名古屋女子大学　紀要　**43**（人・社）　211～224　1997

Sudden Speaking: TheatreSports for Language Learners

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"There are people who prefer to say 'Yes', and there are people who prefer to say 'No'. Those who say 'Yes' are rewarded by the adventures they have, and those who say 'No' are rewarded by the safety they attain. There are far more 'No' sayers around than 'Yes' sayers, but you can train one type to behave like the other." (Johnstone, 1981)

Introduction

The growing popularity among theatre enthusiasts and club audiences throughout the world of the light-heartedly competitive improvisation games collectively known as TheatreSports has given a renewed prominence to spontaneity and participation in drama. Since these are all too often the very qualities that are most sorely missing from Oral English lessons in Japanese universities anything capable of injecting such energy would appear to merit careful investigation.

The aim of this paper is to argue that, provided that care is taken in the presentation of the format and selection of the games to be used, TheatreSports contests can be enjoyable to watch, even more enjoyable to take part in and highly effective for motivating language learners of all levels. The paper is divided into five sections. In the first the general background to youth drama is reviewed. It will be shown that drama has had a long history in education and has come to be recognized as a uniquely valuable pedagogic technique for a wide variety of learning situations. Moving on from the general case for drama in the curriculum the second section discusses the use of drama specifically for language education, with the emphasis on my particular subject, EFL. After an overview of the various approaches to drama for language teaching which have been used, the third section concludes with a discussion of the particular merits of improvisation. This leads into a brief review of the history of the phenomenon of improvisation, with reference to the two leading figures in its development in the twentieth century, Viola Spolin and Keith Johnstone. The fourth section gives a short description of what TheatreSports is, while in the fifth, practical suggestions on how to incorporate such activities productively into language teaching in the Japanese university context are given. Finally, two appendices are provided containing a glossary of TheatreSports terminology and introducing an annotated selection of TheatreSports activities suitable for language teaching.

Drama in Education

The educational value of drama has been appreciated in my own country, Britain, for hundreds of years. The tradition of plays performed by young people goes back to at least the twelfth century. There is a record of choir boys at Dunstable acting the *Play of St Catherine* early in the 1100s (Chambers, 1982). By Shakespeare's time companies composed of only boys were common and were a particular favourite of Queen Elizabeth I. In *Hamlet*, Rozencrantz decries the 'aery of children' who are 'tyranically clapped' and Ben Jonson has Censure in *Staple of News* complain of schoolmasters who 'make all their scholars play-boys! Do we pay money for this? We send them to learn their grammar and their Terence, and they learn play-books!' Censures are still around, but in many countries drama has now been accepted by progressive educators as having an important place in the curriculum (Bolton, 1984).

The rapid growth of the modern educational drama movement in Britain in the 1960s has been described as 'arguably one of the most significant developments in British theatre in the second half of the century' (Jackson, 1993). There are in fact several varieties of young people's theatre, of which the two most closely associated with formal learning are Theatre-in-Education (TIE) and Drama-in-Education (DIE). The former term refers to professional theatre groups that devise programmes for performance in schools, generally with associated project work for the learners before and after the performance. In contrast, DIE originally referred to the conventional teaching of drama in schools and the putting on of the 'school play'. Nowadays however it is more concerned with the exploration of themes and problems through role-play and improvisation, with an awareness of developing the learner's imagination, expressiveness and the social skills involved in working as a group. Albeit with far less resources than actors in the professional theatre, drama-in-education teachers use the same tools, in particular, improvisation, to tap the learners' inner creativity. But while in the theatre everything is contrived for the benefit of the audience, in DIE everything is contrived for the benefit of the learners. It is this aspect of educational drama that I would like to emphasize in the present study.

