

**Development and Assessment of a Theater Group for People with Aphasia**

Madeline Dunne

Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders, Temple University

Diamond Research Scholars Program, Temple University

Honors Program, Temple University

**ABSTRACT**

The Philadelphia Aphasia Community at Temple (PACT) utilizes a group therapy approach for people with aphasia (PWA) by providing opportunities for PWA to enhance communication skills in an interest-driven setting. Recent research demonstrates how theater can improve the communication of ideas through both non-verbal and verbal means and can offer a medium through which PWA can interact and share their experiences. The main goal of this project was to examine how theater has been used with PWA and how theater games and experiences can be adapted for PWA at PACT. Existing studies were reviewed in regard to the benefits of theater for people with communication disabilities and the theories underlying different theater games. These concepts were applied to a pilot theater group at PACT. Nine PWA attended six weekly sessions throughout Summer 2019, and eight PWA attended weekly sessions throughout the Fall 2019 semester. Sessions incorporated different theater games and activities to gauge interests and skills, with support from Physical Therapy. Pre-/post-group testing included the Communication Confidence Rating Scale for People with Aphasia and a theater survey examining participant's interests, skills, and knowledge of theater. Results from pre-test and post-test were compared to determine changes in perception of theater, enjoyment, and overall benefits of a theater group for PWA.

## INTRODUCTION

Communication is essential in daily interactions, activities, and social relationships. Language impairments often impede an individual's ability and opportunity to communicate, as well as their psychosocial well-being. Aphasia, a language impairment, commonly occurs after a traumatic brain injury or stroke and is defined as a loss of ability to understand or express language. Approximately 30% of stroke survivors have aphasia (Davidson, Howe, Worrall, Hickson, & Togher, 2008). While aphasia can affect an individual's production and/or comprehension of speech, as well as their ability to read and write, it does not affect his/her intelligence. In addition, aphasia severity can range from mild to severe, and treatment approaches for people with aphasia (PWA) are individualized for each client. Two general categories of treatment include impairment-based therapies aimed at improving language functions with aid from a clinician and communication-based therapies involving more natural interactions involving real life communication challenges (Elman & Bernstein-Ellis, 1999). This project focuses on a communication-based approach and its applications in a theater group for PWA.

PWA often report social isolation, loneliness, loss of autonomy, restricted activities, role changes, and stigmatization (LeDorze & Brassard, 1995). To combat this, communication-based therapies, such as aphasia support groups and aphasia centers, aim to promote interaction among members, increased communicative initiation and turn-taking, and a variety of communicative functions or speech acts. Following the Life Participation Approach to Aphasia (LPAA), aphasia centers and groups aim to assist participants in the re-engagement of life by strengthening daily participation in activities of choice. The LPAA focuses on a broad approach to functional communication treatment through life participation goals and social relationships (Chapey et al.,

2000). Additionally, aphasia groups can improve an individual's psychosocial functioning by providing a supportive environment with others who share similar issues and feelings (Elman & Bernstein-Ellis, 1999). Groups allow for free-flowing participation and help members feel they have a stake in their organization or community. Moreover, group discussion, deliberation, and decision making can be beneficial for making personal decisions, problem solving, and developing interpersonal relationships (Elman, 2007). Lastly, aphasia groups provide places where people with aphasia can become part of a community that accepts and nurtures them, thus alleviating some of the social isolation they encounter during their daily lives.

The Philadelphia Aphasia Center at Temple (PACT) offers a variety of aphasia group programs to the surrounding Philadelphia community. In the past, programs have included art, music, writing, games, and spirituality. These programs were selected based on participant interest and resources available. While a wide variety of programs have been offered at PACT, one program that had not been offered was a theater group. Theater groups may benefit PWA because they provide opportunities for participants interested in theater to explore acting and improvisation within the supportive group setting. In addition, theater groups emphasize strong group dynamics and collaboration and create an open environment for group members to participate and express themselves, with the goal of improving communication confidence.

