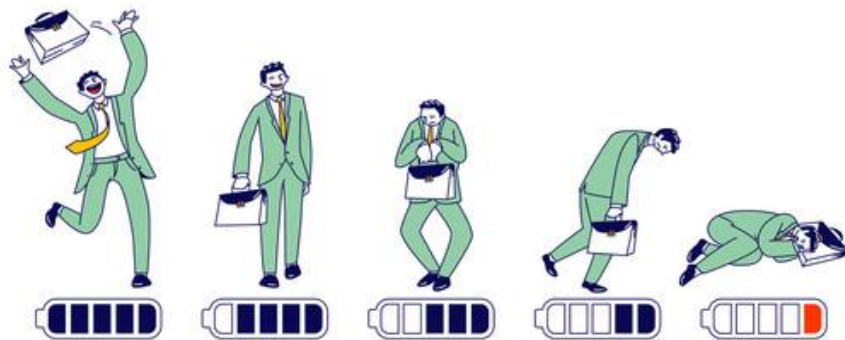


Process Workbook

Drama and Theatre in Education

Leah Sheridan

I can confirm that I have **not** used any AI in my work.



My experience working with children ages 6-10 was during an art class where the children were sitting down for the class and tasks were repeated which resulted in the energy of the class naturally being low. In these art classes it was relatively easy to keep the kids entertained so I expected this module to be 'easy'. In reality, I did not have the relevant experience for working with children in a theatre setting which has pushed me to develop as an actor and facilitator. I have developed my understanding of my own energy and stamina, learned through a practice workshop and been able to develop my skills to create my own workshop and lead it during this module.

The Importance of Drama and Theatre in Education

'Engaging in creative drama activities can offer students an excellent way to interact with each other and the materials, expanding their knowledge and social relationships'
(Tuncdemir, 2025, p. 538)

I think **theatre in education (TIE)** is extremely important for young people. I went to an academic primary and secondary school in Ireland, and my favourite days were when theatre practitioners would come and do workshops. As a creative and neurodivergent person, the normal school system did not suit my way of learning. I hugely benefited academically and personally when we did drama in school. I wanted the children from this school to experience the same thing I had when I was younger, specifically the ones who do not conform to 'normal' school teachings and schedules. See [Appendix 1](#) for research on neurodivergent students in education.

First Workshop

For the creation of our first workshop, we decided to write a song with the children based off a poem called *The Sound Collector* (McGough, 2004). It was inspired by the work we had seen in a primary school a week prior, where a piece of theatre was shown and a song was made in the workshop after that was relevant to the show. When we watched the workshop, I thought the children reacted positively to writing the song as it was a collaborative process, they got to work with their friends and use their imagination.

We also created movement and sounds to go with the poem to perform to the children. I noticed I naturally took the lead in coming up with ideas. I played with levels, speed, collective sounds and beats. I decided to take some personality tests to see how I could expand my group work skills, see [appendix 2](#) for results.

Song writing and future employment

Emyr and Carys were in my group, Emyr wrote the lyrics and I wrote the music and played my guitar during. We wrote the chorus and were planning on developing a verse with the children, see [appendix 3](#) for my process.

As I want to be a professional actor, I want to develop my skills with the instruments I play, so this was a perfect opportunity. I am aware that as an actor in TIE, it's beneficial for future employment to play an instrument, hence why I wanted to push myself. *'Both fringe shows and large-scale productions have made use of the actor-musician. This skill has become highly sought after by producers working to ever-tighter budgets and has given rise to the quadruple threat performer who can act, sing, dance and play'* (Bennison, 2026).

My Task - Ice breaker

My designated task for the workshop was the **ice breaker**. *'The workshops begin with a series of light physical exercises, intended to foster trust in the facilitator and others, awareness of themselves as performers, group camaraderie, and to lay the basis for the main phase of the program'* (Skeiker, 2015, p. 118).

I chose the exercise called 'Machine' (Ministires, 2020). It involved the children coming up with a sound and movement for an imaginary ice cream machine. After my instruction and explanation of the activity, the children could go into the centre of the circle individually and the result would be a symphony of noise and movements. I asked Carys and Emyr to start it off, so the children felt less daunted to go first and they get to see examples. I thought it would be a fun exercise for the children to move and be creative.

My feelings during the workshop:

From the start, everyone's energy was quite low, and I was not sure how to bring it up. This could have been due to the new space the children were in, new people and new instructions.

Ice breaker and my energy

I very quickly realised that the children weren't comfortable enough yet to go in individually, so I asked if they wanted to go in pairs which worked better.

I found it quite challenging to keep myself engaged during the song writing part, due to the children not enjoying it. I noticed that they seemed disengaged and possibly they did not understand the process. When we moved into smaller groups, they were talkative, but when we came back to a big group the energy dipped again.

