a couple of times.

### Introduce variations

- Introduce a greeting in English or in another language.
- Introduce vocabulary from current or previous sessions.
- Explore walking in different ways for example, happy, tired, brave, hopeful, rushed etc.
- Explore walking in a different context. Imagine being in a village, city, supermarket, protest, etc.

## TIPS

- Initially, the students will walk in one direction together. This can make them dizzy. Ask them to walk slowly and in different directions.
- Ask them to concentrate on the floor and even spacing between each other until it starts to work.
- Use simple instructions.
- There are infinite possibilities in this game!

# FORUM THEATRE



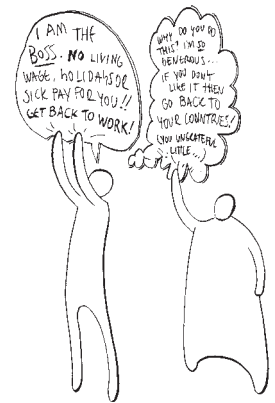
## WHY?

### Politics and Pedagogy

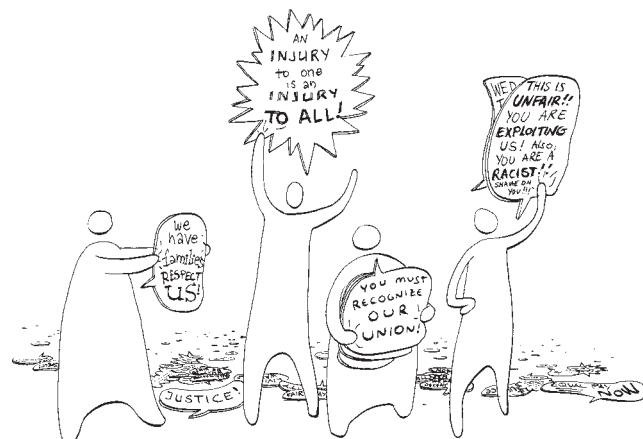
- Forum Theatre gives students the chance to rehearse for change.
- Forum Theatre has the potential to produce tangible change in behaviour, language, and understanding.
- It allows students to imagine other possibilities for society and break habitual ritualised behaviours to find options for change.
- It makes a creative space where it is safe to experiment.
- Forum Theatre centres students' experiences and stories in the learning process, widening our collective understanding of our lives and experiences.

### Language Focus

- Forum Theatre helps students find the language to express themselves in daily situations.
- It helps students develop their own voice in English.
- Embodied action in the moment leads us naturally to search for the best language and communication options.
- It helps develop a range of oral and literacy skills by sharing stories.
- The struggle with language in real life situations binds and strengthens the students.



With Forum Theatre you can perform a situation in your life and explore ways to change it. Other students in the group take turns to try out different actions and solutions.



# FORUM THEATRE



## HOW?

### Step by step guidance

- Work in small groups: 3 or 4.
- Share stories from your lives which show a problem. For example, a situation when people you're dealing with are unhelpful or rude. This could be because they do not understand, are blocking you, or where language is a problem.
- Choose one story to develop and show it to the whole group as a performance.
- The Joker helps to create an interactive play (see Joker card).
- The Joker facilitates setting, time, location, roles and space by asking the group who are the characters, what is the story? When and where is it happening and why?
- Students perform the play to the group.

### Replacements: playing a scene to a group

- First, the group watches the performance all the way through.
- Once the group has watched the performance students can step in one at a time to stop the action and replace the protagonist.
- They show they are the new protagonist by taking a prop for example a scarf.
- The replacement tries out a different way of resolving the problem depicted in the scene, or tries out different ways of using language in the scene.

The antagonist/problem person can also be replaced:

- If someone understands the oppressor better than the actor playing the oppressor.
- If someone wants to explore the pressures on the antagonist, for example, are they a horrible person? Are they being bullied too?

There are many approaches to forming scenes and these will develop and change as the work progresses. For ESOL students, language is often the central exploration and the following working suggestions focus on that process, although many other issues may emerge during the work. As in all learning situations, if problematic information or material emerges, the class teacher needs to manage this ethically.

It is essential to show the stories as action. It may take a couple of sessions to do this. Learning the introductory games and exercises and playing with them is a pathway to group work and Forum Theatre.

## TIPS

If possible avoid stories that are potentially traumatic or too personal. Encourage the group to explore social and language issues that are shareable. If you develop a story further, check that the student who shared the story is comfortable with it. Bear in mind that creative conflict is the basis of Forum and theatre in general. The best stories get their energy from conflict. Have faith in introducing Forum, it works!

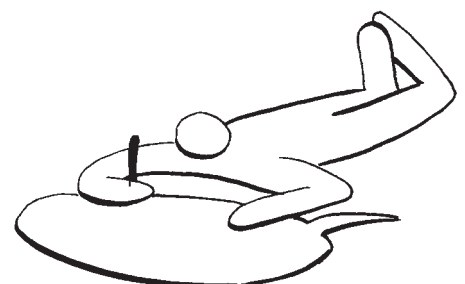
- Language itself and the conflicts with it can be a source for Forum.
- Sometimes stories are not full Forum-able: support all students to share stories but develop those which work best in Forum.
- Students sharing stories and recognising similarities in each of their stories is very powerful.
- Change of ownership means the stories become 'our stories' not 'Samira's story'.
- Sometimes a story isn't clear at first so persevere. Give it time, it might take more than one session.
- Groups may have to rework the story more than once before deciding to use it.
- There are arguments whether and when to replace the antagonist to explore who they are. This can depend on the nature of the oppression and power structures at play.
- You can develop Forum further by doing:

- Lightning Forums
- Hot seating
- Speech bubble

See Glossary card for more information on the above three terms.

For Lightning Forums:

- Ask students to write down what they would like to say before they join the Forum.
- If they can't write, do two minutes of group work to discuss what to say before they join the Forum.

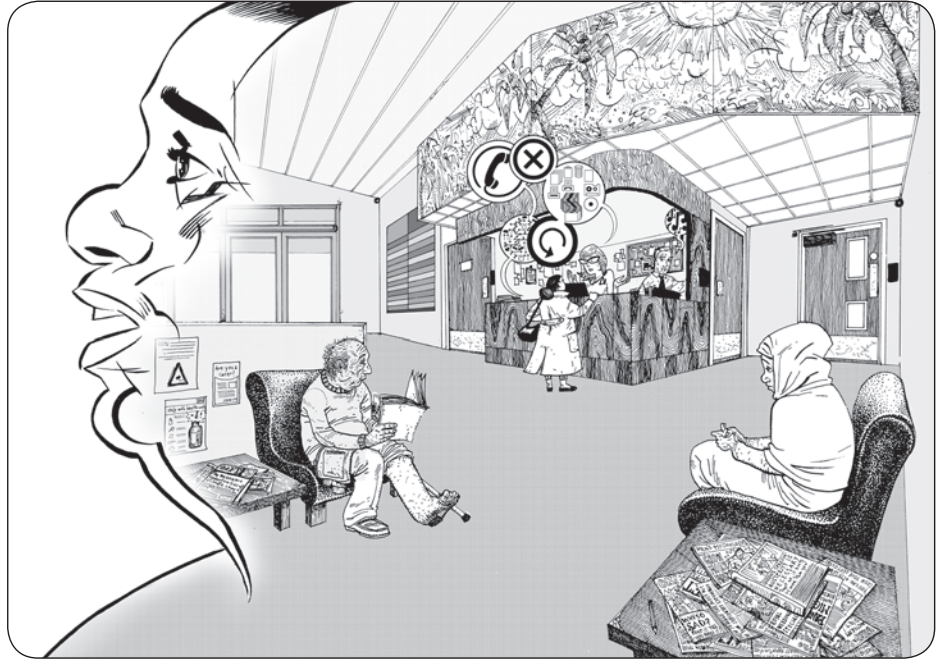


# DEVELOPING LANGUAGE

Theatre of the Oppressed is great for language development at all levels. It also focusses ESOL on the link between language and power in society. Language learning is both incidental and explicit, and the teacher can respond to emerging language issues at any point during the theatre work (if appropriate) or in a subsequent lesson if she doesn't want to disrupt the flow.

## WHY?

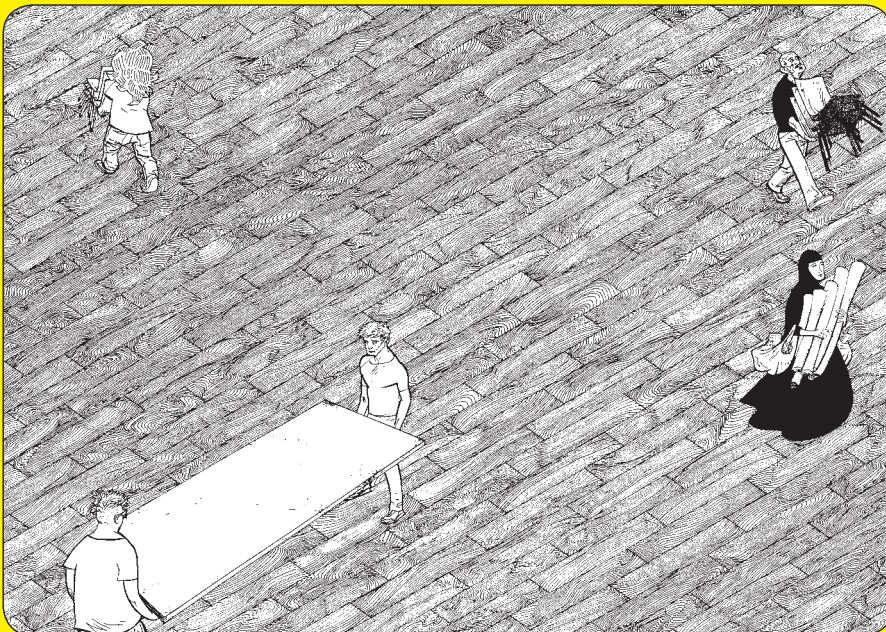
- The language work is authentic and students have more ownership over the content of lessons because they narrate and perform experiences from their own lives.
- There is a focus on language in society. This encourages students to discuss wider issues around language like cultural norms, power, and language rituals, as well as experimenting with breaking these rituals in a safe space.
- It creates space in the classroom to confront injustice in society and for students to rehearse challenging injustice in their own lives.



- The language work connects easily with the social, economic, and political issues that affect students' daily lives.
- It brings a different energy to language work. Students use mind and body in learning.
- It's fun and interesting and students feel confident and able to take risks.

# MAKING AND BREAKING THE SPACE

Making and Breaking the Space is a process where you can work with students to deconstruct the boundaries and power dynamics of the classroom. This process involves an introduction to theatre as well as the physical rearranging of the classroom through the removal of furniture.



## WHY?

- To reposition the power of the teacher.
- To remove the constraints imposed by traditional classroom forms.
- To collectivise the process of learning and democratise the space.

# DEVELOPING LANGUAGE

## HOW?

### 1 Through the games

Theatre games work for language learning on a whole range of levels. Although useful for practising single language 'items' such as pronunciation and vocabulary, their real value is much broader. They allow students to experiment with taking risks, challenging power, playing with concepts of power, developing trust, and listening to themselves.

### 2 Through performance

Students develop confidence speaking in real time, they develop turn-taking and language appropriacy skills. They can replay a scene many times, making changes each time to what they say or how they say it. This gives them freedom to try out new language, make mistakes and also correct their mistakes. Students become more confident and assertive in difficult real life situations where they can experiment with and challenge their own habitual responses to events while developing the skills to challenge others, particularly in situations of power inequality.

### 3 Through follow up work

Performances lead to fascinating student-generated material that you can work with after the performance. For example, students can develop narrative oral skills by retelling the performance as a story. In follow up literacy work, students can develop narrative skills by re-writing storylines of the performances they have done or seen. For beginner literacy classes, performances scribed by the teacher provide accessible reading material.

## TIPS

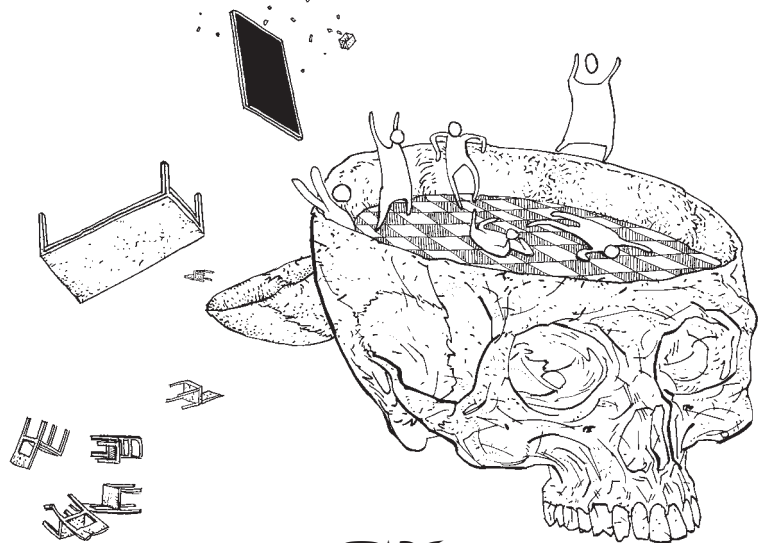
- Always have a blank flipchart on the wall for emerging language.
- Encourage students to ask about language or how to say something at any part of the process. Teach them the language to do this.
- Encourage students to take on roles in different languages to experiment with identity and confidence.
- This is also good for exploring and comparing cultural and language norms.
- Make a video to look at later.

---

# MAKING AND BREAKING THE SPACE

## HOW

- Continuous preparation of the space for learning is important when facilitating theatre work.
- Show the students photographs of others performing, for example, images from Forums in other countries.
- Discuss the project with students.
- Prepare the room—if possible with the students.
- Moving tables and chairs prepares the performance space; this process re-imagines the space.
- Tables and chairs should now be viewed as props.