Other aphasia centers have incorporated theater into their programs, with positive results and feedback from group members. The Adler Aphasia Center in Maywood, NJ is a large aphasia center, compared to PACT, that offers a drama group in addition to the several other groups available to PWA. The Adler Center produces annual aphasia-friendly musical productions, in addition to occasionally offering an improvisation (improv) group and a sketch comedy group. Past shows have included "The Wizard of Oz", "The Sound of Music", "West

Side Story”, and “South Pacific”. All center members interested in participating are encouraged to join the group, regardless of language or physical limitations or acting/singing experience.

According to facilitators, the drama group promotes psychosocial, communication, and recreational/vocational benefits. For example, participants improve their communication skills by practicing communication strategies and improvisation in a supportive and relaxed setting and engaging in script practice while rehearsing lines (Beideman, Szabo, Castka, Abbanat, & Holland, 2010).

Similar to the Adler Aphasia Center, the Aphasique Theater, founded by Anne-Marie Theroux, uses drama and theater to help PWA regain their self-esteem and rehabilitate their communication skills (Côté, Getty, & Gaulin, 2011). Unlike Adler, the Aphasique Theater is focused solely on the relationship between theater and aphasia and does not offer other groups. The theater company, located in Montreal, was founded in order to create a shared, open, and respectful environment of peers and professionals and to involve communication activities in a pleasant and successful way. The Aphasique Theatre offers drama workshops and theatrical play productions. Objectives of the workshops include stimulating cognitive skills, pragmatic skills, body, expression, and speech skills, as well as encouraging social interactions and developing self-confidence and encourage self-esteem. The theatrical play company is available to PWA seeking more time as an active member and PWA interested in play development. The productions are dedicated to informing the audience about aphasia.

In a study commissioned by ESPACE Group on the Aphasique Theater, PWA involved in theatrical plays reported improvement in everyday activities and communications, in addition to improved self-esteem (Côté et al., 2011). The study examined three key issues: everyday habits of PWA, communication abilities, and relationships and interactions with relatives and

social environment. The study methodology included a quantitative and qualitative component, as well as a before and after theatrical plays comparative component (Côté et al., 2011).

Quantitative measures included the *Mesure des Habitudes de Vie*, *Functional Assessment of Communication Skills for Adults*, and *Adjective Check List*. A semi-structured interview method was used for the qualitative assessment. PWA reported that experiences in workshops and play-acting resulted in better interactions with relatives and strangers and more communication tools (Côté et al., 2011). Relatives and friends viewed PWA in a more positive way and were more satisfied with the person's everyday performance too. In addition, PWA reported greater self-confidence and happiness, as well as diminished shyness, stress, and depression.

In efforts to gather more empirical evidence regarding the benefits of theater for PWA, Cherney, Oehring, Whipple, and Rubenstein (2011) developed an 18-week drama class for PWA. Participants in the drama class wrote and produced a play addressing their experiences with aphasia. Unlike other aphasia theater groups in which participants rehearse and perform established pieces of literature, group members in Cherney et al. (2011) produced original material through improvisation and script development. The group included four stages of the drama process: encountering the drama/theater experience through games and exercises, exploring the drama/theater experience through improvised storytelling and psychodrama, elaborating the drama/theater experience through script generation and rehearsal, and preserving the drama/theater experience through performance.

Cherney et al. evaluated the group using 4 of the 12 subscales in the *Burden of Stroke Scale (BOSS)* and the *Communication Confidence Rating Scale for Aphasia (CCRSA)*. The BOSS subscales included communication difficulty, social relations, negative mood, and positive mood. Participation in the drama class resulted in perceived improvements in both

communication and mood. There were no significant changes in these rating scale measures as a result of group participation. Examination of the effect sizes revealed some small or medium improvements in the rating scales following the drama class (Cherney et al. 2011). However, it is difficult to conclusively determine if the effect sizes were a direct result of the drama class, as there may have been confounding variables or extraneous factors affecting the participants' responses and there was no control group.