Drama in Language Education

Since the 1970s various drama companies have been established which specialize in English teaching. Perhaps the most well-known is the *English Teaching Theatre* directed by Doug Case and Ken Wilson, whose book of sketches, *Off-Stage* (1979), is the vade-mecum of every EFL teacher who has the smell of greasepaint in his nostrils. However, these companies are all mainly practicing forms of TIE, and therefore tend only to engage the learners as audience, not as participants. Of more relevance to this study is the pioneering work of Charlyn Wessels of the Institute of Applied Linguistics at Edinburgh University, who set up the first ever Drama for TEFL course there in the early 1980s. This course and Wessel's book, *Drama*, (1987) have been highly influential in popularizing the

whole range of drama activities for language teaching throughout the world. So too has the work of Karbowska Hayes (1984), Maley and Duff (1982) and others, particularly in Europe. Despite this widespread acceptance elsewhere, drama has as yet made little impact on the teaching of English in Japan.

Anyone who has attended an English play performed by a Japanese university ESS (English Speaking Society) group will be familiar with the tremendous amount of enthusiasm that the students display and the feats of memorization they can achieve. Seeing such a show, who could deny that performing plays in English is an enjoyable and effective way of learning a foreign language? However, after the curtain has fallen and the cast comes out to meet their public, what a transformation seems to overcome them. Asked to comment on their performances, the cast are suddenly struck dumb: the erstwhile loquatious male lead is incapable of anything more than monosyllabic Japlish, the movingly eloquent leading lady dissolves into a fit of nervous giggles, and the supporting actors can hardly say the name of their own university. Clearly, something, somewhere, is going terribly wrong.

I believe that enjoyable though performing plays may be, and even to a certain degree motivating and practically useful, it is not the best way of using drama techniques for teaching languages in Japan. What is needed instead is a form of drama that does not rely on rote memorization and meticulous preparation — the things that Japanese learners are good at anyway — but a technique that helps them overcome their major barriers to fluent communication; namely, their passivity, their shyness and their perfectionism. To achieve this we must throw away our scripts, seek out new art-forms and boldly go into the great terra incognita of improvisation.

The Foundations of Improvisational Theatre

Improvisation is not a new dramatic phenomenon. It pre-dates the invention of writing, since long before people started writing scripts they were telling stories by acting them out. Its history begins with the shadowy figure of the shaman — precursor of poet, priest and actor — out of whose sacerdotal rites the craft of the clown evolves. The same mingling of sacred and parodic impulses is seen in the relationship between Japanese *noh* and *kyogen*, but the clown soon escapes from the confines of the sacred. The theatrical clown is universal: his true origin lies in the instinct for play itself.

Improvisational performers were known among the Dorian Greeks, and were a popular element of Mystery plays throughout Western Europe during the Middle Ages. Probably the closest ancestor of modern improvisation is the *commedia dell'arte*, which was popular in Europe for almost two hundred years starting from the mid-1500s. Troupes of performers would travel from town to town, presenting shows in the public squares and on makeshift stages. They would improvise their dialogue within a framework provided by a rough 'scenario'. Improvised theatre faded into relative obscurity with the development of enclosed, decorous theatres during the eighteenth century and the rise of

the director, which promoted a style of work in which improvised creativity on stage was not valued. The fact that the latter half of the twentieth century has seen a resurgence of improvisation is in no small measure due to its rediscovery, separately and spontaneously, by two people who have had an enormous influence on shaping the craft as it exists today — Viola Spolin and Keith Johnstone.

Viola Spolin and Theatre Games Viola Spolin was born in Chicago in 1906 and raised in a tradition of family theatre amusements, operas, and charades. She trained initially (1924-26) as a social worker The innovative methods of her teacher, Neva Boyd, in the areas of group leadership, recreation. and social group work strongly influenced her, as did Boyd's use of traditional game structures to affect social behaviour in inner-city and immigrant children. While serving as drama supervisor for the Chicago branch of the Works Progress Administration's Recreational Project (1939-1941), Spolin perceived a need for an easily grasped system of theatre training that could cross the cultural and ethnic barriers within the WPA Project. Building upon the experience of Boyd's work, she responded by developing new games that focused upon individual creativity, adapting and focusing the concept of play to unlock the individual's capacity for creative self-expression. These techniques were later to be formalized under the rubric 'Theater Games'.