## ETHICS

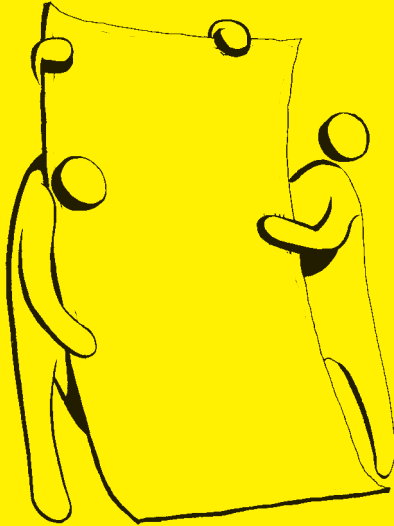
- We all have tables and chairs in mind when we think of teaching and learning. Why, and what do they really represent?
- Disrupting the traditional classroom framework can disrupt the feeling of safety for students.
- Adjustments may need to be made for students with access needs.

## TIPS

- If removing all the chairs is too much of a leap for students, use a circle game as an introduction to different ways of framing the space.
- Consider moving onto Occupy the Space as a means of fully owning the space.
- Invite students to reshape the space—don't direct.

# IMAGE THEATRE

An Image is like a freeze-frame of a specific moment or situation in your life. The Image reveals emotions, thoughts and motivations. It can be humorous or serious, small or very significant. Every story is important.



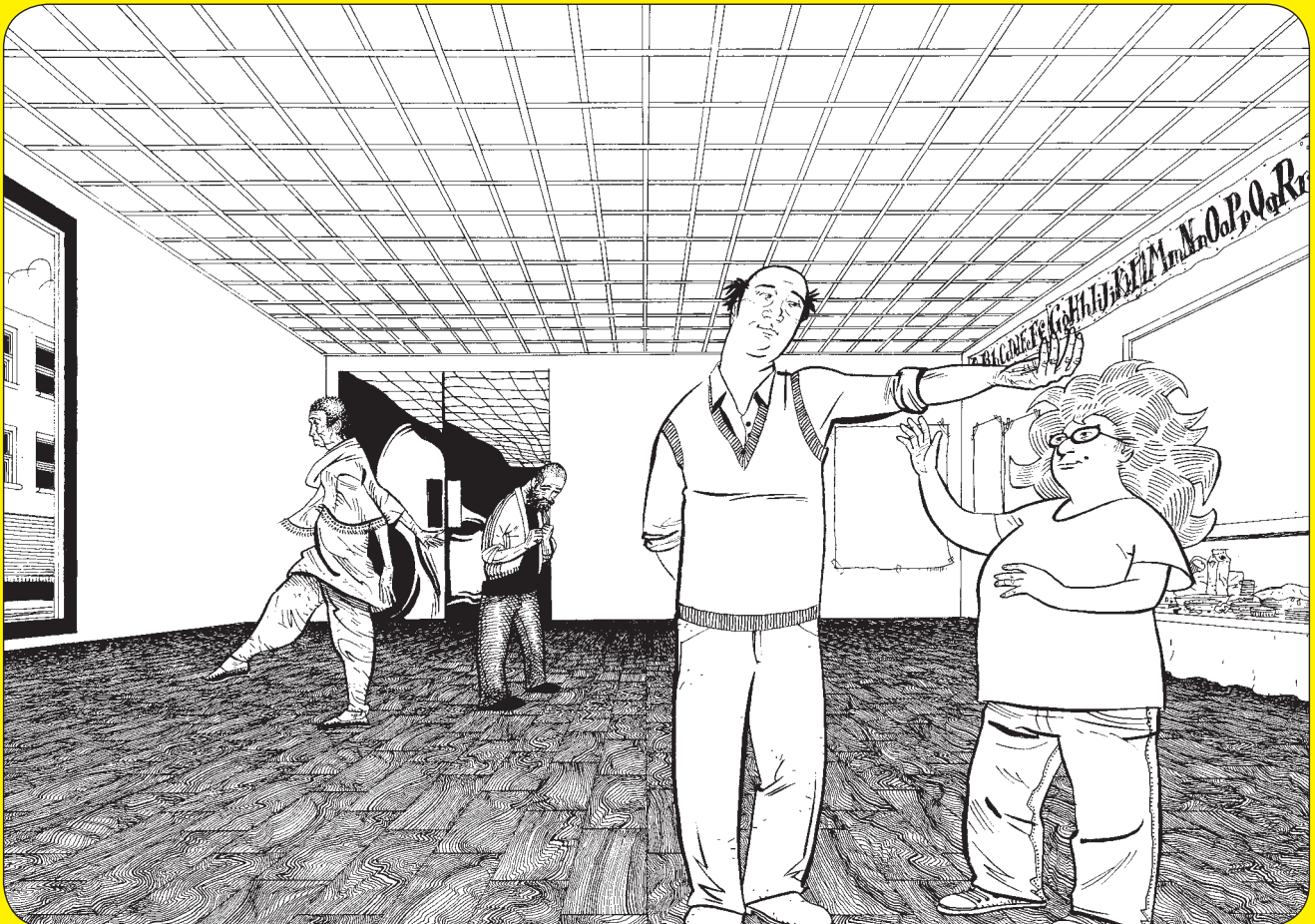
## WHY?

### Politics and Pedagogy

- Image Theatre is a language in its own right. Image Theatre works on two levels. The image-makers communicate their ideas and experiences. In turn, the students use their own experiences and knowledge to understand the Image. Image-makers do not immediately verbalise the idea behind their Image. By doing so shared experiences and communalities are free to emerge.

### Language Focus

- This is a unique way of learning language as it centres the body. Images use silence and embodied expression to communicate. Language and words emerge from the energy of the Image.
- The expression of ideas through the body creates a new shared language. As a result, words become rooted in physical expression and understanding. A shared and collectively owned vocabulary emerges.
- This can be used at any level but can enable beginners to communicate their ideas and feel their experiences are valued even if they struggle to articulate them in their new language.





# IMAGE THEATRE

## HOW?

The Joker shows how to make a freeze-frame by sharing a situation of her own.

- Work in small groups.
- Without talking or explaining each student takes a turn to model the group into a freeze-frame by either physically moving their bodies or by showing them where to stand and which expressions or movements to make.
- Here are some examples of situations or contexts that students could share through image making:

→ Being in a specific place: at a bus stop, doctor's surgery, work, when helping a friend, standing up for yourself.

→ Speaking, explaining and/or sharing something in English but couldn't.

→ Wanting to change something but couldn't.

- Show each freeze-frame to the whole group.
- Encourage the rest of the group to talk about the Image and welcome different ways of seeing the Image.
- Discuss what is happening in the Images and ask questions:

→ What is the protagonist of the story trying to say?

→ What are others trying to say?

→ How many ways can they say it?

→ What can the protagonist do next?

→ What new ideas and words can the protagonist find?

→ What is happening here?

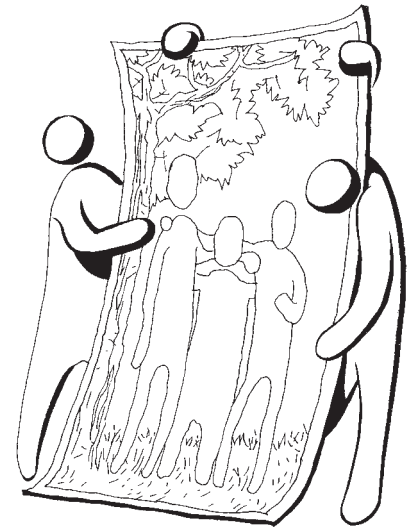
→ Is this a familiar situation?

→ What else does it look like?

→ Do you recognise this?

→ How does this person feel?

- Next step: in groups tell each other the stories of your experiences and create performances (see Forum Theatre card).



## TIPS

- Use props and furniture to create a realistic environment.
- Use the words who, what, why, where and when (see Forum Theatre card) to help structure scenes.
- When the group looks at the Images, they may see different things. The different responses create opportunities for sharing language, discovering related memories and experiences, and creating empathy.

## ETHICS

- Be careful which themes you introduce as working through the body may trigger profound memories.
- Stick to general issues, for example, language in society, arguments at work, or going to the doctor's.
- Keep an eye on the material students share. It might be too personal, if so, discuss it with them.

# BOAL, FREIRE AND WE

## (PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED, THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED ACT ESOL)

### What?

#### Pedagogy of the Oppressed

'Reading the word and learning how to write the word so one can later read it are preceded with learning how to write the world, that is, having the experience of changing the world and touching the world.'

(Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire and Macedo, 2003, p.356)

In Pedagogy of the Oppressed Paulo Freire calls for a critical- or problem-based education, which enables students to critically engage with the world around them. In contrast to traditional hierarchical power structures between teacher and students, power dynamics are directly challenged and the teacher has as much to learn from the students about their worlds and experiences, as the students can learn from a curriculum that engages with their interests and needs. It envisions learning as a transformative, emancipatory process through which the students and teachers explore how to impact the world around them to make it a fairer and socially just place. Students engage with the learning by developing a sense of wanting to take part in shaping the world around them.

#### Theatre of the Oppressed

'Theatre of the Oppressed has two fundamental linked principles: it aims a) to help the spect-actor transform himself into a protagonist of the dramatic action and rehearse alternatives for his situation, so that he may then be able b) to extrapolate into his real life the actions he has rehearsed in the practice of theatre.'

(Theatre of the Oppressed, Boal, 1995, p.40)

Theatre of the Oppressed applies Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed through theatre practice. It is a participatory theatre form, created and developed by Augusto Boal, and described by him as a 'rehearsal for change'. It originates from 1960s Brazil, a time when the country was ruled by military dictatorship. Theatre of the Oppressed aims to use the collective and creative moment of a theatre performance to organise and explore strategies to fight oppression.

As a method it encompasses a range of games, exercises and theatre forms exploring power and powerlessness, and challenging oppression/injustice through the creative medium. Its arsenal of games and exercises facilitate the participants, or as Boal calls them 'spect-actors', to become conscious of themselves, their physicality, and each other, framed by collective analysis and reflection.

Oppression is a word with many meanings to many different people. Both Freire and Boal defined oppression as the situation in which a person is stopped from doing something they want to do. Oppression can be a situation where one person or a group is dominated by the monologue of another and has no chance to reply. We believe the term oppressed should not refer to the condition of being defeated or being victims, but of a struggle against oppression.

### Why?

#### Politics and Pedagogy

'It is a way of knowing that is often expressed through the body, what it knows, what has been deeply inscribed on it through experience. This complexity of experience can rarely be voiced and named from a distance. It is a privileged location, even as it is not the only or even always the most important location from which one can know.'

(Teaching to Transgress, bell hooks, 1994, p.91)

Pedagogy of the Oppressed challenges a traditional understanding of what knowledge is or can be. Opposed to traditional schooling where knowledge is seen as a fixed, external set of facts which are not to be questioned, here the learning happens collaboratively between teacher and students. They are with each other, rather than in the conventional teacher-pupil relationship. Crucially the learning also engages with the socio-historic context it is set in. Both in Theatre of the Oppressed and in Pedagogy of the Oppressed, the students' experiences and stories form the core of the work and are crucial in the production of knowledge.

In Theatre of the Oppressed, the creative or aesthetic space of the theatre is a designated space within which to actively engage with each other's diverse understandings and experiences, working with memory and imagination. For Boal, the theatre practice facilitates a creative learning environment, which opens different ways to reflect and share ideas, embedded in practice. He says this creative (aesthetic) space entails:

'...properties which stimulate knowledge and discovery, cognitions and recognition: properties which stimulate the process of learning by experience.'

(Theatre of the Oppressed, Boal, 1995, p.20)

# BOAL, FREIRE AND WE

(PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED,  
THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED ACT ESOL)



## Language

By applying Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed in the ESOL context, language learning becomes a means to participate in shaping society, culture, and place. Learning a language means participating in society, it means being able to engage with it and take part in shaping it and confronting stereotypes or injustices produced by it. The content of the learning is shaped by the needs of the students, and students can work on situations where they have wanted to speak but couldn't find the words. Students can help each other explore how to engage with such situations and decide what language they need in order to learn to navigate these encounters successfully. By sharing their stories and exploring the new language through theatre, the learning is creative and experiential, and happens through the body.

The content of the lessons/work comes from the students, from their own stories, histories, interventions and experiences. It helps bring groups together to explore their experiences, using the language they are learning to share and communicate. This kind of practice supports ESOL students to explore the use of English to discuss and engage both with life's daily pleasures and practices, and with its difficulties and obstacles, in order to challenge oppression and injustice. The arsenal of games and exercises encourages the students to engage with language and the issues they face with friends, allies and obstructers.

## How?

Applying Theatre and Pedagogy of the Oppressed in the ESOL classroom is a process in which the teacher becomes the facilitator or Joker (see Joker card), and the students become participants in shaping the space of learning. The classroom structure is changed to frame the new way of learning. Tables are cleared away and chairs moved into a circle setting, which enables everyone to see each other and which allows room for physical activities to take place in the centre space (see Making and Breaking the Space card). This shifts the power dynamics in the classroom, changing the relationship between students and teacher, changing the meaning of learning as such. Relationships between students can be transformed by the collaborative nature of the learning. The theatre games and exercises play an important role in students' and teachers' relationship to language. Introducing the body and the playful nature of the games helps students find a different way to connect to language (see Games and Image cards), and Forum Theatre helps the students to learn to speak, read, and write the word to 'touch the world and change it' (See Forum Theatre card).



# JOKER



## WHY?

### Politics and Pedagogy

- In becoming the Joker, the ESOL teacher transforms the conventions of the classroom (see Making and Breaking the Space card). In so doing the teacher and students imagine and embody a different set of relationships, both in and outside the classroom. This allows the group to question real or perceived power dynamics in relationships, for example, student/teacher, doctor/patient, ESOL student/expert speaker, or the dynamics within the group itself.

Both the Joker and the students, collectively, create ground rules which shape a shared learning space in which both the Joker and the students are learners. The Joker facilitates the structure of the session through the games and exercises. This structure creates a good space for learning. It provides a clear framework within which there is free expression and creativity. The instructions for the games and exercises are shared with the students in order to democratise the learning process.

It is the Joker's role to explore with the students the issues and ideas they choose to work with. It is the Joker's responsibility to make sure that all issues are contained within a supportive ethical frame (see Ethics and Ground Rules card).

The facilitator is called the Joker, the person who holds the overall structure of Theatre of the Oppressed. The term Joker comes from Boal's use of the Portuguese word 'curinga' meaning 'wildcard'.

