

## **Incorporating Improv into the Second Language Classroom**

(Courtney Rehkamp, VCL Graduate Assistant)

Dr. Divya Chaudhry, a senior lecturer of Hindi-Urdu in the department of Asian Studies, makes regular use of improv strategies in the language classroom. With specialties focusing on pedagogy and conversation it is evident that her students enjoy and benefit from the use of improv-based instruction and games.

But what is improv?

Derived from theater performance, improv is the use of games, prompts or pre-organized situations that challenge the participants to respond in the moment to the stimuli, be it a question, an action, or a situational description. In the second language classroom, improv encourages students to respond in the moment to the proposed scenario without preparation, challenging them to use grammar structures, vocabulary, and phrases that they already know to achieve spontaneous language production. Improv activities can be utilized effectively at all levels of learner ability and when appropriately scaffolded can offer students of differing abilities the opportunity to interact with one another.

If you are interested in learning more about the possibilities of improv in the second language classroom or would like to see examples of how it can be used, be sure to check out the links below. In *Enlivening Instruction with Drama and Improv: A Guide for Second Language and World Language Teachers* (2021), Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor and Kathleen McGovern write more in depth into the theory behind improv and give an extensive exploration into games and strategies that can be adapted for most languages. In her blog post for Carnegie Learning, “5 Improv Theater Games You Can

Try Today With Your Language Learners”, Natalia Álvarez-Morillo shares not only strategies for the classrooms, but also embeds videos of how these activities might be executed.

Further Resources on Improv in Second Language

Cahnmann-Taylor, Melisa, and Kathleen R. McGovern. *Enlivening Instruction with*

*Drama and Improv : A Guide for Second Language and World Language*

*Teachers*. Routledge, 2021. (Available online through the Vanderbilt Library)

Álvarez-Morillo, Natalia. “5 Improv Theater Games You Can Try Today With Your Language Learners”. Carnegie Learning. Web.

<https://www.carnegielearning.com/blog/improv-conversation-games-language-classroom/>