Central to this system are the terms physicalization ('showing and not telling'), spontaneity ('a moment of explosion'), intuition ('unhampered knowledge beyond the sensory equipment — physical and mental'), audience ('part of the game, not the lonely lookeronners'), and transformation ('actors and audience alike receive the appearance of a new reality'). To achieve their purpose, Theater Games need only the rules of the game, the players (both actors and audience are considered to be players), and a space in which to play. Beyond the very tangible pleasures of 'playing' which the games encompass, they also heighten sensitivity, increase self-awareness, and effect group and interpersonal communication, precisely the things that make improvisation such a valuable technique for language learning. In 1963 Spolin published *Improvisation for the Theater*, a manual consisting of approximately two hundred and twenty of her games and exercises. It has since become a classic reference text for teachers of acting, as well as for educators in many other fields.

Spolin's son, Paul Sills, built on his mother's work and was one of the driving forces behind the tremendous growth of interest in improvisational theatre at the University of Chicago in the mid-1950's. Together with other leading teachers of the 'Chicago School', Sills created an ensemble of actors who developed what they called a 'modern commedia' which could appeal to the average man in the street. The company that sprang from this work, called *The Compass*, was the first professional improvisational acting group in the United States. *The Compass* was extremely successful, bringing to the theatre an audience who in many cases had never been before. This eventually lead to the development of another company, *Second City*, through which Spolin's ideas and techniques have gone

on to influence several new generations of improvisational performers including many stars of the hit American TV series *Saturday Night Live.*

Keith Johnstone and TheatreSports Keith Johnstone started formulating his theories about creativity and spontaneity while growing up as, in the view of many of his own teachers, a rather 'difficult' child in England (Johnstone, 1981). As a co-director of the *Royal Court*'s Writers' Group in the late 1950s he revolutionized its procedures by banishing 'aimless discussion' and transforming the meetings into 'enactment sessions'. In his workshops, it was what happened that mattered, not what anybody said about it. In the 60s he set up the improvisational touring company, *Theatre Machine*, and later took his methods to the University of Calgary in Canada where he has been teaching ever since. His current company, *Loose Moose*, is now the worldwide headquarters of TheatreSports.

From the start, Johnstone had been concerned that the theatre seemed to be increasingly a minority taste. He believed that mainstream theatre had become pretentious, which was why the average man in the street rarely if ever considered attending it. Johnstone wanted to bring theatre back to the ordinary people: the sort of people who went to sporting and boxing matches – the same audience to whom the *commedia* had performed and for whom Shakespeare had written in his day. His remarkably simple idea was to try an approach which would combine elements of both theatre and sports, to form a hybrid called TheatreSports in which the competitive forms of team sports were adapted to the improvisational theatre context. Teams would compete for points awarded by judges, and audiences would be encouraged to get involved by suggesting themes, cheering for good scenes and shouting good-natured abuse at the judges. Through the world-wide popularity of TheatreSports, Johnstone's ideas have gone on to influence, directly or indirectly, every major development in improvised theatre in the last two decades. Just as Spolin's compendium of theatre games is regarded as the essential practical reference work, so Johnstone's book, *Impro* (1981) is considered by most modern exponents to be the urtext of improvisation theory.

What is TheatreSports?

TheatreSports is probably best known in my own country due to the popular Channel 4 TV series *Whose Line is it Anyway?*, hosted by Clive Anderson and featuring sundry celebrities performing various TheatreSports games in front of a live studio audience. The games themselves are substantially the same as in standard TheatreSports, with a few differences which exploit the medium of television, such as reading the show's closing credits 'in the manner of' a certain film genre etc. However, the format differs in that there are no teams composed essentially of members of the audience, the scoring is taken (even) less seriously, and the host plays a more prominent part relative to the players, acting as judge, referee and scorer.