### Language Focus

- The Joker understands that learning language means to explore the power relations within language.
- Learning a language means to participate in changing the world around you.
- The 'wildcard' effect means learning becomes playful, exciting, powerful, and shared.

# JOKER



## TIPS

All teaching involves 'Joker-like' elements already.

- It is not something completely new or outside the experience of a teacher.
- Becoming a Joker is a process and takes time to develop.
- Rely on the instructions. Keeping the framework will allow for more freedom for the students.
- Demonstrate the instructions with as little initial explanation as possible. This is clearer for everyone, teachers and students!
- It's fine to read instructions from the scripts, especially when starting out. This will give you time to hold the structure, pace the work, and watch the group.
- Stick enlarged instructions on the wall for everyone to see and follow. This democratises the process and takes the focus away from the Joker as sole leader.
- Keep track of the language the students are using and record it on flip charts around the room.
- You can interrupt the theatre process to work on language development, if appropriate, and doesn't break the flow of the work.

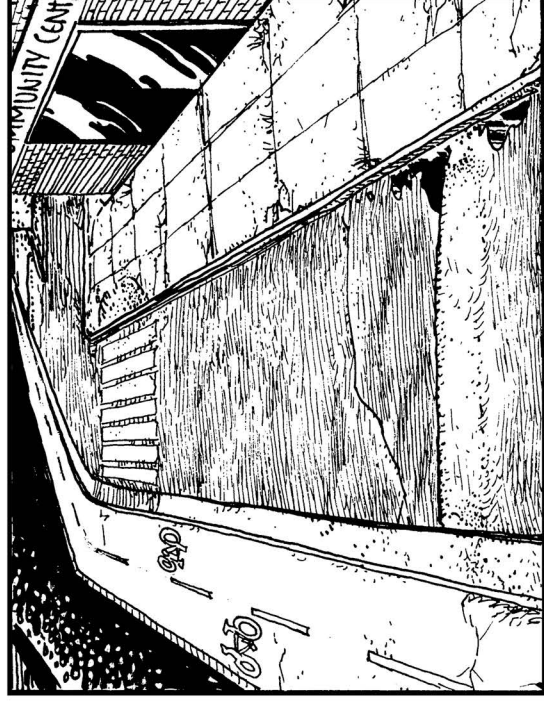
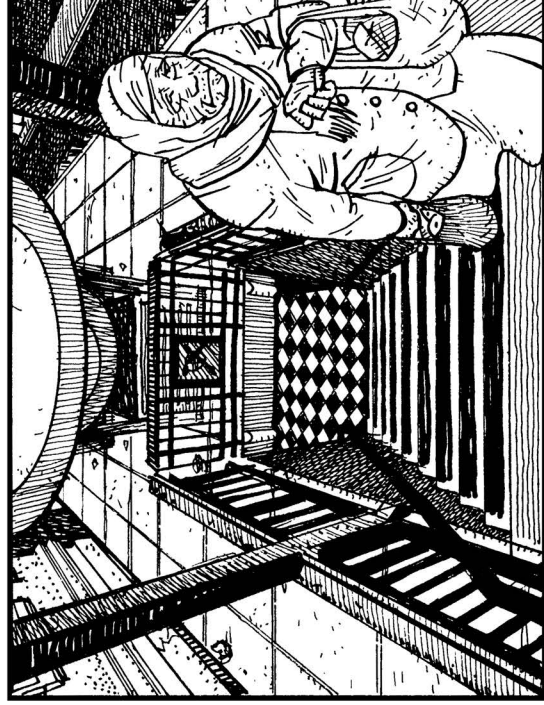
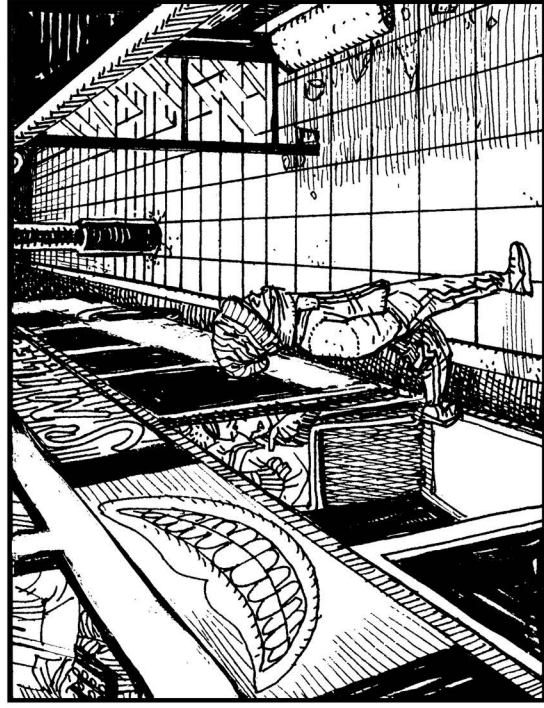
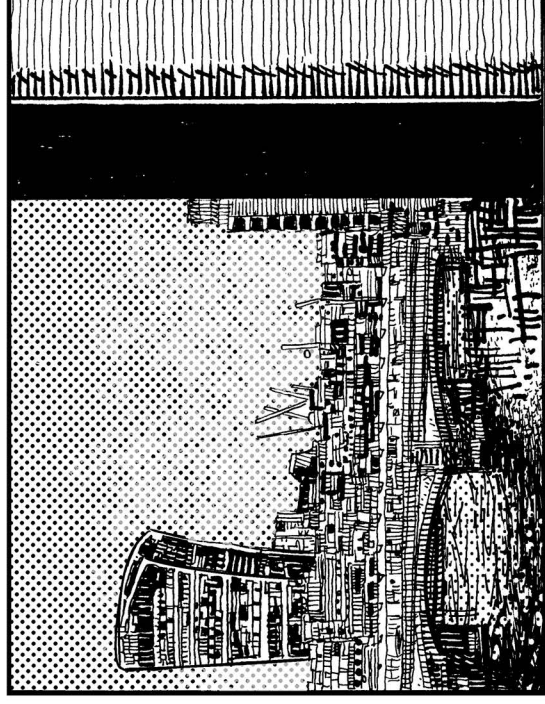
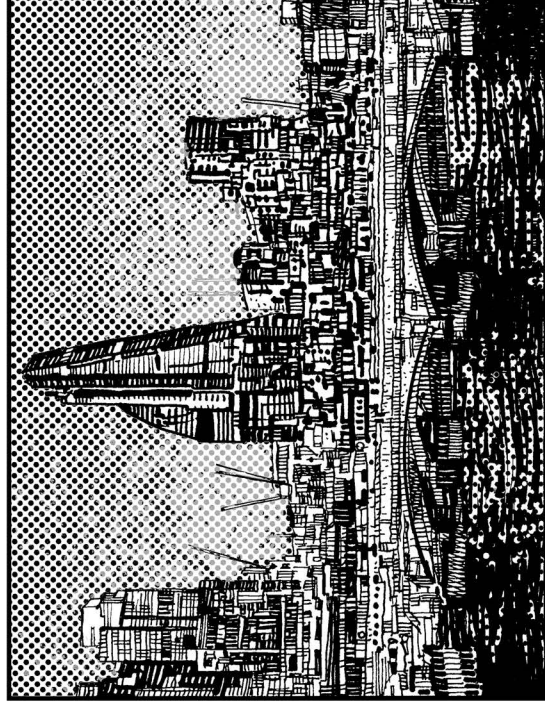
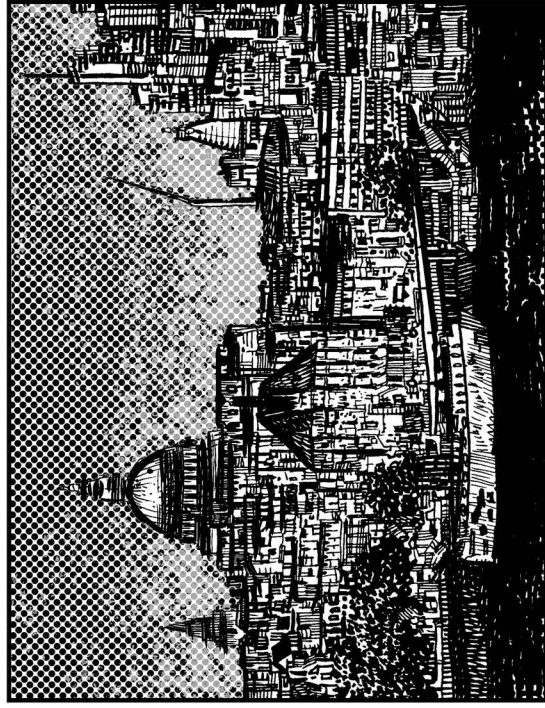
## HOW?

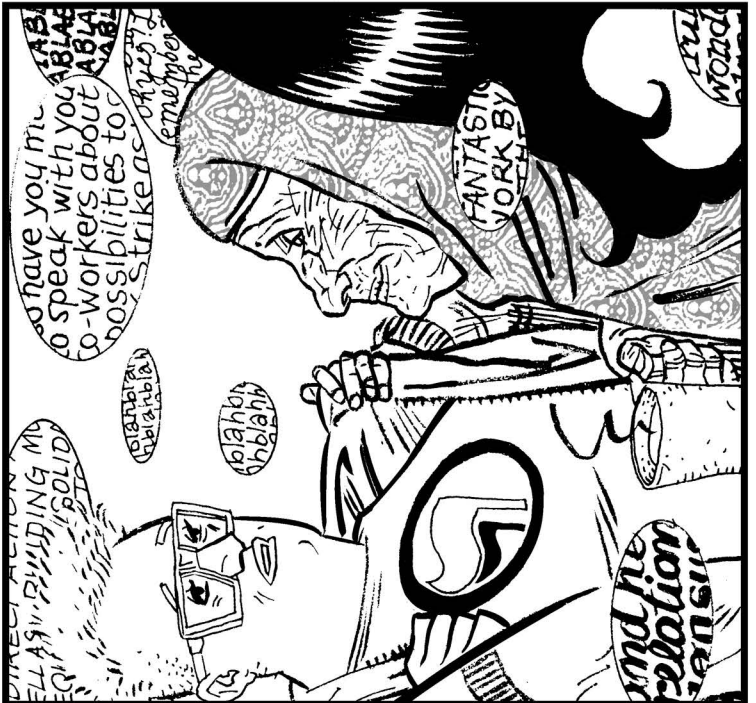
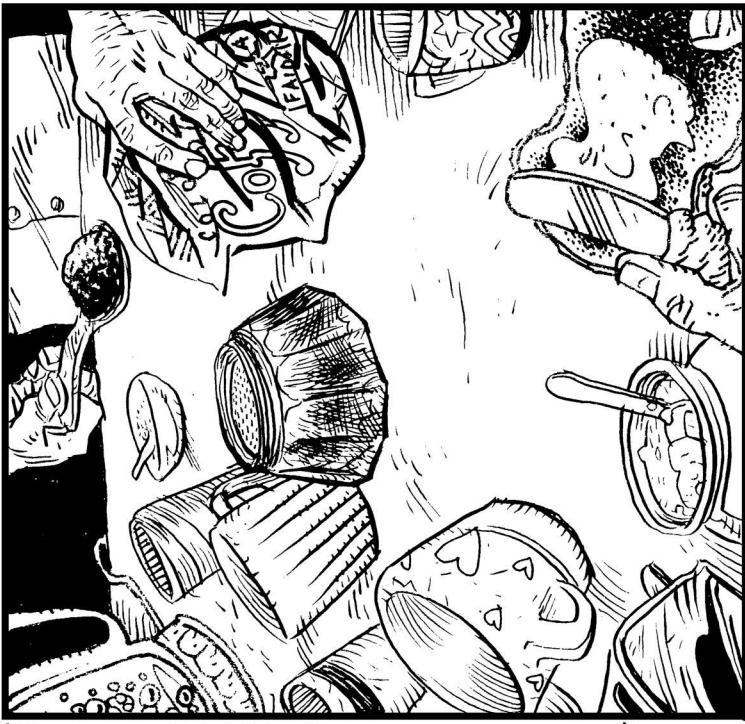
- Create some ground rules before starting: sharing, listening, quiet when asked, agree to try the games, ask questions, space for discussion, free exchange of opinions and ideas, the right to stand back.
- If a student doesn't want to take part or wants to drop out or pull back, support them and ask them to help you observe and to feed back on what they see. This will support them to re-join the group when ready.
- Don't over explain. Demonstrate what you want people to do using as few words as possible. Call "freeze!" or another short word to stop the action. It's good to have a simple one-syllable instruction.
- Insist on no talking during the games. This focuses the action.
- After the game, ask people to share their feelings and reflections in pairs/threes and with the whole group if needed.