In terms of reflection in action, '*Phrases like "thinking on your feet," "keeping your wits about you," and "learning by doing" suggest not only that we can think about doing but that we can think about doing something while doing it*' (Schön, 2016, p. 54), We all agreed not to sing the chorus again and just do the first chorus and verse. We slightly adapted the original plan to make it simpler for the children as they were showing signs of zoning out due to potential shyness, confusion about the task, individual temperament or time of day for example.

Observing other groups

We got to observe another group doing their workshop. This was beneficial to get an outside perspective on what worked/ what did not. Again, I noticed that splitting the children into smaller groups let them have more fun as there was less pressure of a big group. The set up offered them the opportunity to be creative and have conversations with their friends. I noticed that the energy of the group slowly built, but I think it would be a good start to have a high energy activity at the start.

My feelings after the workshop:

On reflection, I was disappointed that the children didn't seem to enjoy or connect to what we were doing. I think I had high expectations after seeing the show in the primary school the week previous and thought we could replicate it exactly. I did feel myself become frustrated at myself and the children when it did not go to plan. I do think that frustration is a common feeling that actors could feel and it was beneficial to experience it because it is preparing me for future auditions, or performances that are not successful. *'When facing a task that makes you anxious, divide it into a series of smaller steps and tackle them one at a time. Completing several smaller tasks rather than one big one will make the stress more manageable and increase your chances of success'* (Popovich, 2024).

To grow from the experience, I am going to come up with a list of ways to improve my approach to TIE.

What I need to work on

1. Controlling my energy – being able to maintain a high energy will ensure that the children stay involved throughout the workshop
2. Coming up with engaging activities and ice breaker – this will help the children to have fun and learn something new
3. Come up with an idea that works in small groups -so the children can explore their ideas in a setting that's comfortable for them

Workshop for assessment

‘In order to gain their interest and encourage an enthusiasm for theatre, children need a performance that appeals directly to their world, their pleasures, their fears and their experiences’ (Eluyefa, 2019, p. 85).

Play and music

My group started with designated roles for the story of *Lady of the Lake* from 1810 (Scott, 2023) (LOTL). Since I naturally drove the group for the first workshop, I stepped back and let Carys and Emyr lead. I did this because I have gotten feedback from previous modules to let other lead in the class. When I took a step back, I did notice it was hard to get tasks done, especially the development of play.

I decided to play my tin whistle. I learnt the ‘Rattlin bog’ an iconic traditional Irish song, again with future employment and expanding my skill range for the future in mind.