As demonstrated in the examples above, there is a growing interest in incorporating the dramatic arts for PWA. While the relationship between theater and aphasia may not seem obvious at first, many principles and philosophies behind theatrical activities directly correlate with the LPAA and communication-based therapy approach for aphasia. Similar to LPAA principles, theater promotes interaction among members, which in turn may encourage increased communicative initiation and speech acts. This is due to the collaborative nature of theater and the importance of building a united ensemble (Green, 2012). Theater incorporates acting which is, in itself, an interactive process that involves learning how to observe, interpret words, actions, and non-verbal cues (Mickiewicz, 2017). Theater games promote self and group expression, physicalization, and techniques for communication, all of which are carried into daily life (Spolin, 1999). Key principles of improvisation (improv), include agreement, no denial, attentiveness, and making connections (Welsh, 2014). These promote positive interpersonal communication, communication confidence, and listening skills, which are transferable to daily interactions. For example, with the essential principle of agreement, improvisers often refer to the "Yes, and..." rule: actors must accept and add to the ideas of others (Stamatoplos, 2016). The acceptance of each other's ideas brings forth strong group cohesiveness and group dynamics. "Yes, and..." promotes communication from all members, as each member adds to the conversation and scene.

In addition, the principle of “no denial” stresses that actors not deny, negate, or reject offers made by others in a scene, thus emphasizing group collaboration. Lastly, theater offers a fun, supportive environment to learn and grow, explore, and connect with peers.

While theater programs for PWA continue to develop upon these ideas, there is little research examining the effects that a variety of theater activities (improv, games, role rehearsal, and theater development) have on communication confidence or the overall enjoyment for members. Each theater group examined above focused on a specific aspect of theater, such as improvisation and theater production, rather than sampling these various areas of drama. These theater subtypes differ from each other in important ways, which may produce different learning outcomes and reactions. Improv focuses on creating an environment where participants can develop confidence to speak up on their own behalf, through unscripted performance and spontaneity. On the contrary, role rehearsal, where participants are assigned existing characters and scenes, focuses on observing, listening, and reacting. Role rehearsal allows for introspection and self-reflection, as well as finding connections between a character and self, in addition to a momentary escape from reality. Theater development, including script creation and developing original material, targets the transfer of communication from thought to page and promotes creativity. Lastly, theater games promote group dynamics and unity amongst an ensemble, along with spontaneity and personal freedom (Spolin, 1999).

Aside from this, there are few reports on the methods needed to effectively adapt theater activities for PWA and what activities are best suited for this population. This has led to the questions of what theater subtypes and activities are most enjoyable for participants at PACT and what impact theater has on communication confidence. In the present program evaluation, communication confidence and enjoyment of theater activities was investigated in a small group

of PACT members who present a range of types and severities of chronic aphasia, across different times post-onset. The CCRSA was compared pre/post group to determine if there was any change associated with participation in the theater group. In addition, PWA's interest in theater subtypes were compared pre and post participation in the theater group to determine which activities are most enjoyable for PWA. We hypothesized that all participants, regardless of aphasia severity, will benefit socially from participation in the theater group. The theater group was run twice, in Summer and Fall 2019. The Summer 2019 group was a pilot program to gauge interest and develop the structure of the group. For the Fall 2019 group, the program was extended and modified based on participant feedback from the pilot program.

### **PILOT PROGRAM - SUMMER 2019**

#### **METHODS**

##### **Participants**

The theater group was initially offered to PACT participants over the course of Summer 2019. The group was scheduled to meet once weekly for 90 minutes over six weeks, and was advertised as follows:

*Are you interested in theater, improv or acting? Join PACT Theater Group!  
Wednesdays from 12:30pm - 2:00pm, June 5th - July 17th. Play improv games,  
act out scenes, and learn more about theater this summer!*

The first ten PWA who expressed interest were enrolled in the Theater Group. The only prerequisite to join the group was for the individual to have an acquired aphasia; no participants were excluded from group due to language and/or physical abilities. Group members included 10 (seven women; three men) individuals with chronic aphasia. Mean age was 61.1 years (range: 51 to 74). Mean education was 13.4 years (range 7 to 18). Of the ten participants, nine completed

pre-testing and eight completed post-testing. Pre- and post-testing was incomplete for some participants due to scheduling conflicts and limited availability. Etiology for all participants was stroke. Participant characteristics are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Summer 2019 Participant Characteristics

