Anna Musielak graduated from the Philology Department of Silesian University with a PhD. She has worked for the military and at schools where she taught British Literature and Culture and as methodology director in a private language school. She is interested in using drama, music and literature in teaching English. Currently she runs practical workshops and teaches English to young learners and adults.

**Can drama be all about...grammar?**

“Grammar is a piano I play by ear. All I know about grammar is its power”. Joan Didion

For many students grammar is not the most electrifying subject in the world... The aim of this workshop is to show how to make grammar lessons fun, exciting and memorable thanks to using drama games and techniques. The activities presented will show how to help students remember grammar rules and apply them to their everyday life.

All games and activities presented during this workshop can be easily adapted and tweaked and used for various purposes – not only for grammar practice. They can be toned down or hyped up, depending on the level/age and personalities of the students. The activities are simple ones, but they have more latitude and therefore can be modified and used on various occasions – for material introduction, practice and revision.

1. **Shapes and prepositions.** Choose a shape (e.g. a triangle) and write your name in/on/next to etc. your shape. The teacher asks everybody about their chosen shape and placement of their name. A very simple icebreaker that can be used for revising prepositions.

2. **Preferences**: Ask your group to move to the opposite sides/corners of the classroom according to their choices and your instructions. Alternatively students show their choices by making some noise/movement (e.g. Mexican wave, whistling etc…). Later on they discuss their choices.

   **Sample questions**

   What would/do you prefer: Breathing like Darth Vader or talking like Yoda? Looking like a fish or smelling like one? Having X-ray vision or having super strength? Bathing in eels or showering in spiders? Eating chocolate without getting fat or having a lifetime supply of beer? Having a huge tattoo of Justin Bieber on your back or having a bad hair day every day?

3. **My very own shape**. Every participant draws a star/triangle/square and writes things that describe his/her past weekend in its corners. (E.g. Star Trek, 30 minutes, chocolate, etc…). Other players have to guess what meaning a certain thing has for the speaker (Were you running/watching TV for 30 minutes last weekend? Did you take a 30-minute nap?)

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1 Adapted from Lagoon Games Would you prefer? The game of Diabolical Dilemmas!

2 Adapted from Ken Wilson, Drama and improvisation, Oxford University Press, 2008
4. **Find somebody who.** That is a great (classic) activity for practicing various grammar aspects from beginning levels (e.g. *find somebody who is tall, find somebody who can cook*) to more advanced groups (*find somebody who has never eaten an orange, find somebody who would prefer to live on a beach than in the city center*)

5. **Miming narrations.** One person shows an activity that he/she drew at random (e.g. Show how you prepare for a date). Students describe the actions using Present Continuous tense (e.g. *She is putting on a dress, She is brushing her teeth, She is calling her best friend*)

6. **Cheering corrections.** The teacher produces various sentences to practise a certain grammar point (e.g. Past Simple tense). Every time the sentence is correct students cheer/make a Mexican wave/jump etc. (e.g. *Did he go to the cinema yesterday?* Correct so students cheer). Every time a sentence is incorrect students boo/put their thumbs down/duck etc. (e.g. *Did he went to the cinema yesterday?* Incorrect, students boo). It can be also used as an energizer – instead of cheering and booing students have to run to chairs/desks/stations with yes for every correct sentence and no for every incorrect one). The teacher swaps places with students and lets them produce sentences. The sentences can be written on the board and students can look at them and even chunk them up by booing or cheering to the correct words in the sentences.

7. **Multifunctional object**. Choose an object (e.g. a spatula) and tell students that you are going to show them what you did at the weekend/what you are doing right now/what you can do – depending on the structure you want to introduce/reinforce/revise. Mime an action and say the sentence e.g. *I played badminton at the weekend.* Pass the object and ask students to mime their actions.

8. **Various personas.** Students draw randomly pieces of paper that describe their role e.g. Mickey Mouse, Superman or Justin Bieber etc. Students come to the middle of the class and being in their roles have to perform actions that other students give in Present Simple tense. You wake up early in the morning. You eat cereal for breakfast. You go work etc. The sentences might be very simple and can be similar for various roles but their execution will be different every time (e.g. Mickey Mouse walks/eats differently than Superman or Justin Bieber). With shyer students you might be the first one to perform the action and you can ask students to work in smaller groups

9. **Naughty kids.** Very simple activity to practice the negative forms. Students get in pairs. Student B is a naughty and stubborn child and has to contradict all the statements made by student A. E.g. Student A: *I like swimming.* Student B (with some attitude and body language) *I don’t like swimming.*

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3 Adapted from Sarah Phillips *Drama with Children*, Oxford University Press, 2001
10. **Whose is it?** A funny activity to practice the possessives. Teacher collects items from the students (e.g. pens/glasses/bracelets etc.) Once the objects are collected the teacher asks questions:

   *Teacher: Whose pen is this?*

   *Student: That’s my pen*

   *Teacher: Whose pen is this?*

   *Students: It is Peter’s pen*

   *Teacher: Whose pen is it?*

   *Students: It’s his pen.*

   *Teacher: Is it your pen?*

   *Student: Yes, it is mine (my pen)*

11. **Taboo.** Choose a volunteer and give him a past action to describe to his/her partner or to the rest of the class. E.g. *You got drunk and picked up a girl in a bar last night.* He/she can provide descriptions and answer questions from the audience/partner but cannot use certain words (that you provide earlier on a piece of paper) e.g. *girl/bar/pick up/drink/alcohol.*

12. **Space beings.** Divide students into two groups – group A: Alien females on the prowl looking for a fit male. And group B: Attractive, outgoing and very talkative single Earth men. The task for the female aliens is to find an eligible bachelor that will help them repopulate the planet but they cannot reveal their identities. To find a suitable partner they have to ask about his lifestyle/hobbies/illness history etc.). The men do not suspect anything and are willing to answer (some questions). That role playing game is perfect for general grammar revision (Present Simple for asking about routines, Past Simple to ask about illnesses, Present Perfect to find out about recent events, Conditionals to talk about hypothetical situations etc…)

13. **Hot seat and evasive answers**⁴. One person takes the role of the interviewee and is asked various questions depending on the studied structure (e.g. *Have you ever smelled your feet?* For Present Perfect practice or for the revision of conditionals, *Would you consider eating stale bread?*) and their job is to answer by not giving Yes/No answers. To make the exercise

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⁴ Adapted from Ken Lackman, *Universal Activities. Original and Adapted Recyclable Activities*, 2011
more drama-like ask students to provide answers loudly/angrily/sleepily/happily/in a robot voice/doing jumping jacks etc.).
The answers have to be different every time.

Sample:

A: Have you ever drunk dialed somebody? B: I don’t remember.

A: Have you met a celebrity? B: I might have.

Resources:

1. Lackman Ken, *Universal Activities. Original and Adapted Recyclable Activities*, 2011
2. Lagoon Games *Would you prefer? The game of Diabolical Dilemmast*