Exploring my workshop

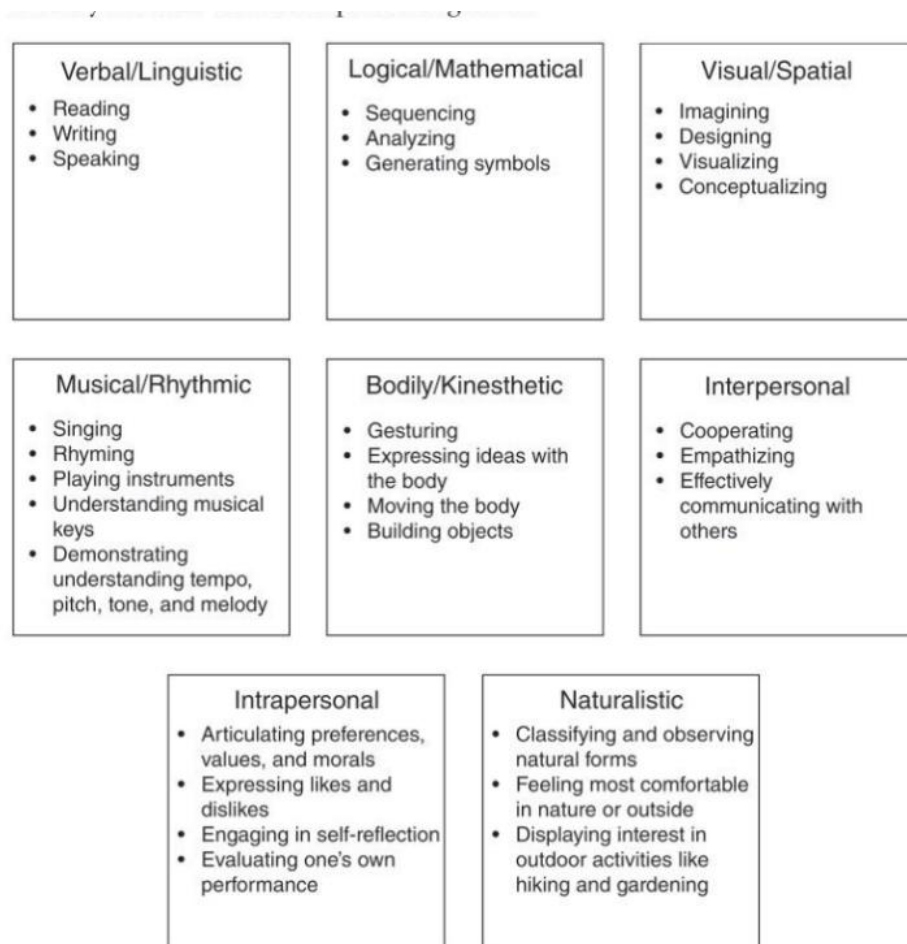


Figure 1.1 Multiple intelligences

I wanted to make sure my workshop was suitable for all students. I began researching **multiple intelligences** and Howard Gardner discusses how every person has a set of intelligences, but it is expressed in different ways, which result in different interpretations of situations, see figure 1.1 above.

‘Drama’s potential for exploring multiple identities, points of view and understandings also makes it highly suitable in teaching for inclusion, diversity and social awareness’
(Water, et al., 2015, p. 23).

I wanted my workshop to have different intelligences sections with multiple ways of exploring them to make it accessible for all.

I knew I wanted an **ice breaker** that helped the children with group skills and competition. I researched and used my own drama experience and decided to do two activities called alphabet race (Menu, 2020) and human knot (Robinson, 2022). The intelligence sections these activities cover are verbal, visual and kinaesthetic, through:

- Alphabet race includes gesture, moving, teamwork, coordination, listening skills and focus.
- Human knot includes communication, consideration, conceptualisation, teamwork.

For my **main task**, I came up with the children making **freeze frames** (Lowe, 2025). The freeze frames were then added with sounds and movements. I split the group into two, so the task was less daunting.

I applied **Dorothe Heathcote’s Mantle of the Expert**, as I gave the children a role during the freeze frame. *‘When the mantle of the expert is used in drama, the teacher assumes a fictional role which places the student in the position of being the “one who knows” or the expert in a particular branch of human knowledge’* (Heathcote & Herbert, 1985). I used this theory by giving the children a situation, exploring the moon, and let them come up with people and things they could possibly see on the moon. This meant that they were in control when coming up with ideas for what could be in their freeze frame.

The intelligence sections I wanted to cover were visual, intrapersonal and naturalistic; seen through imagining, visualisation, expressing likes and dislikes.

I found that **rehearsing** my workshop with my peers helped and I got into a rhythm for it. I also experimented with my energy, I found that if I started off with big, positive energy the class responded very well. This meant they were engaged and I was able to bounce off their energy as well. I was able to test my stamina in a workshop by giving one hundred percent commitment to everyone’s individual workshops. I also prepared by

reading the safe guiding guidelines to make sure everyone was safe during the workshop.

Improving my energy

I realised that if I do not have the ability to create a high physical energy, I will not be able to have high emotional energy. Casey Mink discusses self-care for actors which helped me I focus on maintaining my health by **getting enough sleep, doing physical activity:** I went for walks and roller skated and **nutrition:** I have an overall healthy diet, but I just focused on eating more nutrients for example, having an extra vegetable with my dinner. (Mink, 2024)

During the workshop

On the **day of the assessment** I did a warm-up before, went through my workshop by visualising it, ate a nutritious breakfast and arrived at the school with plenty time to spare. This helped me to calm my nerves, and I felt fully prepared and ready. Although, I was still nervous before we started. The children enjoyed our rendition of LOTL because they were watching intently and laughing at the funnier parts, this put me at ease, and I felt my nerves going away. For my section, I made sure to give clear instructions and keep my energy up, I found moving around helped me.

After the workshop

I was really proud of how my workshop went. The children enjoyed the ice breakers at the start and participated greatly. I was enjoying myself, which I feel encouraged the children to do the same. With us coming to their school also helped as they knew the space and they were comfortable in it. With it being the morning time, the children had most of their energy and were ready to start their school day. We had worked with some of the children before, so they recognised us, which was of great help to build the trust to commit to our workshop exercises.

Reflection on this Module Overall

From the first week to the final week, I have felt a massive increase in confidence in myself. I found the hic-up at the start drove me. I pushed myself in terms of learning and growing from experiences, developed my musical knowledge and finished on a workshop where the children and I got to create, imagine and have fun. In the future, I now know that TIE is a possibility for me and I could learn and push myself further with any workshop for children.

Appendix

Appendix 1

As I am neurodivergent, I did research on how practical theatre workshops can help primary students develop. The studies were completed with students with learning difficulties and/ or autism, regarding practical Sense theatre, '*Sense theatre is a theatre-based program that uses theatre games, role-play exercises, improvisation and character development while putting on a play, to explore and practise social interaction skills*' (Corvett, 2025, p. 660) . The findings were that theatre helped students' social cognition and interaction regarding gains in memory for faces and social communication skills overall. I think it's beneficial for me to learn the impact that theatre workshops can have on children with learning difficulties so I can facilitate my workshops for all types of students.