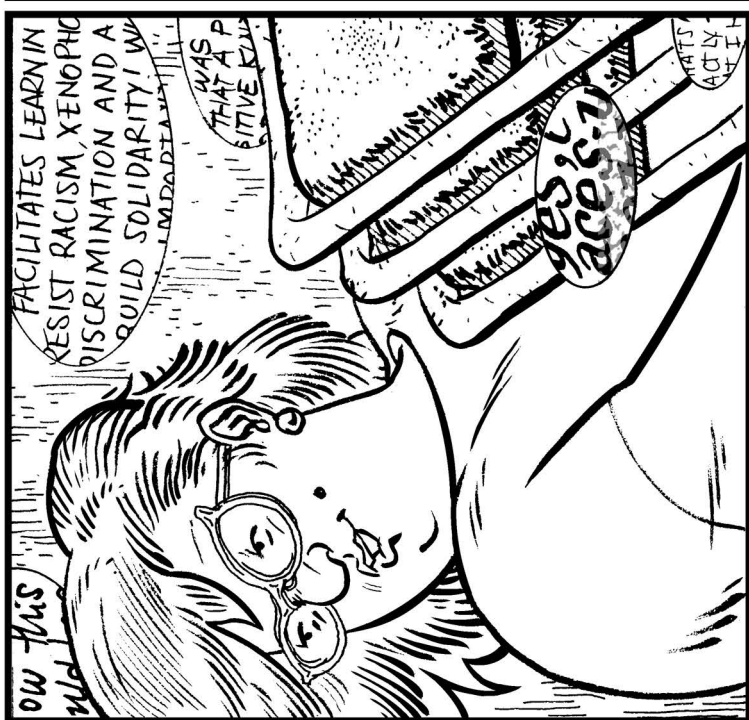
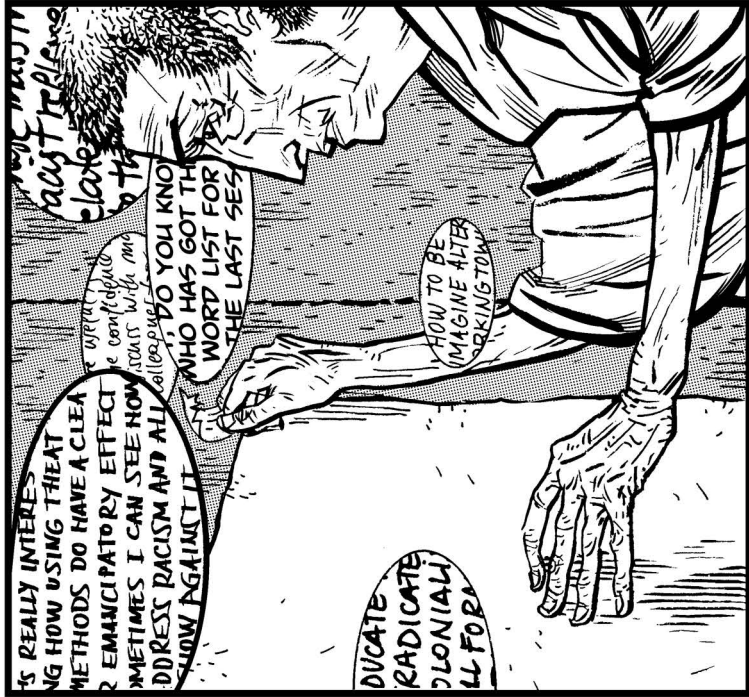


# Speaking Without Words

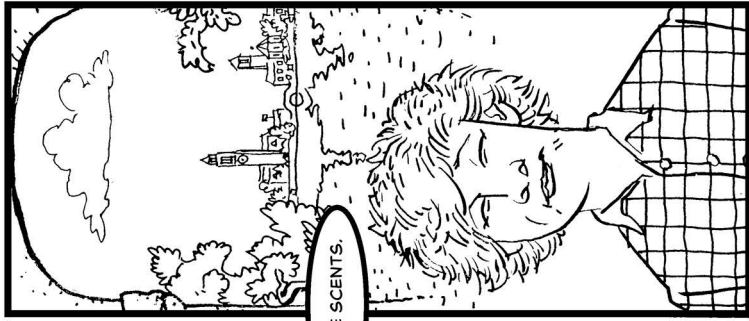
*A Journey Through ACT ESOL*



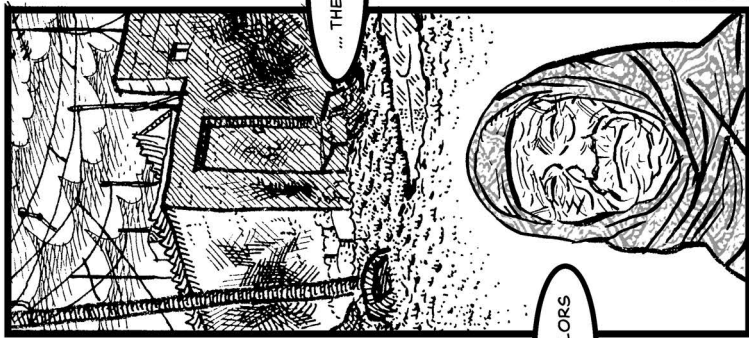








... THE SCENTS.



... THE COLORS



... THE SOUNDS



FEEL THE BREEZE

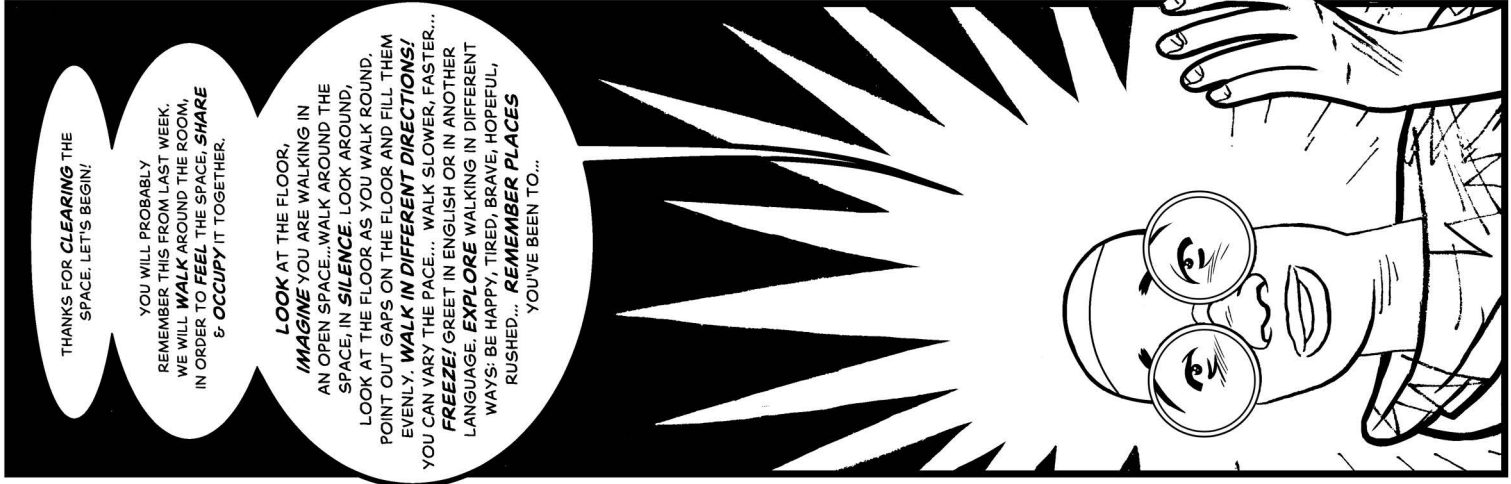


AND CAN YOU GET THERE?  
OR ARE THERE BARRIERS?

WHERE WOULD YOU GO?

DIFFERENT SPACES.

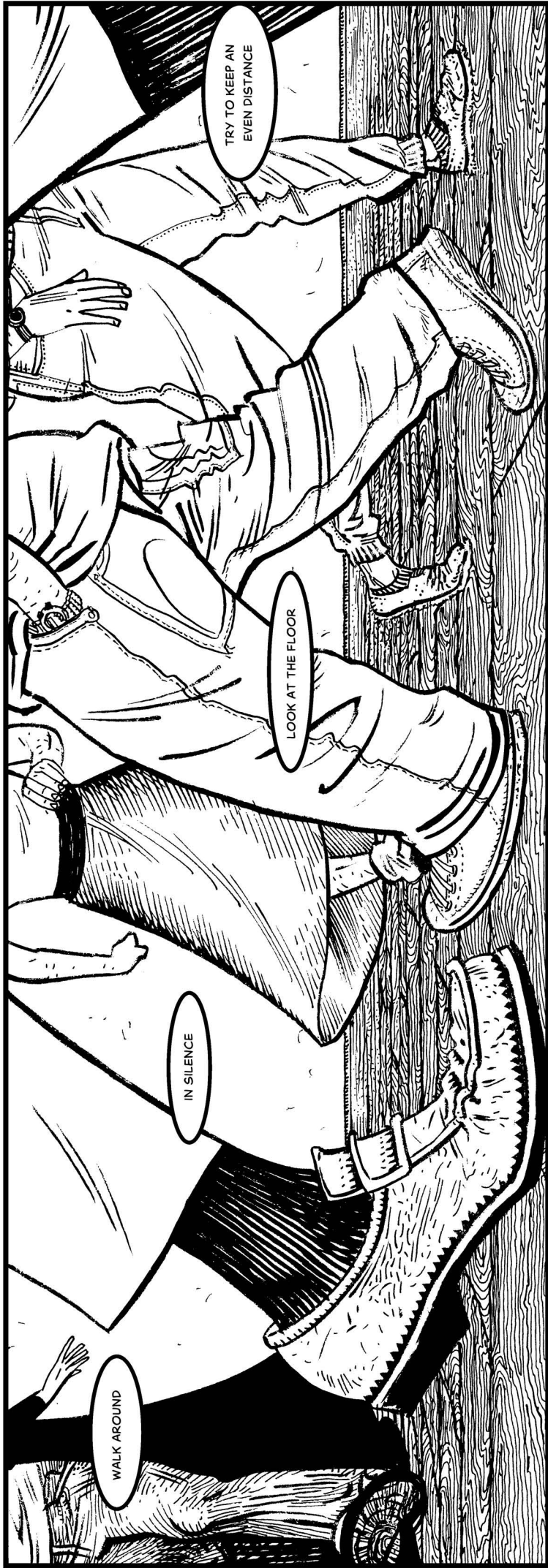
OR IMAGINE OTHER PLACES.



THANKS FOR **CLEARING** THE SPACE. LET'S BEGIN!

YOU WILL PROBABLY REMEMBER THIS FROM LAST WEEK. WE WILL **WALK** AROUND THE ROOM. IN ORDER TO **FEEL** THE SPACE, **SHARE & OCCUPY** IT TOGETHER.

**LOOK** AT THE FLOOR, **IMAGINE** YOU ARE WALKING IN AN OPEN SPACE... **WALK** AROUND THE SPACE; IN **SILENCE**. **LOOK** AROUND, **LOOK** AT THE FLOOR AS YOU WALK ROUND. **POINT** OUT GAPS ON THE FLOOR AND **FILL** THEM **EVENLY**. **WALK** IN **DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS!** YOU CAN VARY THE PACE... **WALK SLOWER, FASTER... FREEZE!** **GREET** IN ENGLISH OR IN ANOTHER LANGUAGE. **EXPLORE** WALKING IN DIFFERENT **WAYS**: BE HAPPY, TIRED, BRAVE, HOPEFUL, RUSHED... **REMEMBER PLACES** YOU'VE BEEN TO...

