

**Notes for a first hand puppet workshop for Toyo Eiwa University ECE Program students
with Phil Duchene, Drama Instructor in the UVic Teacher Education Program,
Gwynne movement studio, CARSA Building**

In this short workshop we will be playing with proven activities for younger students as we explore simple hand puppet exercises.

This is a practical methods class and you are encouraged to borrow any activities we do today and try them with your own students. Please take photographs as they will help re-establish activities and connections for you after the class.

Some first puppet principles will be explored. For example; how the energy of the character is put into the hand with the puppeteer's job to keep the character 'alive' with continual small movements. If the hand puppet slips from the vertical or stops moving, it dies for the audience. Your mirror work will help you make sure your puppet is still alive. As you build character it is worth knowing that puppets already have a back story which you can fill in as you work together...

Intro: Name tags

Physical warmups:

'Warming up your imagination' (rubbing hands/hands on heads/ raised eyebrows)
Call and return name games: Student say their names, all repeat the name; in turn they add an action to go with the name; repeat without the name, just the action so it becomes a mime.
Brain gym: Crossed palms/Nose ear switch/ thumb littlest finger switch/Gotcha – circle; fingers in palm grab.

Vocal warmups:

Alphasound. As you know there are 26 letters in the English alphabet which can make 44 sounds. (We separate letter and sound combination. Eg. t + h =th (tongue between your teeth.)
The best advice I ever had about learning languages: Don't worry about pitches and stresses – talk like a robot. Context is everything. People will know what you are talking about!

Bringing a coat to life:

With a partner, lay a coat out on the floor. Move it around until it suggests an animal: a bat? a turtle? an elephant? Now, make it three dimensional; make it breathe; make it wake up; make it move; give it a related activity.

Finger/Hand Warmups:

Hand shake out/Palms up and down/Finger ripples/Fist and hand stretch/Do the worm
Thumb war/Chewing gum

Mirror work:

Seated in front of the mirror: Using the mime white face pictures go through the facial expression card. Choose three facial expressions. Morph between the three. Now, have your hand physically show those emotions. For example: pride/confusion/anger. (If you make an associative noise, for example, 'Grrr!' for anger, your facial muscles needed to make the noise will give you a true matching expression for the emotion. Perhaps your hand naturally makes a fist?)

Getting to know your puppet: We have over eighty puppets for you. Try at least three hand puppets. Find one that will 'speak' to you. (Think of your emotional connection with a product in your favourite store. Do you feel the product, say a bag, somehow chooses you?) Look your chosen puppet in the eyes (using the wall mirror) until it tells you its name. Take your time. It will tell you its name. Where does your puppet come from? Can you give it a voice? In turn, we get to say, 'My name is....' What does your puppet like to do? Swim? Sleep? Cook? Read? 'I'm....and I like to....'

Seated in front of mirror again: Hold your puppet at eye level. Do the same exercise you did with your hands. This time, your facial expression of emotions must be mirrored by your puppet. You are not separate beings...you are one animal with the same human emotions. Try disgust/tiredness/love.

Partner Work

Find a partner. Face each other. Count to ten in turn. Start a conversation. For example, 'How are you?' 'What do you like best about Canada?'

Try and improvise one of these conversations between your puppets (in Japanese):

A spoiled child and its mother at the checkout

A shared favorite holiday memory

A talk show host with a famous guest

'You can't go and play with your friends until you have done your chores!' Parent and child.

An argument with a younger sibling. For example, 'I told you not to go into my room!'

A visit to the vet

Tell a joke

Perhaps we can share some of these conversations.

Last words

Puppets have a special place in the Primary classroom. For example, you can call upon puppets to help run the organisation of the class; to outline the day's work; to take attendance; to 'be' the principal to pass on messages or the librarian in book exchanges. School counsellors working with Primary students all know the value of a comforting distance that a puppet can provide to emotional situations. Students in the autistic syndrome may typically converse with

puppets when they would otherwise choose to be mute with adults and their peers. And, of course, puppets can always tell stories. All you need is to be aware of a few basic rules:

- Keep your puppets breathing, focussing and moving
- Make your puppet's movements small and slow; they must have weight, too
- Don't worry about being seen as a puppeteer by your audience – the children won't be looking at you!
- Find the puppets that suit you best: Rod puppets? Shadow puppets? Finger puppets? Sock Puppets? Paper bag puppets – and so on. Even your own three puppeteer Bunraku (which I love) using rolls of paper...
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vXT3gPef8zo>
- Above all; have fun!