Appendix 2

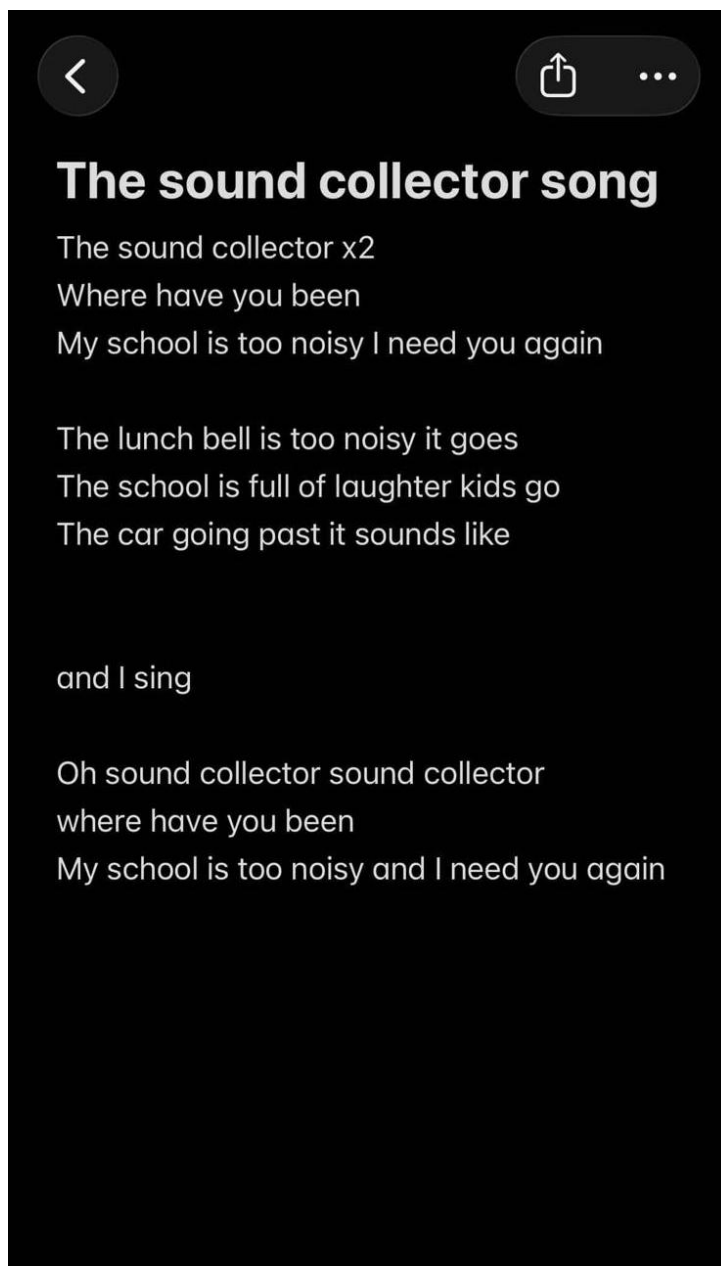
Here are my results from multiple personality tests for working in groups.

1. 'Driver- The driver is generally very ambitious and energetic. He or she may appear as impatient and impulsive. The driver is a strong motivator and will challenge others at crucial times. Although the actions of the driver may sometimes seem somewhat emotional, they do play a crucial role in pushing the team forward to succeed' (Tests, 2023)
2. 'Knowledge Gatherer-As a Collector, you thrive on research and sharing knowledge. You love gathering information and ensuring your group is well-informed. Your passion for learning makes you an invaluable team member, inspiring others to explore and discover more!' (guilleman, 2025)
3. 'The Supporter is the heart of a team, radiating warmth and stability that keeps morale high. They excel in roles that require patience and persistence, often working behind the scenes to ensure everyone is facilitated. Their strength lies in their unwavering reliability; colleagues know they can depend on a Supporter to listen, empathize, and assist. By fostering a nurturing environment, they enable others to perform at their best' (AREALME, n.d.).

I think it is important to know how I work in relation to a team due to the nature of this course and job in general involves teamwork and communication skills. If I am naturally a driver in the group, I feel sometimes there is an expectation on me to facilitate all group work and that can involve feelings of pressure on me. By taking an opportunity to step back and let other lead was beneficial for me to see how different group role's function and how my personality fits into those roles.

Appendix 3

Song writing.



Here are the lyrics for the song. The chorus which is repeated in the photo attached above was cemented for the workshop and the chorus was an example of what we could have come up with the kids.

I chose a basic strum pattern Down (D)/ Up (U) of: DDUUDU, which is used in loads of songs and chords C, D and A minor. I kept it simple because it was my first time playing my guitar in a big group and I wanted to be very confident with what I was doing.

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