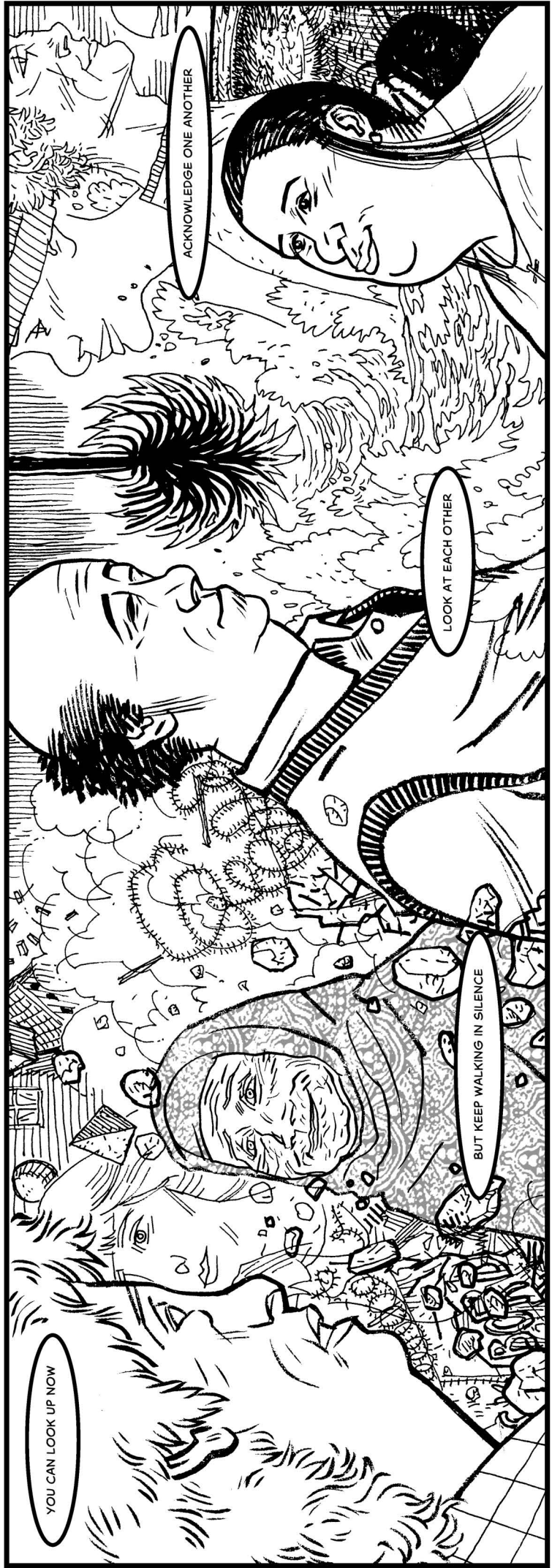


WALK AROUND

IN SILENCE

LOOK AT THE FLOOR

TRY TO KEEP AN EVEN DISTANCE

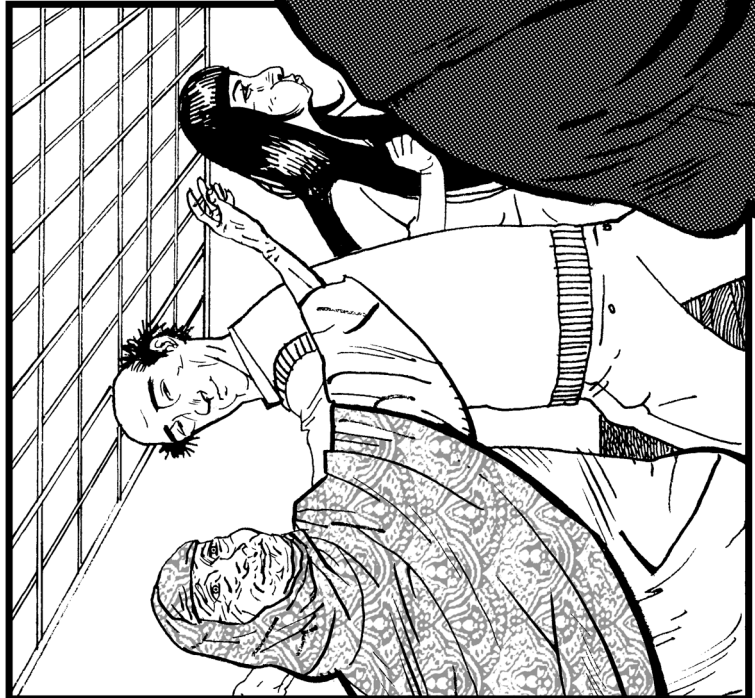
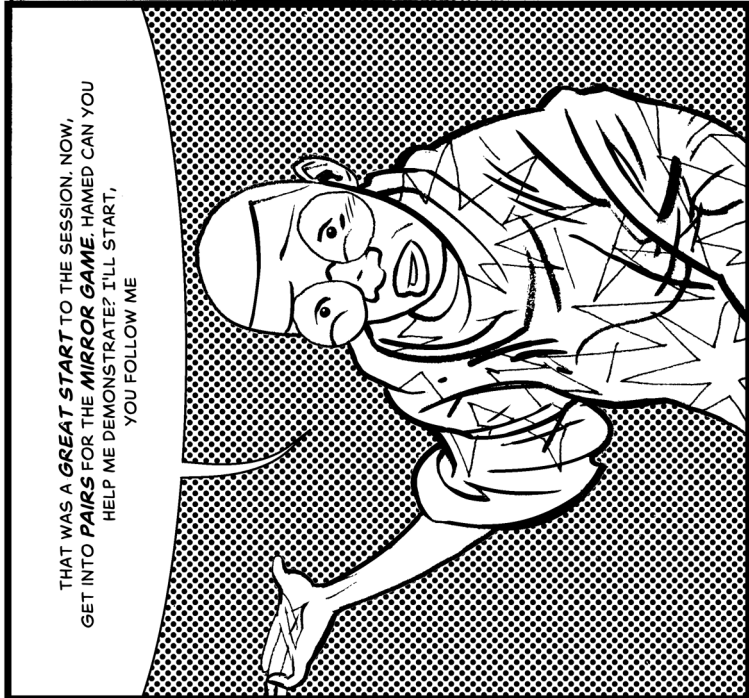
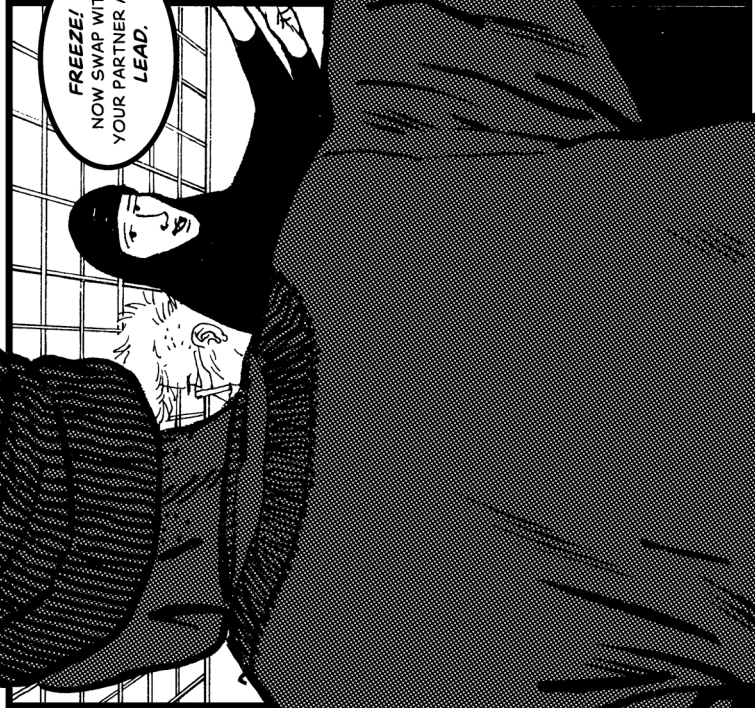
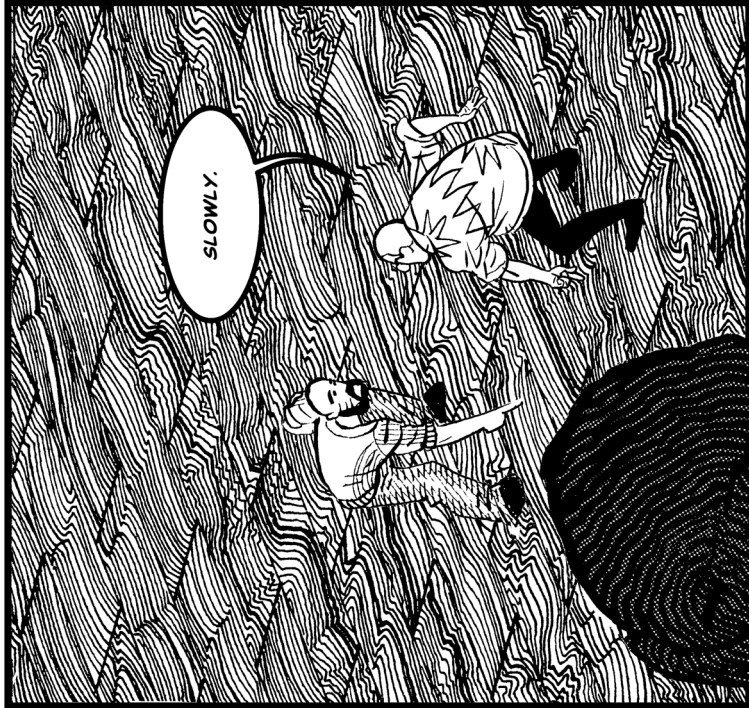
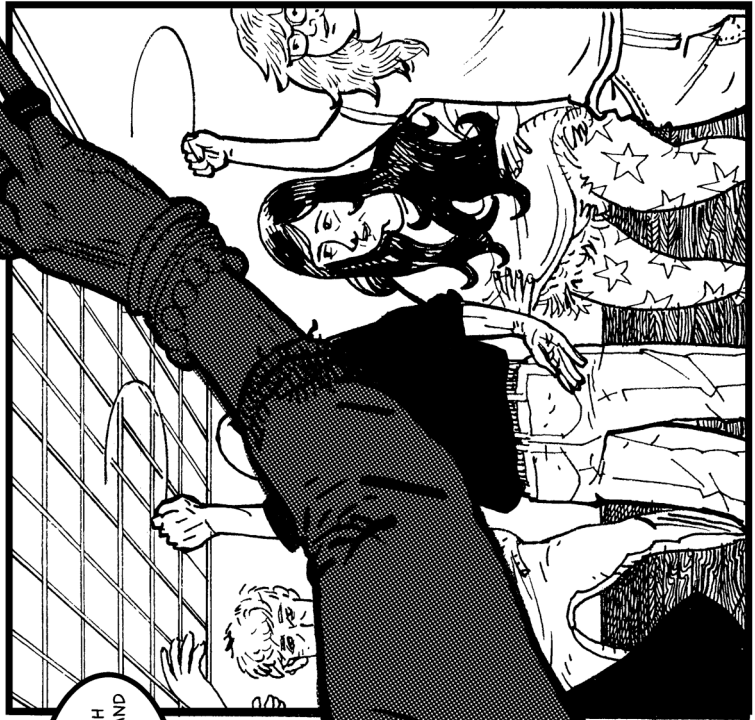
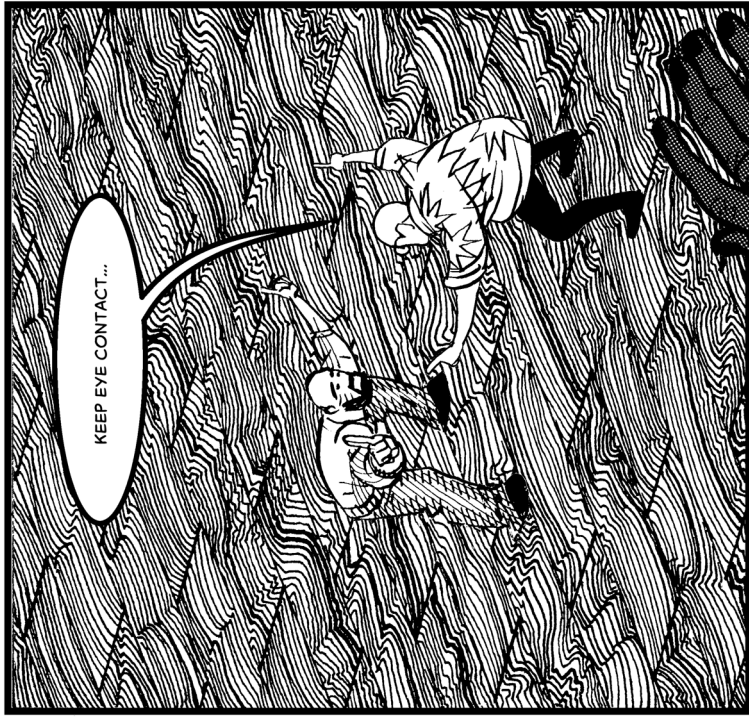


YOU CAN LOOK UP NOW

BUT KEEP WALKING IN SILENCE

LOOK AT EACH OTHER

ACKNOWLEDGE ONE ANOTHER





SOMETIMES IT WAS **HARD** TO FOLLOW.

**FOLLOWING** SOMEBODY ELSE'S MOVES WHILE KEEPING **EYE CONTACT...** IT FELT STRANGE.

BUT IN A GOOD WAY!

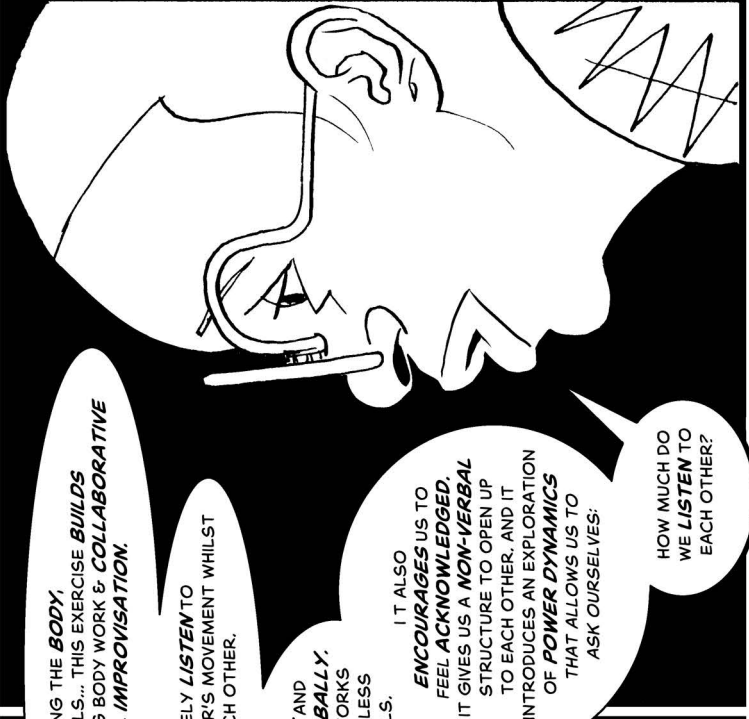
**SUPER-SILLY!**

IT'S LIKE **SPEAKING WITHOUT WORDS.**

HMM... IT FELT FUNNY. WHEN I LOOKED AT OTHERS, I REALIZED THAT THE GAME IS LIKE A VERY SILENT **CONVERSATION...**

GEORGE, YOU SEEMED TO BE HAVING FUN...

SO, **WHAT** DID THAT FEEL LIKE? **HOW** DID YOU FEEL?



USING THE **BODY**, BREAKING RITUALS... THIS EXERCISE **BUILDS TRUST** BY INTRODUCING BODY WORK & **COLLABORATIVE PHYSICAL IMPROVISATION.**

YOU NEED TO ACTIVELY **LISTEN** TO AND **OBSERVE** EACH OTHER'S MOVEMENT WHILST **COPYING** EACH OTHER.

IT HELPS THE GROUP TO **CONNECT** AND **COLLABORATE NON-VERBALLY**. THE COMMUNICATION WORKS **INCLUSIVELY** REGARDLESS OF LANGUAGE LEVELS.

IT ALSO **ENCOURAGES** US TO **FEEL ACKNOWLEDGED**. IT GIVES US A **NON-VERBAL** STRUCTURE TO OPEN UP TO EACH OTHER, AND IT INTRODUCES AN EXPLORATION OF **POWER DYNAMICS** THAT ALLOWS US TO **ASK OURSELVES:**

HOW MUCH DO WE **LISTEN** TO EACH OTHER?