Variable	N (N = 9)	Percent of Sample (%)
<b>Age (years)</b>		
51-65	6	66.67
65+	3	33.33
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	3	33.33
Female	6	66.67
<b>Language Impairment</b>		
Expressive	6	66.67
Receptive	3	33.33
<b>Apraxia of Speech</b>		
Presence of Apraxia of Speech	2	22.22
<b>Physical impairments</b>		
Hemiplegia	3	33.33
Wheelchair usage	1	11.11
<b>Education (years)</b>		
5-8 years	1	11.11
9-12 years	2	22.22
>12 years	6	66.67

Mean time post onset stroke was 9.0 years (range: 1 to 28). Theater experience was variable amongst participants (see Table 2). Six of the nine participants tested prior to the start of the group reported experience acting before (two during childhood, four during adulthood), and five of the nine reported experience with improvisation (two during childhood, three during adulthood).

Table 2: Summer 2019 Participant Theater Experience

Experience	Acting Experience	Improv Experience	Theater Education/Classes
<b>n (N = 9)</b>	6	5	5
<b>Percentage (%)</b>	66.67	55.56	55.56

### Program Development

The Theater Group incorporated four aspects of theater, which are summarized in Table 3 below with sample activities. Activity selection evolved throughout the six weeks of group based on participant needs and abilities. In addition, activities incorporated aspects of previous activities, thus building off past lessons and activities. Activities selected were screened for physical requirements (sedentary; active/mobile) and language requirements (verbal; non-verbal). Due to range of aphasia severities and physical disabilities, it was important to be aware of activities non-inclusive to all participants and to ensure all participants' contributions, whether verbal or nonverbal, were respected, honored, and incorporated.

Each session consisted of three to five activities/games. Activities were chosen from each of the four aspects of theater, and duplicate aspects were minimized in order to create variety in sessions (e.g., only one improv activity per session). Session plans were created to outline activity structure and rules, group assignments, materials required, and other additional

information. A treatment hierarchy was established for each activity and incorporated when needed by participants. For some activities, predominantly role rehearsal and theater production-based, hand-outs and scripts were created for reference and guidance. Scripts included color-coded lines, arrows indicating participant's lines, and large (20-point) Verdana font. These were used in "You're Fired" and "Scene work" (see Appendix 16 [p.60]). For each session, chairs were arranged in a semicircle, thereby allowing participants to engage with others in either direction or across the circle. In addition, the circle provided opportunity for facilitators to move freely among the group. Dry erase boards, papers, pens, side tables, and other manipulables were available each session to aid in communication.

Table 3: Four Aspects of Theater

<b>Improvisation</b>	Most or all of what is performed is unplanned or unscripted: created spontaneously by the performers Examples: Simple Scenarios, One-Word Story, Pass the Prop, Emotional Object, One-Line Starter, Funny Walks, Honey Walk, Family Portrait.
<b>Theater Games</b>	Commonly used as warm-up exercises for actors before a rehearsal or performance or in the development of improvisational theatre. Examples: Name Gesture Sound, Action Activity, Movement Circle, Mirrors, Wink Murder, Character Chain, Boxing, Whoosh.
<b>Role rehearsal</b>	Actors assigned roles within a scripted scene Examples: Baker and Attendant, Scene Work, You're Fired".
<b>Theater Production</b>	Actors create, make, and produce original scripts and works Examples: Build-A-Scene, Magic, Human Machine.

### Physical Therapy Integration

Faculty and students from Temple University's Department of Physical Therapy (PT) partnered with Theater Group. The PTs assisted during group sessions and helped facilitate movement-based activities. While PT did not assist in session plan development, they helped facilitate activities with high mobility components, such as "Funny Walks" (see Appendix 9

[p.53]) and met with facilitators during planning meetings and post-group discussions. The PTs partnered with individuals for additional support during activities. In addition, they encouraged non-dominant limb usage and modeled appropriate movement and worked on increasing physical endurance and dual task challenges of language and physical mobility simultaneously. PT focus remained heavily on participants with physical impairments and limited mobility. However, PT helped facilitate sessions and assisted with any/all group members.

Incorporating Physical Therapy into Theater Group encouraged inter-professional collaboration between the Communication Sciences and Disorders Department and Physical Therapy Department. Moreover, it provided students the opportunity to practice interpersonal collaboration and learn more about the other department.