There are in fact many different varieties of TheatreSports, including TheatreSports Hamlet in which all the games are related to Shakespeare, and Gorilla Theatre; where the players compete against each other as 'directors' trying to direct the best scenes. The following is an account of what may be called 'classic' TheatreSports. It shares the basic premise of all varieties in that it involves teams of improvisers competing against each other in scenes for points. The teams can range in size from two players upwards but the most common number is four. Teams take turns challenging each other to perform various improvised scenes. There are hundreds of such scenes or games available (for examples see Appendix I). These scenes often start with some form of input from the audience such as, for example, a suggestion for the scene's location or a character's peculiar physical or mental characteristics. There are three judges who award the scores after the scenes and also enforce penalties that may occur during the scenes. Each judge scores the scene from zero to five, making a maximum possible score per scene of fifteen points. Penalties are awarded for gratuitous humour when a player tries to get a cheap laugh at the expense of advancing the scene. If the judges think a scene is out of control or too boring they can end it by sounding a horn or bell. Far from being the vindictive punishment that might be imagined, this is usually a merciful way of stopping players in difficulty. As well as the authority of the judges there is a referee who acts as an MC, introducing the show and having responsibility for keeping the show moving. Finally, the audience is a vital component of a successful TheatreSports event. As already noted, audience participation such as cheering good performances and calling out suggestions for scenes is strongly encouraged. More so than other actors, improvisation players need feedback from the audience to give them confidence and make them feel they are holding their interest.

That then is the standard TheatreSports format, but since contests are played throughout the world in improvisation theatre clubs, university societies and commercial venues like *Second City* in Chicago and *The Comedy Store* in London, there are innumerable 'house rules'. Most clubs have a rules committee to decide what these are and adjudicate on disputes. What all TheatreSports groups share however is a commitment to spontaneity and creativity 'in the moment': precisely what one would like to achieve in the oral language class.

A TheatreSports Format for Language Learning

There are several ways in which TheatreSports can be adapted for use in teaching a foreign language, ranging from the occasional use of a game simply as a 'filler' at the end of an otherwise conventional oral lesson to the wholesale unmodified incorporation of the entire official contest format. The choice of which level of adoption or degree of modification is appropriate will depend on the many variables pertaining to the individual teacher in his particular situation. Among the factors that need to be considered are the level of English ability of the learners, the time and facilities available, and the teacher's

own confidence in using the techniques.

However, in my experience of using drama in Japanese universities, one can never achieve any lasting degree of success unless the course is specifically devoted to drama. Anything less that this and the learners will simply regard drama as something to be endured for the sake of humouring the teacher. If learners know that, provided they show sufficient lack of interest, the teacher will soon lapse back into something less demanding they will not make the necessary commitment to bursting through the bubble of their customary patterns of passivity and fear. On the other hand, if the teacher emphasizes from the very beginning of the course that 'this is the way it's going to be' then the learners will be more likely to make the necessary leap of faith. This is not to say that the teacher should be dogmatic to the point of totally alienating the learners: obviously, if despite all his best efforts it becomes clear that a significant proportion of the group are uncomfortable with drama then it behoves him to admit defeat and switch to something that the learners can handle.

The most vital requirement for success in something as potentially chaotic as drama is that there must be a strong structure to the class and in particular a clear framework of rules. I have written previously about the measures necessary to channel Japanese learners' energies into constructive directions in my papers about the LIFE system (Haig, 1994, 1995). Essentially, the approach I am advocating here is an extension of that system. In LIFE, learners work on task-sheets in teams, and are assessed continuously as a group. By a combination of inter-group competition and intra-group cooperation, reinforced by a thoroughly transparent system of rules and grading criteria, LIFE learners take maximum possible responsibility for their own learning and achieve a remarkable level of positive communicative interaction. The ritualistic intensity of the LIFE class produces a near trance-like effect on the learners from which the end-of-lesson bell can sometimes scarcely awaken them, so immersed are they in the task or, as Johnstone would say, 'the moment'. It is my contention that the same principles can be applied even more effectively to EFL drama via TheatreSports.