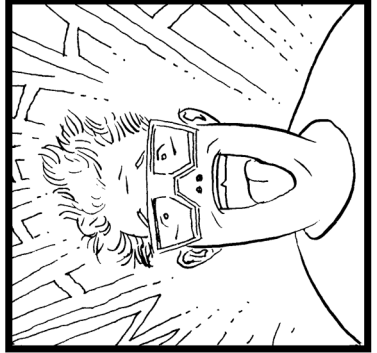
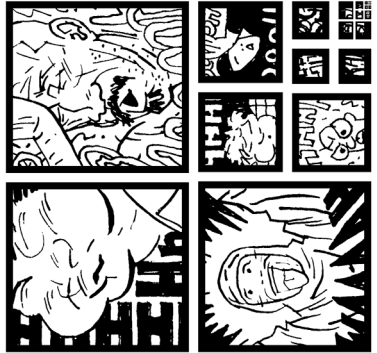
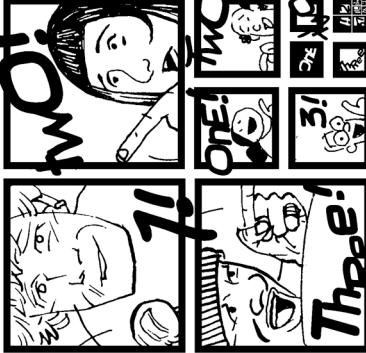
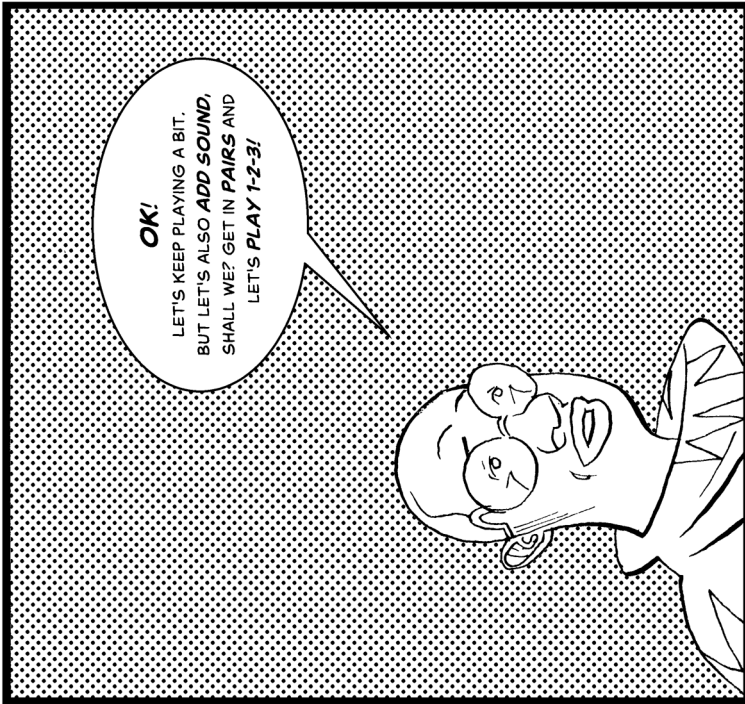
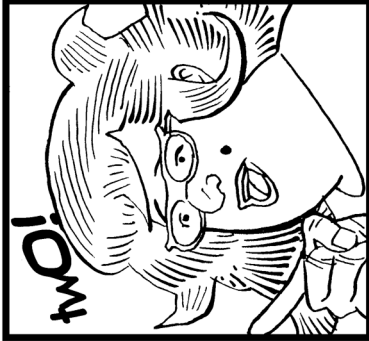
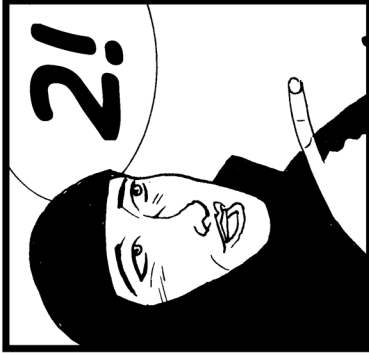
EVEN AFTER THE SWAP, THERE WAS A MOMENT WHEN IT WAS **DIFFICULT** TO KNOW **WHO WAS GUIDING** THE EXERCISE AND WHO WAS **FOLLOWING...**

I FELT THAT I **COULD TRUST** YOU.

I FELT **CLOSER** WITH EYE CONTACT.

**INTENSE!**

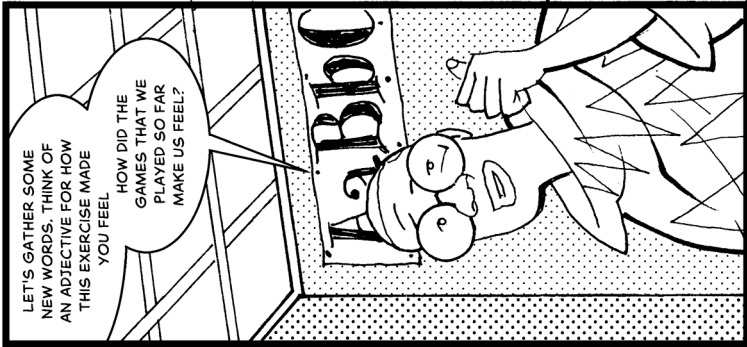




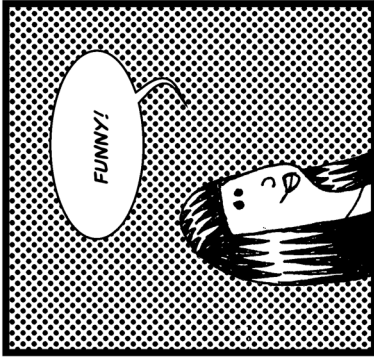
LET'S GATHER SOME NEW WORDS. THINK OF AN ADJECTIVE FOR HOW THIS EXERCISE MADE YOU FEEL.

HOW DID THE GAMES THAT WE PLAYED SO FAR MAKE US FEEL?

**Abbc**



FUNNY!



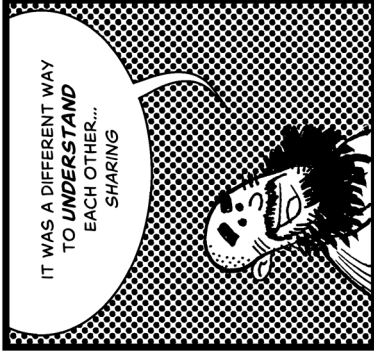
BRAIN TANGLING!



FRUSTRATING...



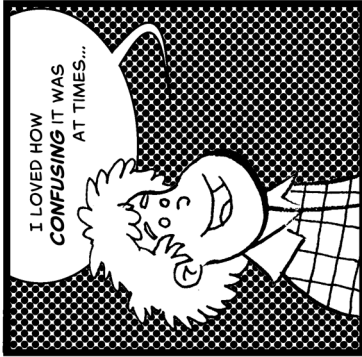
IT WAS A DIFFERENT WAY TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER... SHARING



LET'S PUT THESE WORDS DOWN!



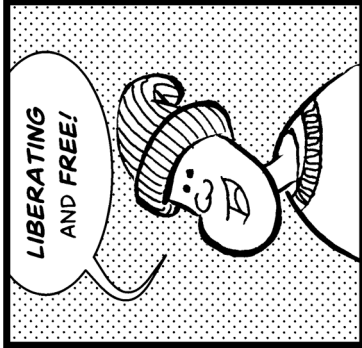
I LOVED HOW CONFUSING IT WAS AT TIMES...



HOW DO YOU SAY LIBRE..?



LIBERATING AND FREE!



I FELT LIKE AN ACTOR.



LET'S MOVE ON AND SHOW THESE WORDS WITH THE BODY.

MAKE A SCULPTURE TO SHOW HOW IT FEELS.

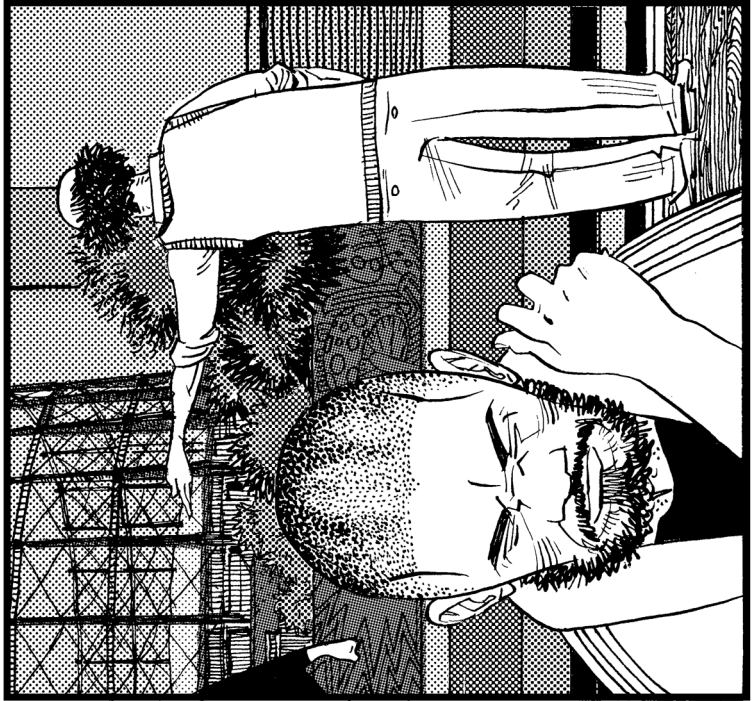


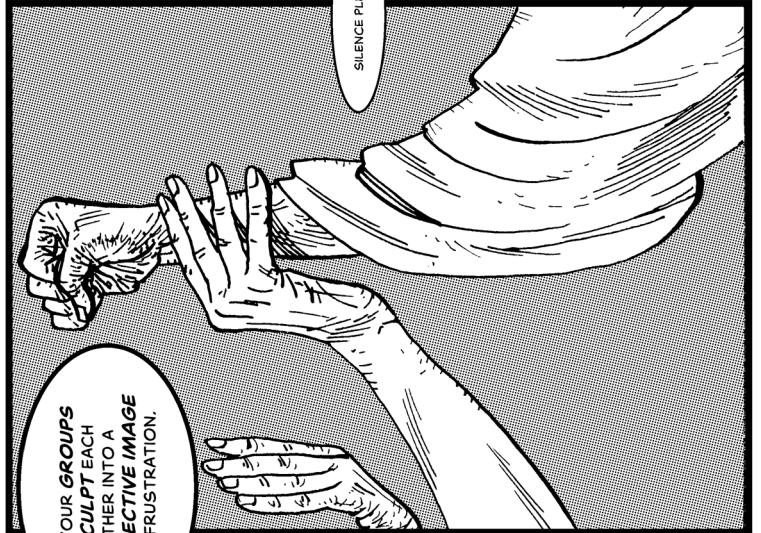
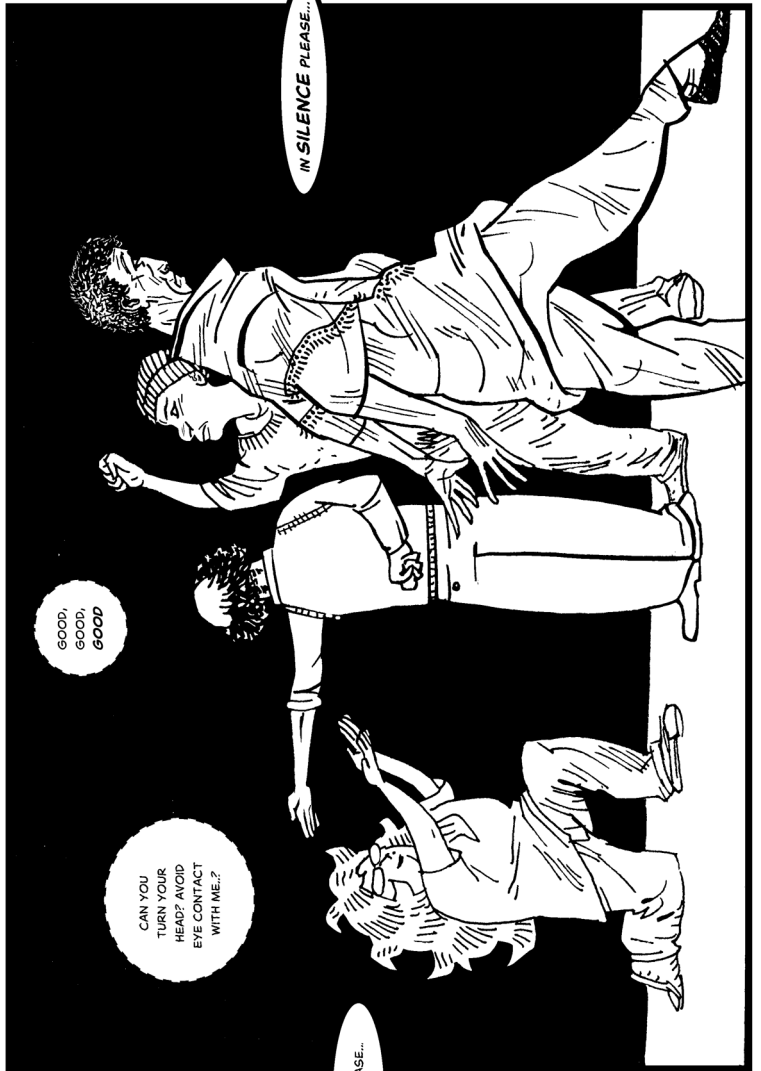
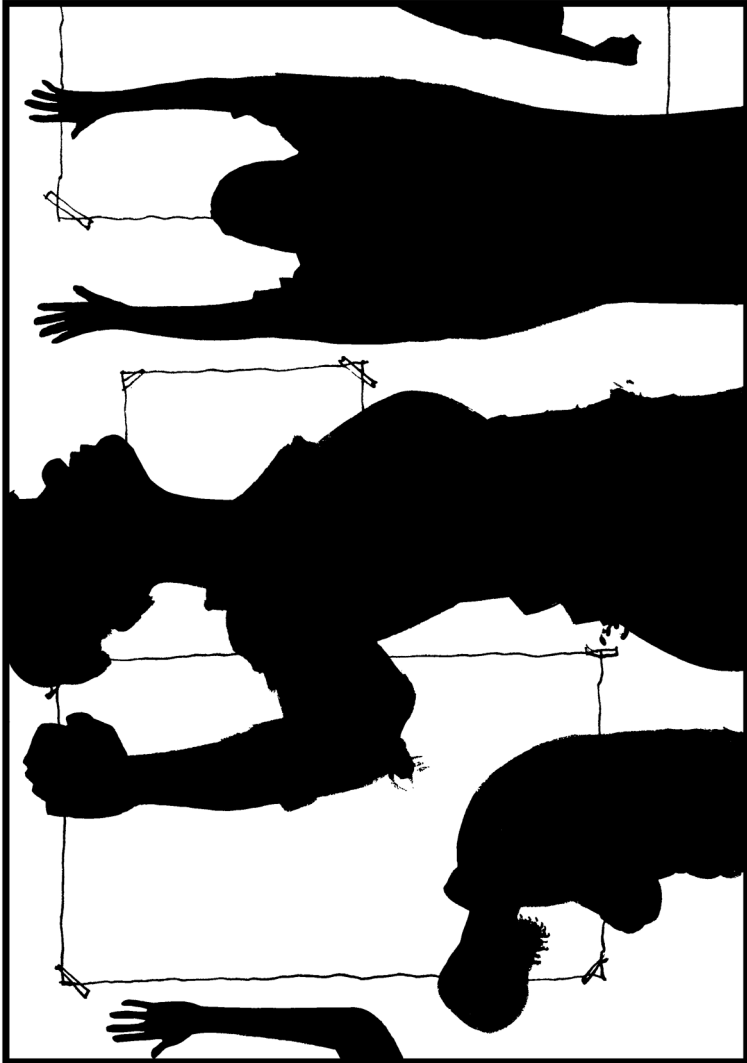
- 1 FUNNY
- 2 BRAIN TANGLING
- 3 FRUSTRATING
- 4 SHARING AND MOVING
- 5 CONFUSING
- 6 LIBERATING
- 7 FREE!
- 8 LIBRE
- 9 LIKE ACTING