#### Participant-Reported Outcomes

Participant-reported outcome measures were administered before participation in the theater group using the Communication Confidence Rating Scale for Aphasia (CCRSA) and a theater survey created by the primary group facilitator to determine participants' levels of theater experience, interests in different theater subtypes, and performing confidence. The CCRSA is a 10-item self-report scale that assesses the PWA's confidence in communication in various situations, such as when talking on the telephone or in a group setting. Both the CCRSA and theater survey required participants to indicate their responses on horizontal visual analogue scales. For post-group testing, the CCRSA was repeated and a revised theater survey, which included repeated measures of performing confidence and theater interests, as well as overall group feedback, individual activity feedback, and future interests.

Pre and post program evaluations were conducted by the primary group facilitator (M.D.) using paper and pencil, with additional comments recorded using a Sony IC RECORDER ICD-

UX533 recorder. Because of the small number of participants, data were analyzed using effect sizes rather than inferential statistics. Effect sizes reflect the magnitude of a treatment effect. Cohen’s *d* was calculated using the means, SDs, and correlation coefficients for both pre-group and post-group (Morris & DeShon, 2002). Effect sizes were benchmarked against Cohen’s (1988) definition of effect size as “small,  $d = 0.2$ ”, “medium,  $d = 0.5$ ”, and “large,  $d = 0.8$ ”.

Self-Reflections

After each session, the primary group facilitator wrote a session reflection, including a rationale for each activity, how the overall session went, what activities were successful or unsuccessful, what activities should be repeated in the future, and what modifications to include for future use. Anything remarkable that occurred during the session was also included, such as participant actions, abnormal behavior, and session plan changes. Self-reflections are important for analyzing facilitator participation, successful activities, and participant engagement. Moreover, self-reflections may serve as a reference when developing future sessions.

**RESULTS**

Table 4 shows the means, SDs, and effect sizes for CCRSA ratings before and after the theater group. There was a large effect size in expressing thoughts and opinions. In addition, there were several effect sizes that could be benchmarked as medium, including the overall CCRSA and interests in improv and role rehearsal. Perceived improvements that could be benchmarked as small include performing confidence and interest in theater production.

Table 4: Effect Sizes of Participant-Reported Outcomes for Summer 2019

	Pre-Group		Post-Group		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Effect Size
CCRSA					
Talk with people	64.44	20.07	67.50	24.93	0.14

Stay in touch with family and friends	65.56	20.07	66.25	22.64	0.03
Included in conversations	52.22	27.29	62.50	25.50	<i>0.39</i>
Follow news and sports	73.22	18.56	82.50	14.88	<b>1.23</b>
Follow movies	82.78	17.52	86.25	14.08	<i>0.22</i>
Speak on the telephone	60.00	25.00	68.75	25.88	<i>0.34</i>
Understand you	61.11	25.71	70.00	18.52	<i>0.40</i>
Make your own decision	83.89	17.64	91.25	11.26	<u>0.50</u>
Speak for yourself	66.67	24.50	80.00	16.90	<u>0.63</u>
Discussions about finances	81.11	15.37	86.25	15.98	<i>0.32</i>
<b>Average</b>	69.10	12.58	76.13	12.82	<u>0.55</u>
Performing Confidence					
Public Speaking	63.17	30.71	62.88	24.88	-0.01
Performing	67.11	39.12	79.63	26.17	<i>0.38</i>
Expressing myself	74.94	28.89	87.25	12.99	<u>0.55</u>
Expressing thoughts and opinions	66.28	25.77	85.38	17.04	<b>0.87</b>
Theater Subtype Interests					
Improv	81.06	23.30	91.38	7.96	<u>0.59</u>
Theater Games	76.06	33.16	80.13	33.81	0.12
Role Rehearsal	86.83	16.09	95.63	4.93	<u>0.74</u>
Theater Production	62.50	38.97	73.75	32.73	<i>0.31</i>

Note: Italic items indicate a small effect size, underlined items indicate a medium effect size, bolded items indicate a large effect size.