In the following account I shall outline the format that I have been using with two different groups of learners; (A) a senior year Oral English class of English majors at Nagoya Women's University and (B) intermediate and advanced General English classes at Nagoya University which are open to students in all departments on the basis of a placement test. Both types of class average around twenty students and both are elective courses, although in neither case does this mean that the decision to take the course is as voluntary as one might wish. In the former case, an insufficiency of credits and in the latter time-tabling clashes may have been the determining factor in propelling some motivationally-challenged learners to the TheatreSports arena. The A class combines a range of oral abilities, from the returnee fluent to the terminally taciturn, with in general a fairly low degree of self-confidence in speaking English. The B classes exhibit greater homogeneity of ability due to placement and usually a greater degree of confidence and enthusiasm. The elements of the TheatreSports lesson format I use are the same for both

types of class. Such differences as there are concern the pace with which the format is introduced during the first few lessons of the course and the amount of teacher input necessary in terms of motivating and supporting the learners

In the first lesson of the TheatreSports course I give the learners two sheets of paper. The first is the course 'mission statement' This explains what standard TheatreSports is and what the course is trying to achieve. After reading through this sheet I then show some excerpts of a video of *Whose Line is it Anyway?* This has the benefit of making the learners laugh and realize that what they are being offered can be fun. On the other hand it sometimes discourages them if they feel that they could never be as witty as the show's stars. In this case I have to emphasize that they should regard the course as a training in a new skill and that nobody is expected to be brilliant first time. The other sheet I hand out includes some of the games included in Appendix II and these too are explained. I then show the video clips again and the students match the clips to the game descriptions. It may be that some learners would be 'happier' with more conventional lessons of 'free conversation' or discussion (and where in fact as most teachers know it is the teacher that supplies most of the talk), or at least doing something 'serious', preferably with a textbook to hide in. But what, I ask them, is the point of wasting time doing what they can already do, ie. listening to (or perhaps just hearing) the teacher and solving arcane grammar problems? Instead, I ask them to trust me, suspend their disbelief and give it a try, at least for the first few weeks, before making up their minds about whether or not the course is good for them. I tell them that if after the first semester they really do not want to continue doing TheatreSports then they can stop. So far that has never happened. Even initially reluctant learners seem to be drawn into the games once they have surmounted the blocks to their motivation with the help of the LIFE-like TheatreSports system.

The following three to four weeks are known as 'basic training'. Contests do not start until after this training is completed, and its duration will depend on the pace at which the learners develop. During this period a repertoire of games is learnt and practised. These are graded in difficulty starting with non-language games such as 'Machines' and moving on to more complex scenes. All lessons, whether contest days or not, begin with the mood-creating rituals of moving the desks and chairs to the sides of the room, physical loosening-up and voice exercises.

Contest lessons are arranged as follows. The class is divided into teams of four or five players. Unlike LIFE classes these teams are fixed for the year, as are the captain and vice-captain. This is perhaps a more rigid arrangement than the precepts of humanistic teaching might dictate, but I have found it necessary with the courses I teach to artificially induce the necessary team-spirit amongst learners who may have no other lessons together during the rest of the week. Another reason for not starting the contests for the first few weeks is that it gives the learners time to get to know one another and decide their own teams. There are only four or five teams in the class, which is too few to form a league as in regular TheatreSports. Instead, each week two teams play each

other while one team acts as judges, scorer and timekeeper, and the other team or teams are the audience. The program of contests is drawn up in advance and learners are made aware of the especial importance of attending class on days when their group is performing or judging. Ideally, it would be best if a particularly able learner could act as the referee but in fact this is usually my role. It is a difficult one for the teacher, akin to the 'joker' in the Forum Theatre of Augusto Boal (Boal, 1979) in that he must be both at the centre of running the contest and at the same time sufficiently in the background to allow the learners as much autonomy as possible. The practical compromise I have adopted is to be as energetic as possible when setting up the scenes and as unobtrusive as possible during the scenes. It is during the scenes that I have an opportunity to monitor and evaluate the participation of the learners.