BUILD SOME SCULPTURES:



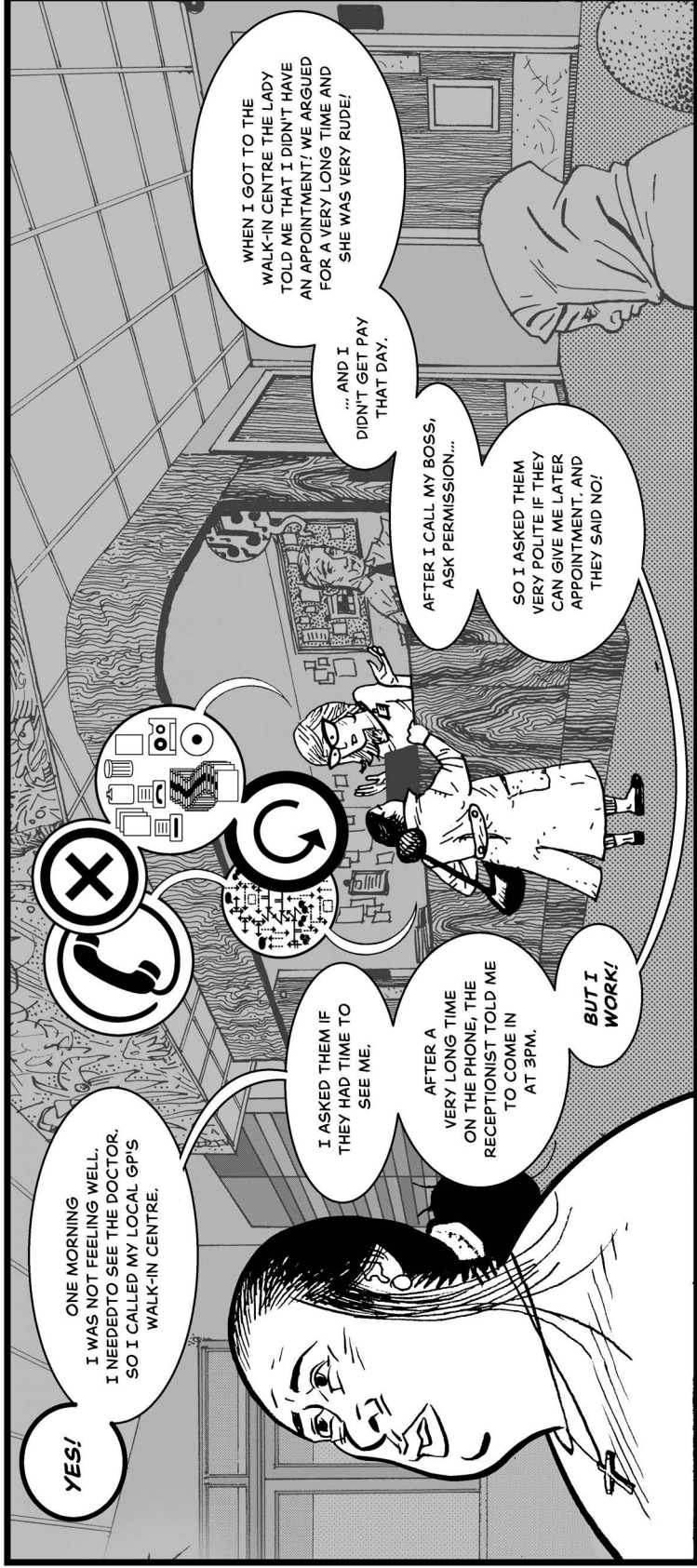
- COMIC
- DRAG
- MAN
- AN











YES!

ONE MORNING I WAS NOT FEELING WELL, I NEEDED TO SEE THE DOCTOR, SO I CALLED MY LOCAL GP'S WALK-IN CENTRE.

I ASKED THEM IF THEY HAD TIME TO SEE ME.

AFTER A VERY LONG TIME ON THE PHONE, THE RECEPTIONIST TOLD ME TO COME IN AT 3PM.

BUT I WORK!

AFTER I CALL MY BOSS, ASK PERMISSION...

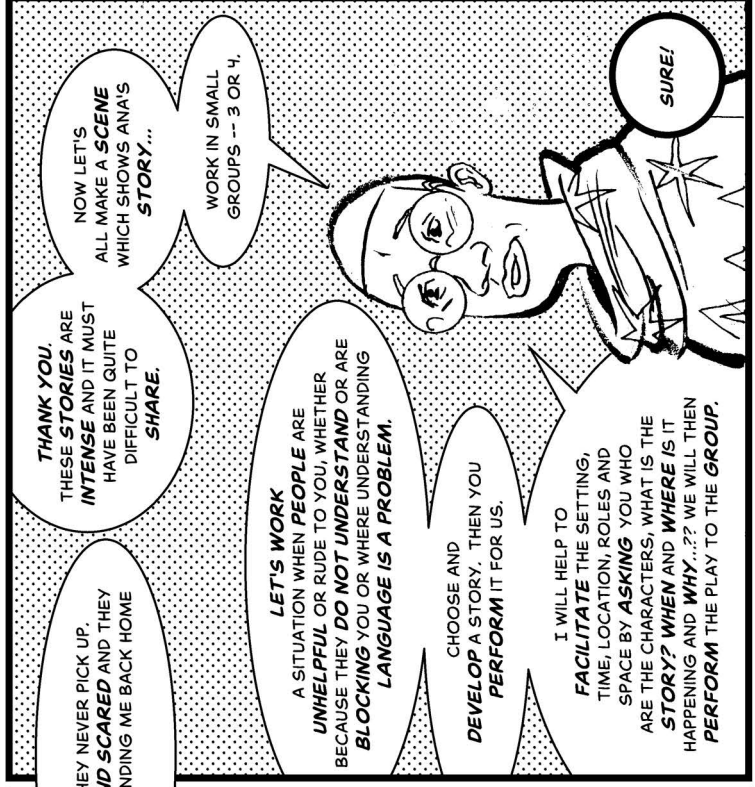
SO I ASKED THEM VERY POLITE IF THEY CAN GIVE ME LATER APPOINTMENT, AND THEY SAID NO!

... AND I DIDN'T GET PAY THAT DAY.

WHEN I GOT TO THE WALK-IN CENTRE THE LADY TOLD ME THAT I DIDN'T HAVE AN APPOINTMENT; WE ARGUED FOR A VERY LONG TIME AND SHE WAS VERY RUDE!



ANA, YOUR IMAGE IS POWERFUL. WHAT IS THE STORY BEHIND IT? CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT IT?



WITH ME, THEY NEVER PICK UP. I WAS SICK AND SCARED AND THEY ALSO KEPT SENDING ME BACK HOME

YES, I KNOW THAT TOO.

THAT HAPPENED TO ME AS WELL, MY LITTLE DAUGHTER HAD A BAD COUGH AND I COULDN'T EXPLAIN! THEY DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH PEOPLE TO LOOK AFTER HER THEY SAID, AND I FELT VERY BAD ...

I WANTED HER TO LISTEN, AND UNDERSTAND, BUT I COULDN'T EXPLAIN, I DID EVERYTHING RIGHT, AND ALSO I DIDN'T GO TO WORK, I KNOW THE SYSTEM BUT COULDN'T EXPLAIN THINGS THE RIGHT WAY, I FELT ASHAMED, ANGRY AND POWERLESS.

THANK YOU THESE STORIES ARE VERY INTENSE AND IT MUST HAVE BEEN QUITE DIFFICULT TO SHARE.

NOW LET'S ALL MAKE A SCENE WHICH SHOWS ANA'S STORY...

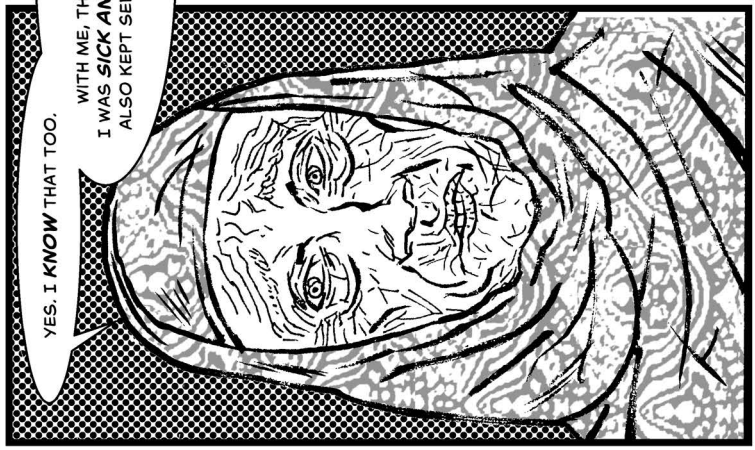
WORK IN SMALL GROUPS -- 3 OR 4.

LET'S WORK A SITUATION WHEN PEOPLE ARE UNHELPFUL OR RUDE TO YOU, WHETHER BECAUSE THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND OR ARE BLOCKING YOU OR WHERE UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE IS A PROBLEM.

CHOOSE AND DEVELOP A STORY. THEN YOU PERFORM IT FOR US.

I WILL HELP TO FACILITATE THE SETTING, TIME, LOCATION, ROLES AND SPACE BY ASKING YOU WHO ARE THE CHARACTERS, WHAT IS THE STORY? WHEN AND WHERE IS IT HAPPENING AND WHY...?? WE WILL THEN PERFORM THE PLAY TO THE GROUP.

SURE!





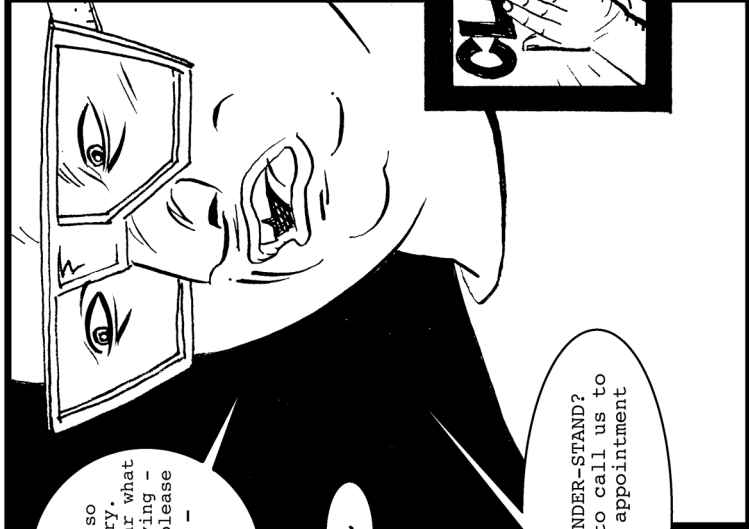
OK

I WANT TO TRY THIS

**CLAP!**

SHE IS SO RUDE!

THIS IS TOUGH!  
I KNOW WE ARE PLAYING,  
BUT I STILL DIDN'T KNOW  
WHAT TO SAY!



OH -  
Dear I'm so very sorry,  
I cannot hear what you are saying -  
Could you please speak -  
up?

DO-YOU-UNDER-STAND?  
You need to call us to make an appointment



GOOD MORNING.  
What's your name and date of birth?

ANA LOPEZ  
13.04.1971

NOT IN THE SYSTEM.  
You didn't make an appointment.  
You must go home and call us.

BUT I DID CALL YOU...

HELLO I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT PLEASE.



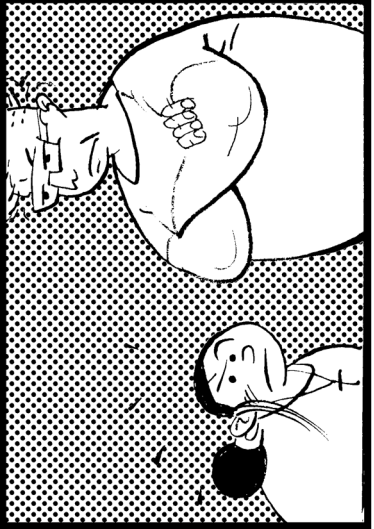
Ok.  
please move aside and let me register those standing behind you.



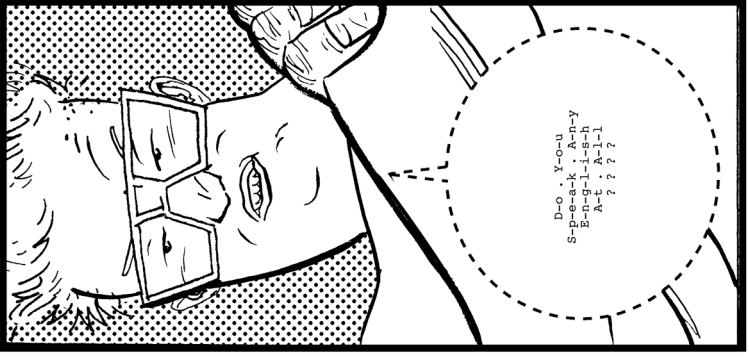
NO



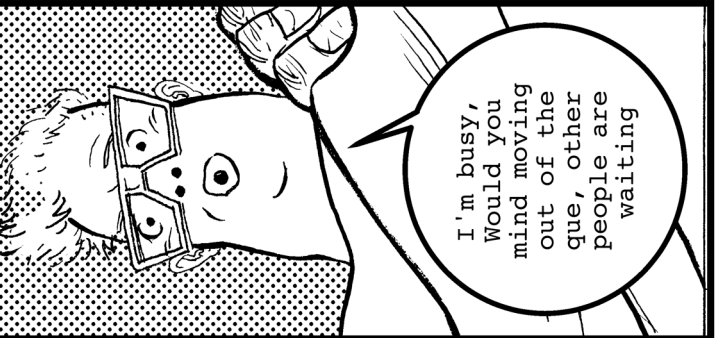
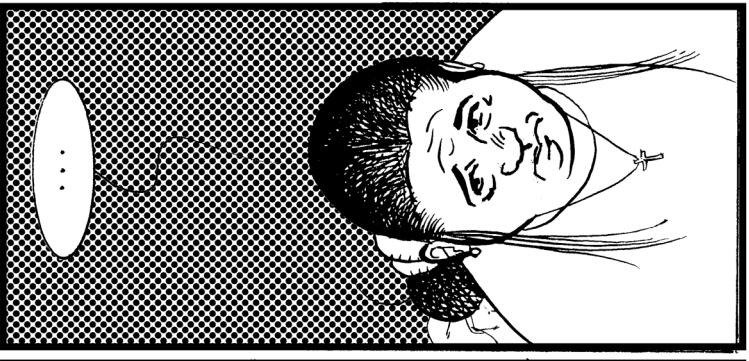
Ok.  
please move aside and let me register those standing behind you.