### Evaluation of Specific Activities

The following narratives demonstrate sample self-reflections for each theater subtype. Outcomes varied in length depending on the activity and its success. In addition, outcomes included whether the activity should be repeated for future use.

#### 1. ONE-LINE STARTERS (IMPROV) – Appendix 11 (p. 55)

The one-line starters task was implemented in the 5th session. One-line starters is an improv activity in which participants are given a beginning line to initiate a scene. Participants must base the scene around the assigned line. The goals of this activity included emphasizing spontaneous speech and conversational skills, as well as listening skills and auditory comprehension. As a whole, this activity proved to be the most enjoyable activity of the session based on participant engagement and feedback. Modifications required included visual cues (dry erase board), facilitator cueing, and assigned scene partners. Visual cues served as a memory aid to remind participants of starting lines and benefited participants with better visual comprehension than auditory comprehension.

Initially, no participant volunteered to start the scenes. The group facilitators then modified the activity by strategically pairing non-verbal participants with more mildly impaired, verbal participants. This proved to be very beneficial, as it was easy for the non-verbal participants to play off their partners. Moreover, the non-verbal participants effectively utilized facial expressions and gestures to progress the scene and remain on topic. When giving starting lines, it was important to make sure participants with intact reading skills pulled out the line from the bowl. Thus, facilitators needed to be cognizant of pairings and who was comfortable/confident reading. This task was later repeated with different partner pairings.

#### 2. MIRRORS (THEATER GAME) – Appendix 3 (p. 47)

The mirrors task was implemented in the 2nd session. For this activity, participants were required to “mirror” their partner and follow/copy their movements. This activity focused on neuromuscular facilitation, as participants were required to use their non-dominant side. Participants worked on overall physicality and movement. This activity promotes decision-making skills and confidence because participants make bold movement choices while acting as the leader and having to commit to their actions. Extra support from PT was required for this activity given the physical nature of the tasks.

This activity was the most favored during the session based on laughter from participants and overall engagement. All participants were engaged and active. PT helped facilitate and adapt movements for participants effectively. In future semesters, this activity might be incorporated as a warm-up each week for movement-based activities. To reduce the likelihood of participants becoming bored with this task, it can be modified into similar activities, such as boxing, group mirroring, and mirror passing between participants.

### 3. “YOU’RE FIRED” (ROLE REHEARSAL) – Appendix 16 (p. 60)

“You’re Fired” is a short, scripted scene involving two participants - one as a “boss” and one as an “employee”. This activity was implemented in the 4th week of the summer. This activity focused on role rehearsal and the ability to follow a scene, with emphasis on language comprehension and communication exchange between participants. Participants were required to work with each other to develop an effective scene. Modifications included role assignments and color-coded scripts. Participants were assigned either boss or employee pseudo-randomly. One constraint was that non-verbal participants were assigned “boss” since that role had fewer lines and language could be communicated through gestures. The use of different colors and arrows in

scripts effectively segregated parts and indicated when to say appropriate lines, thus providing visual cues for participants.

This activity provided participants the opportunity to act out a role and perform a scripted scene. During pre-testing, participants seemed excited for role rehearsal, so the facilitators were interested to see how they would react. Each participant had the opportunity to act out the scene twice - once as written and once with an added background task. Participants seemed to enjoy this activity and get into character. In the future, facilitators would give participants the opportunity to play both roles and switch partners.

#### 4. MAGIC (THEATER PRODUCTION) - Appendix 19 (p. 63)

This task was implemented in week 6, which was the last session. “Magic” was created from a list of words written by a participant. All of the words on the list related to the theme of magic. Each participant was given a copy of the list. Then, the group was split into two groups, and each group created a scene incorporating words from the list. To set a tangible goal, participants were encouraged to use at least 3 words listed. PT and Speech facilitators were divided amongst groups to help facilitate. This task promoted written language comprehension, incorporated scene development and creation, and encouraged turn-taking in small group settings.

Modifications included word lists for each participant and cueing/prompting by facilitators. The word lists served as a visual aid and memory reinforcement for participants. Facilitators guided scene creation when needed and gave minimal input in order to best preserve the participants’ visions for their scenes. Participants seemed very engaged throughout the activity and generated many creative ideas. Interestingly, both groups decided to incorporate and develop props for their scenes. Props utilized were impressive and very creative. While one

group performed, the other group attempted to track how many words were used in the scene.