The contests involve the teams taking turns in issuing challenges to each other just as in standard TheatreSports. Each week after the warm-up activities and before the contest begins at least one new game is introduced, so that by the end of the first semester there are about twenty games to choose from. The rule in choosing is that no game can be used more than once in the same contest. The team that is challenged can choose whether to perform first or second. It is entirely up to the team to decide which members will perform the challenge, with the captains taking ultimate responsibility. Since one of the biggest drains on the precious flow of energy through a contest lesson is waiting for something to happen I have a strict set of rules about wasting time. A delay of more than one minute from the issuing of a challenge to the deciding of the performers incurs a one point penalty.

When performing a scene the players are expected to make as good an effort as their abilities permit. Side-coaching in English by the off-stage members is permitted, but conferring in Japanese is not. The audience should be supportive, attentive and enthusiastic without chattering disruptively during the scenes. After a scene, the judges display their scores using number cards and the total is written on the blackboard by the scorer. The number of challenges in a contest is not fixed but depends on the time available. However, each contest is ended approximately fifteen minutes before the end of the period to provide time for rearranging the room and the very important 'post-mortem' session. In this follow-up I start by praising whatever was praiseworthy in the scenes. It is most important at this stage, particularly for players whose scenes may have 'failed', to emphasize what was good before moving on to deal with what might be improved. Each member of the audience is required to make at least one constructive criticism. Then I point out some of the problems of technique and language that players have had. It is at this stage that a video recording is often extremely useful. If it is possible to actually show clips of the players in action, this is a great help in raising their awareness of their mistakes. Naturally, it can be excruciatingly embarrassing to watch oneself on video like this and so it has to be used with the utmost sensitivity, but in general the interest generated by the contests and the spirit of mutual support of the teams means that this is a far less threatening experience for the learners than might otherwise be supposed.

Finally, it is necessary to make a brief mention of how learners are evaluated. As noted above, evaluation is on a continuous assessment basis. I have already referred to the points systems adapted from LIFE, as well as from standard TheatreSports itself The points awarded for the scenes as part of the contest account for just thirty percent of the learners' grades. Each member of the team is given the same number of points, regardless of her contribution to the scenes. The remaining seventy percent is evaluated individually: forty percent for attendance, and thirty on behaviour as part of the audience and active participation during the contests.

This account of my method is not intended to be prescriptive and no one is more aware than I am of its shortcomings, apart of course from some of my students perhaps. At best the format can be viewed as a starting point from which to build. I hope that other teachers will find it useful and be able to devise improvements to adapt TheatreSports more appropriately to their own particular situations.

Conclusion

As well as using TheatreSports with my own university classes, I have been involved for a number of years with a long-established drama group in running English language TheatreSports events in Japanese universities and colleges. From the point of view of developing learners' confidence and fluency, these games have generally proved considerably more effective than simply performing, or having learners perform, plays. This is partly because they do not require the heavy investment of time, resources and anxiety usually necessary for putting on a conventional performance; partly because of the — albeit minimal — competitive edge to the activities which learners find so motivating, but mainly because of their sheer enjoyment. However, it is clear that drama in the teaching of languages requires substantial further research, particularly in the areas of the psycholinguistic value of using drama. More tangible evidence of the benefits derived from drama work is needed: can the improved performance of learners be objectively measured and compared with that of others taught in more conventional ways? It is to be hoped that research will confirm what so many drama-oriented teachers instinctively feel: that through drama learners can at last see through the myth that language is a package deal, a terminal performance acquired once and for all by the memorization of a few words and grammar rules, and discover that it is something much richer, which is endlessly shifting and generating new, fresh meaning in every moment.

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Appendix I: A Glossary of TheatreSports Terms

This glossary has been compiled from a variety of TheatreSports sources (in particular Roehl, 1996) and includes all of the most commonly used expressions. Since TheatreSports is so widely practiced around the world there is some variation in terms between groups and synonyms have therefore been included where known. Many of the words in this glossary will be familiar to many teachers and their learners but the specialized meaning in this context will in some cases need careful explanation. This explanation will necessarily form an integral component of the basic training process referred to above.