NO



D-o . Y-o-u  
S-p-e-a-k : A-n-y  
E-n-g-l-i-s-h  
A-? ? ? ?



I'm busy,  
Would you mind moving out of the que, other people are waiting



ACTUALLY... I AM NOT SURE I CAN ADD ANYTHING TO THIS... JUST, WOW! YOU REALLY STOOD UP TO HER!

THANK YOU...

I KNOW! FATIMA WAS GREAT! BUT I REALLY DIDN'T LIKE PLAYING THE MANAGER...

JUST DELETE YOUR ACCOUNT FFSE!



Please accept Our Most Sincere Apologies Mrs. Lopez but there is nothing that we can do to fix the problem at this time. Would you like to come back here next week? As a gesture of good-will we are happy to

NO. AND THANK YOU BUT I MUST SEE THE DOCTOR NOW.

THAT IS!!!

MY GOD THE FRUSTRATION!



EXCUSE ME! I CALLED YOU LAST WEEK, IT'S NOT MY FAULT YOU FORGOT TO PUT IT ON THE RECORD. I NEED TO SEE THE DOCTOR, NOW, OR LET ME SPEAK TO THE MANAGER!

CIAP

BOOM

TAKE THAT! LET HER SEE THE GP!

THAT THAT AMAZING!

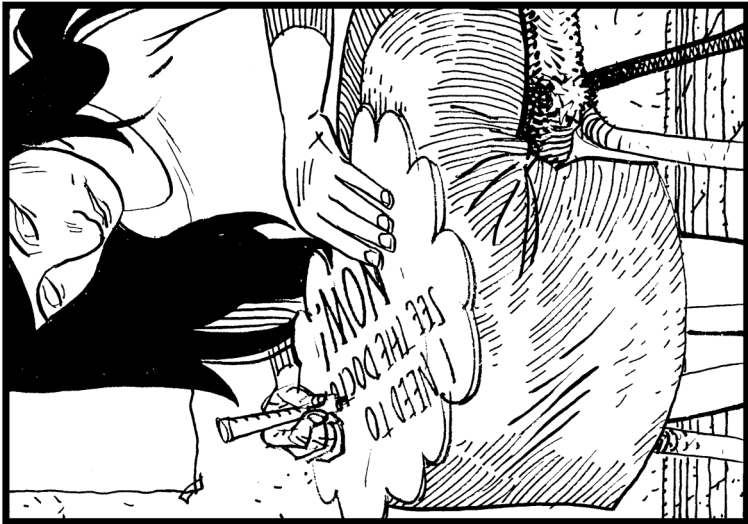
WOW



WRITE THEM DOWN ON THE SPEECH BUBBLES!



THAT WAS VERY STRONG! WHAT DO YOU THINK WERE THE IMPORTANT WORDS AND PHRASES IN THIS SPECIFIC SITUATION?





IT FELT EASIER THAN LAST SESSION.

I DID LIKE THE IMAGE EXERCISE

IT WAS A BIT MORE CHALLENGING...

G&H

I THOUGHT THAT IT WAS AN AMAZING SESSION. WELL DONE!



IT WAS TOUGH BEING IN SOMEONE ELSE'S SHOES!

SAME HERE!

I THOUGHT IT WAS GREAT THAT WE WERE ABLE TO INTERVENE. I LEARNT A LOT FROM THAT.



OK, LET'S GATHER ROUND BEFORE WE GO.

HOW WAS IT TODAY?





# GLOSSARY

## English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

This is the general term used for language education for those whose first language is not English. It is used across the state and charity sector for adult migrants living in the UK.

## Participatory ESOL

This is a teaching approach developed in the UK which combines ESOL with a focus on social and political change. It puts students' experience at the centre of the curriculum and uses a range of participatory tools to develop language. These include *Reflect* visual tools (developed by ActionAid), theatre, and problem posing techniques inspired by Paulo Freire.

## Pedagogy of the Oppressed

A framework for an emancipatory education for social justice and political change, derived from the writings of Paulo Freire.

## Theatre of the Oppressed

Augusto Boal's method of emancipatory, participatory theatre for social justice and change developed in collaboration with Paulo Freire. Based in a structure that engenders reflection, communication, challenge and laughter.

## Critical Pedagogy

The wider field of education approaches based on Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire founded in the facilitation of learning which critically explores the world around it.

## Frame/framework

Theatre of the Oppressed is a framework within which participants can question and change their ways of speaking, thinking and acting in their lives. It helps illuminate the underlying cultural, political and philosophical basis of society.

## Spect-actors

Boal's term for those taking part in the Theatre of the Oppressed. They are defined as group members, actors and participants, creators and reflexive watchers. They generate themes and stories and can create and change the performance.

## Joker

The Joker oversees and guides sessions. In the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology she has multiple roles: provocateur, creative stimulant, empowerer, facilitator, but not a director in the usual sense. She progressively hands power over to the group to use techniques, themes and content.

## Games and exercises

These are used to connect the body and the mind through fun and communication within the group. They develop the group dynamics and structure the theatre activities. The games and exercises range from children's games to theatre exercises, and focus on exploring power dynamics.

## Image Theatre

A technique of Theatre of the Oppressed. Facilitated by the Joker group members choose themes and spontaneously create still body images they associate

with them. Sharing and exploring the images stimulates fresh use of language to express the emerging ideas.

## Forum Theatre

Also referred to as "Rehearsal for Change". An optimistic and life-affirming form of theatre that harnesses our desire to change things for the better in our lives. Scenarios are created by the Spect-actors and can include: exclusion, male chauvinism, arguments with family, and dealing with an employer. The hero of the scene is replaced by other Spect-actors who take it in turn to explore and share possible solutions to the problem. This is a discussion in action, with multiple views seen and shared equally.

## Protagonist

The hero or main character of a performance. The Spect-actors volunteer in turn to replace the Protagonist in the search for change and solutions.

## Antagonist

The character in conflict with the Protagonist. They may be abusive, oppressive and/or difficult to deal with in different ways, and create images of power.

## Ethics/ethical frame

Theatre of the Oppressed as a theatre practice can raise difficult issues that need to be managed with sensitivity. The Joker has a duty towards the group and herself to ensure they are operating within an effective ethical frame.

## Disclosure

Sharing or revealing of difficult and personal information and the agreement to use ground rules to maintain confidentiality.

## Ritualised behaviours

The behaviours and habits, often cultural, which are deeply ingrained and repeated without thinking. These may include simple habits of greeting, or relationship dynamics with powerholders like employers or benefit officers.

## Power

The word power can be used positively and negatively. In positive terms it involves the ability to act to make decisions and gain understanding and control of an unequal relationship. Negatively, it encompasses the position of the Antagonist as a wielder of injustice, unfairness and incomprehension, in the view of the Protagonist.

## Hierarchical space

A term for problematic group dynamics which may manifest in different levels of power being assigned to different members. In this case, the group may be dominated by one person, or a small group, with others expected to follow their decisions. A classic Forum Theatre situation.

## Speech Bubble

Used during Forum Theatre and Image exercises. The Joker can ask Spect-actors to place their hand on the shoulder of one of the performers and speak what might be their thoughts out loud. You can create a dialogue between speech bubbles, exploring ideas and expressions in action.

# GLOSSARY

## Lightning Forum

During a Forum session the Spect-actors can be asked to form a queue and to take it in turns, quickly, to explore different ways of dealing with the Antagonist. Fast as lightning!

## Hot Seating

A rehearsal tool to develop characters for Forum. A Spect-actor playing a character sits on the hot seat

in front of the other Spect-actors. They ask the performer questions about the character. The person in the hot seat answers in character, as “I” not “he/she”. Questions start off simply—what is your name? Where do you live? They gradually build up to asking about their relationships and life situation in relation to the Forum story.

# COLOPHON

## ACT ESOL Language, Resistance, Theatre Editors

**Nelly Alfandari** is a participatory theatre practitioner and critical pedagogue. Her practice aims to create platforms within education, communities and public spaces, in order to facilitate a creative exchange of ideas and to open spaces for developing collaborative processes. Nelly is also working towards a professional doctorate in education and social justice and is teaching English and Drama at secondary school level.

**Amal Khalaf** is a curator and practice based researcher and is currently Projects Curator at the Serpentine Galleries where she has been working on the Edgware Road Project since its inception in 2009. Here and in other contexts she has developed residencies, exhibitions, workshops and collaborative research projects that address the role of art operating within pedagogy and the struggles of migration, policing and housing rights. She is a founding member of artist collective GCC. In 2016 she co-directed the 10th edition of the Global Art Forum, Art Dubai.

**Becky Winstanley** is an experienced ESOL teacher and teacher educator, as well as visiting research associate at Kings College London. Her particular areas of interest include participatory approaches to education and language and literacy development for social change. She worked on Actionaid’s Reflect ESOL project, adapting the international Reflect model for language learning in the UK and trained with Reflect practitioners in Liberia. She has been an active trade unionist for many years and is interested in teachers’ and students’ struggles in education and beyond.

**Frances Rifkin** is a theatre director, lecturer and trainer with a wide-ranging career in theatre, higher education and organisational consultancy. She is the artistic director of Utopia Arts, working mainly as a director in Political and Community theatre. She trained with Augusto Boal, has extensive experience in Forum Theatre, and has been the Director of Serpentine Galleries’ Implicated Theatre programme since 2011. Frances is also an artistic director, oral historian, workshop leader, group worker and community arts animator.

## Editing and production

**Elizabeth Graham** is a curator and educator based between London and Amsterdam. She is currently Assistant Projects Curator at the Serpentine Galleries, connecting artists, communities, self-organised groups and campaigns through long-term residency programmes. Alongside her role at Serpentine, Elizabeth recently initiated Constellations, a working group at Flat Time House that supports artists to develop their practice by exploring the role of social and political activity within art making. Prior to this, she has worked at: Arnolfini, Tate Britain/Modern, and the South London Gallery. Since 2014, she has been a tutor at the Master Education in Arts, Piet Zwart Institute, Rotterdam, and co-organises How To Show Up? an ongoing writing and performance platform at San Serriffe, Amsterdam.

## Comic and illustrations

**Nic Vas** is an artist and teacher who has produced illustrations, visuals and comics for different migrants’ rights campaigns such as the Anti Raids Network as well as collaborations with Implicated Theatre and other art collectives. Nic also plays drums in Leicester-based band Anatomy and has recently completed a PhD in the form of a graphic novel about Visual Community Organising at the University of Leicester’s School of Business.

## Copy editing

Dermot Bryers, Huw Lemmey

## Special thanks

Mitsuo Nakamura Brannvall, Espacio Mama, Janna Graham, Ben Messih, Migrants Resource Centre, no.w.here, students at: Chisenhale Primary, English For Action class at Robert Owen Children’s Centre, Entry 1a students from Hackney Learning Trust class at Woodberry Down Children’s Centre, E3 ESOL class at New City College, Entry 2 students from New City College Hackney, Kingshold Community Centre, Redcliffe CC/FaithSpace Women’s ESOL group, Surrey Square Primary ESOL class.

## Design Elisabeth Klement

Printed by Printon, Estonia



**ACT ESOL** is an ongoing practice-led collaborative action research project initiated by Serpentine Projects in partnership with English for Action. The project brings together English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers and students with theatre director Frances Rifkin (Implicated Theatre) and artist researcher Nelly Alfandari to develop a political and participatory ESOL approach that combines language-learning with a focus on resistance.

#### **ACT ESOL Research Group**

Nelly Alfandari, Dermot Bryers, Alexander Black, Elizabeth Graham, Amy Jowett, Amal Khalaf, Barbara Labiejko, Lawrence Leason, Liz Mytton, Silva Perin, Frances Rifkin, Jess Walker, Becky Winstanley, Nic Vas.

**English for Action (EFA)** believes in the power of education for social change. We deliver English language courses (ESOL) with partner organisations in areas where there is a clear need. Our classes are spaces where students can not only learn English, but also, using community organising methods, can connect with other people in their communities, share experiences, discuss important social issues, develop new skills and take action to effect change in their own lives, communities or even further afield. We are leading practitioners of participatory ESOL, an innovative and liberatory approach to adult education that builds students' critical capabilities, builds on existing strengths and engages with and seeks to change the world, inside and outside the classroom. We use participatory methods in our teaching and, through our training and research, encourage others to join us.

**Implicated Theatre** has been working since October 2011 on a series of workshops and performances that began at the Serpentine Galleries' Edgware Road Project. Instigated by artists from no.w.here and working with theatre director Frances Rifkin, the experimental workshops explore the relationships between political speech and action, the self and the collective, voice and silence. Now in its eighth year of working and performing, Implicated Theatre has been forming close relationships with migrants' rights groups and unions. Implicated Theatre creates theatrical interventions inspired by real-life struggle, and highlights issues of social justice. Implicated Theatre have worked in collaboration with the Migrants Resource Centre and migrants' rights organisations such as the Anti Raids network, Latin American Workers Association, Justice for Domestic Workers, English for Action, and with UNITE's Hotel Workers Union and the United Migrant Workers Education Project (UMWEP).

**Serpentine Projects** builds dynamic relationships between art, artists and people. Projects and events vary in scale, duration and location, and challenge expectations of where art can be encountered and by whom. Building on over a decade of work in and around the Edgware Road, London, the programme connects artists with migrants' rights organisations, recent migrants to the UK, older people living with dementia, care workers, social justice movements and housing activists. Over the last ten years, it has developed a practice in co-creating and co-researching with adults and community organisations across London. In particular, the research strand *Rights to the City* explores housing rights, racial discrimination, the politics of care and privatisation of public space.

[serpentinegalleries.org/learn](http://serpentinegalleries.org/learn)



ISBN 978-1-908617-53-8