This activity could be repeated with different themes and lists and can be used to promote scene writing.

### **SUMMER 2019 DISCUSSION**

After the six-week pilot program, facilitators were able to determine the group's interests in theater and develop an appropriate session structure for Theater Group. Participants expressed great interest across all theater subtypes and developed favorite subtypes. As evident in pre- and post-group evaluations, participant interests in each theater subtype increased in all categories, with the greatest interest in role rehearsal.

Participation in the Theater Group resulted in self-reported improvements in communication confidence. Factors contributing to increased communication confidence include the use of specific dramatic activities and exercises that focused on both verbal and nonverbal communication skills, as well as encouragement and feedback from group facilitators and group members. Interestingly, there was a slight decrease in public speaking confidence. It is difficult to conclude if this decline was a direct result of the group or due to extraneous variables. Moreover, this decline may have been a result of self-report bias.

Aside from quantitative changes, participant engagement throughout sessions increased over the course of the six-week sessions, as noted by facilitators. Compared to the first session, participants became less inhibited and were not as afraid to look "dumb". The group was more willing to step outside their comfort zones and make bold decisions during scenes and improv. The group learned to build off each other's actions and scenes and required less facilitator intervention as the weeks progressed. In addition, participants with severe expressive language

impairments grew to be the most expressive and productive participants in the group, making great use of facial expressions and physical movements.

Self-reported data is important because it incorporates participants' own perspectives on the benefits and enjoyment of a theater group. In addition to participant-reported outcomes, open ended questions and testimonials were used to capture the impact of the theater group. Sample responses from open ended questions included:

1. "[PACT] helps us to get through the day, you know doing different things like this. It just helps us get through the day and we know that we are still um valuable people... and theater group has helped."
2. "Marvelous!"
3. "This one here, uh was a good group. A good good good group. You know, I like to do (do do) [acting] often."
4. "You start laugh and then you can't can't stop, laugh so hard! You know... to me and the other people in my group... That was cool."

The success of the group depended on the group facilitators and session preparation. Effective adaptations and modifications included the creation of accessible scripts, incorporating AAC, and revising session materials to fit the language and physical needs of the participants. The collaboration between PT and speech was essential to ensure that each session ran smoothly. Post-group debriefs allowed for this collaboration and improved the overall communication between both parties.

### **MODIFICATIONS FOR FALL 2019**

Over the course of six weeks, members in PACT's Theater Group participated in 21 activities. Of the 21 activities completed during the six weeks, the most popular activities

amongst participants were Movement Circle (Appendix 4 [p. 48]), Mirrors (Appendix 3 [p. 47]), “You’re Fired” (Appendix 16 [p. 60]), Family Portrait (Appendix 9 [p. 53], Scene Work (Appendix 16 [p. 60] , and “Magic”(Appendix 19 [p. 63]). These activities encompassed all of the theater subtypes, demonstrating the broad range of interests from members. On the contrary, the least popular activity was Baker and Attendant (Appendix 16 [p. 60]). From this, facilitators inferred that participants prefer more structured activities, where they are assigned roles and/or tasks, as opposed to more independently creative activities, like Baker and Attendant.

Common characteristics of successful tasks included usage of multimodal cues, structured framework, and group inclusion. For example, with Family Portrait and Scene Work, participants engaged with one another, rather than performing alone. Moreover, multimodal cues, including verbal, visual, and tactile cues, were used throughout many successful activities. These cues provided additional language support and comprehension, as some participants required visual language while others needed auditory cues. Therefore, these core characteristics help support successful activities and should be included throughout the fall.

On the contrary, characteristics of unsuccessful activities were avoided for the fall semester. Of the unsuccessful activities, all were cognitively challenging, linguistically demanding, and memory based. Although modifications were created to assist participants throughout these types of tasks, such as including word banks, these activities proved to be difficult, resulting in loss of focus and engagement. Participants expressed their frustrations and confusion when analyzing each activity during the post-group evaluation.