Accepting Embracing the offers made by other players in order to advance a scene, no matter how different from what one was planning to do next. Sometimes referred to as 'yielding'.
Advancing The process of moving the scene forwards.
Ask-for A question asked of the audience in order to start a scene.
Blocking Rejecting information or ideas offered by another player. One of the most common problems experienced by new improvisers. Note that this usage is different from the normal theatrical meaning referring to the position of performers relative to each other and the audience sightlines.
Cancelling Making previous action irrelevant. This is usually inimical to good scene advancement.
Commenting Stepping out of the reality of the scene by saying or doing something that refers to the fact that it is a scene being played. This also refers to 'playing' an emotion rather than feeling it. Commenting should generally be avoided, though used sparingly it can sometimes be effective.
Complementary offer An offer that meshes well with what has already gone before and usually enhances it in some way. See 'Offer'.

Driving Taking over a scene and not letting other performers influence its direction

Endowing Giving another performer some information about his/her character, such as a name, a job or personality trait

Explore and heighten To take an idea and see where it leads, exploring its natural consequences while simultaneously raising the stakes. See 'Raising the stakes'.

Extending Taking an idea and letting it become the central theme of the scene

Focus The audience's attention should only be in one place at any given time; that place (or person) is the 'focus' of the scene If more than one thing is going on simultaneously, the focus is split. Experienced improvisers will smoothly share focus, less experienced improvisers often steal or reject focus.

Gagging Trying to make a joke or do something funny that does not flow naturally from the scene Always a bad idea

Gossip Talking about things instead of doing them. Also, talking about things that are offstage or in the past or future

Handle The premise for a scene or game

Hedging Making small talk instead of engaging in action

Information overload Introducing too much information into the scene, making it difficult or impossible to ever find a satisfying ending that resolves everything.

Instant trouble Making an offer that introduces a problem or conflict but that does not relate to the narrative of the scene prior to that point. See 'Offer from space'.

Mugging Making gestures and expressions instead of reacting truthfully Generally frowned upon.

Naming Identifying characters, objects, places, etc. in the scene

Objective The thing that a character in a scene is trying to achieve.

Offer Any dialogue or action which advances the scene. Offers should be accepted.

Offer from space Dialogue or action that is bizarre and that appears to come from nowhere

Physicalization Turning intent into action and movement the key to good improvisation and a central concept in Spolin's system

Point of Concentration What the scene is about.

Pimping Playfully getting another performer to do something difficult or unpleasant which you probably would not do yourself Used sparingly, this can be quite entertaining. The best strategy is to choose things the other performer does well

Raising the stakes Making the events of the scene have greater consequences for the characters. A useful technique for advancing a scene

Reincorporation Bringing back an idea from earlier in the scene, or from a previous scene in the show, or even from a previous performance Otherwise referred to as a 'callback' Always fun and satisfying, but not something to over-do.

Setup Explaining the handle of the scene to the audience before the scene starts. Frequently involves doing an ask-for. The performer who does the setup usually should not start off on stage in the scene

Shelving Acknowledging an offer but not doing anything with it, with the intent of using it later Of course, as later never comes, shelving should be avoided

Space-object An object that is used in the scene but which does not really exist A mimed object. Generally, anything that does not support weight (e.g a chair) should be a space-object

Status A character's sense of self-worth Many scenes can be built entirely around status

transfers, in which one character's status drops while another's rises. Physical environments and objects can also have status. A key term in Keith Johnstone's system.

Stepping out Breaking the reality of the scene. See 'Commenting'.

Talking heads A scene that involves a lot of standing (or worse yet, sitting) around talking rather than engaging in physical action.

Transformation Turning something into something else (one character into another, one object into another, one environment into another).

Tummeling Engaging in humorous conversation with the audience during setups

Uber-mime Overly elaborate mime that is so detailed as to be hard to follow.

Waffling Failing to make decisions. Talking about what you are going to do instead of doing it.

Walk-on The act of entering a scene, making a strong offer that advances the scene, and then exiting. Use sparingly. Also called 'walk-through' and 'cross-over'.

Wimping Unhelpful and uncreative stalling, particularly by accepting an offer but failing to act on it.

Appendix II: TheatreSports Games

There are literally hundreds of games for playing TheatreSports and as its popularity spreads more are being devised all the time. Clearly, it would be an impossible task to describe every one of them here. However, for those seeking a place to start, several of the references noted above include substantial lists (eg. Atkins, 1994; Cassidy, 1993) and there are now a number of TheatreSports and improvisation Internet sites where highly comprehensive and up-to-date lists are maintained (eg. MacLeod, 1996). As will be evident, some of the games below are simply versions of well-known language teaching games that are not normally thought of as dramatic at all; others will be familiar to teachers who have experience of using drama games in more general non-TheatreSports contexts. Nevertheless, since as far as can be ascertained no list of TheatreSports games has yet been published in any medium which is specifically oriented towards or annotated for the purposes of language teaching it is necessary to provide a small number of examples here to illustrate the points made in this paper. The few games included in this appendix have all been selected on the basis of their proven suitability for use with the approximately pre-intermediate to advanced Japanese university students I have taught.

ACTOR'S NIGHTMARE One player reads all her lines from a script, preferably a mundane but comprehensible text, while the other player must justify those lines by improvising her responses. The 'reader' may read from one character, or several characters, whichever allows her responses to be quicker This is a good game for making learners aware of the difference between scripted and improvised scenes. An even more challenging variation which is useful with groups where there is a range of abilities is for two or more learners to read from scripts with a higher-level learner justifying.

CATEGORIES Each player is assigned a general category of object, for example cars, toys, or vegetables. During the scene the players must try to refer to their assigned category as often as possible. The simplest way to do this is by directly mentioning an object, but more advanced learners can use analogies, metaphors and puns. This game is particularly useful with lower ability groups and larger classes, because the audience can be asked to listen out for the use of category words regardless of their overall comprehension of the scene. In this way it becomes a more directly competitive game which is good for raising the energy level of the group.

ENDOWMENT SCENES One common situation for this game involves detectives interviewing a criminal, although in fact, since this is more a scene category than a game, the endowments can be related to any situation. A player is selected as the criminal and leaves the stage while the audience is asked for an unusual crime, an unrelated device and a location. In this Kafkaesque scene the player is willing to confess to the crime but she cannot remember what she has done. If the detectives can let her know what the crime is she will confess. When the criminal is close to getting the crime the audience should 'ooh-aah' to let her know. The detectives should keep to subtle hints at the beginning of the scene, saving the obvious ones for when things are getting slow. There are ample opportunities for walk-ons to help out the detectives This game is similar to the well-known EFL game 'Who am I?' wherein players ask questions to deduce which famous person they are and is similarly useful for practicing interrogatives.

FREEZE GAMES Like endowment scenes this is one of the basic patterns of TheatreSports games. Two players start a scene. At any time during the scene a player off stage can shout 'Freeze' whereupon the players must immediately freeze their position. The player that yelled 'Freeze' should assume the exact position of one of the frozen players and initiate a completely new scene starting in that position. The best effects are had when the scene is frozen in an interesting position, so it is important to keep changing position during the scenes. With weaker learners the freezes can be called whenever a player dries up. As with the well-known 'Die Game', the rapid change-overs generated by these scenes are valuable in helping learners realize that failing can be as much fun as succeeding.

MACHINES In this scene the players create the parts of an imaginary machine, which can be partially defined (name, purpose, etc.) by the audience, by entering the stage one at a time and offering a repetitive motion and associated noise to the machine. For added amusement the referee can speed it up or slow it down. Since this is a non-verbal activity it is one of the best games for getting learners used to performing together on the stage.

TOUCH TO TALK This scene is meant to develop players' non-verbal communication skills The only time that players are allowed to talk is when they are physically touching each other Players should not cheat by merely holding hands throughout the scene for no particular reason