In their post-group evaluation, participants indicated the most interest in role rehearsal and improv for the fall semester. These preferences influenced planning of the fall semester sessions and selection of activities, as sessions aimed to bring forth the greatest amount of

enjoyment and benefit for members. In addition, group facilitators determined that the fall group would conclude with a final performance/showcase. This decision was made on the basis that a final showcase would emphasize role rehearsal and allow participants the opportunity to rehearse scripted material throughout the semester. Moreover, a final showcase would allow participants to work towards a final product and be more involved in the rehearsal process and show development.

Another modification for the fall semester was the addition of a student facilitator to co-lead group sessions. The student would be enrolled in CSCD 3232: Introduction to Aphasia and Evidence-Based Communicative Interventions. The student facilitator would co-create session plans and help lead and facilitate weekly sessions. In addition, PT would continue to be incorporated into sessions, but with two new students for the fall semester. Moreover, the PT students would assist in session development, helping to create at least one activity for each week.

Lastly, duration of groups was reduced from six 90-minute session to ten 60-minute sessions. This was unavoidable because other PACT groups were scheduled to resume during the Fall 2019 semester, and the master PACT schedule could not accommodate 90-minutes sessions along with the other groups. Furthermore, the number of sessions expanded because Theater Group would occur throughout the entire semester.

## **FALL 2019**

### **METHODS**

#### **Participants**

Nine participants were enrolled in the Fall 2019 Theater Group. Seven participants were returning members from the summer session and two were new to Theater Group. Before the

group began, one participant (returning member) dropped out of the group for unknown reasons. No participants were excluded from group due to language and/or physical abilities. Group members included 7 (five women; two men) individuals with chronic aphasia (secondary to stroke) and one member (male) with traumatic brain injury. Although the participant with TBI did not have aphasia, he was included in the group to improve his pragmatic and social skills. Mean age was 64 years (range: 51 to 74 years). Mean education was 14 years (range: 7 to 21 years). Mean time post-onset was 10 years. Participant characteristics are listed in Table 5.

Table 5: Fall 2019 Participant Characteristics

Variable	N (N = 8)	Percent of Sample (%)
<b>Age (years)</b>		
51-65	6	75.00
65+	2	25.00
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	3	37.50
Female	5	63.50
<b>Language Impairment</b>		
Expressive	6	75.00
Receptive	2	25.00
<b>Apraxia of Speech</b>		
Presence of Apraxia of Speech	1	12.50
<b>Physical impairments</b>		
Hemiplegia	3	37.50
Wheelchair usage	1	12.50
<b>Education (years)</b>		

5-8 years	1	12.50
9-12 years	2	25.00
>12 years	5	62.50

All participants who participated in the summer pilot group included the experience in their overall theater experience of the two new participants, one had experience acting with the Philly Improv Theater. The other had no previous experience, making them the sole participant without theater experience, as indicated in Table 6.

Table 6: Fall 2019 Participant Theater Experience

Experience	Acting Experience	Improv Experience	Theater Education/Classes
<b>n (N = 8)</b>	7	7	7
<b>Percentage (%)</b>	87.50	87.50	87.50

### Program Development

Procedures for developing group sessions from the Summer pilot program were repeated for the Fall to ensure appropriate activity selection. Facilitators attempted to incorporate all theater subtypes to allow participants the ability to determine which area(s) were most effective and enjoyable. However, there were few activities incorporating theater subtype “theater production” during the fall. This was due to added emphasis on role rehearsal and less time per session to devote to theater production. Similar to the Summer, physical therapy was incorporated into the fall sessions. Two new Physical Therapy students were involved with the

group. The PT students split time during the semester, with one student facilitating during the first half and the other during the second half.

For the first five weeks, session programming was focused on theater games and fundamental principles of improv and acting. Session planning and materials were similar to those described for the summer group. This provided participants with skills and knowledge that could be applied in the future for the final showcase. In addition, new games and activities were chosen to add variety and avoid repetition of activities from the summer. For each session, activities were split between the two facilitators to ensure equal amounts of work and leadership.

In addition to theater activities and games, the group developed a calendar page for the annual PACT calendar. Facilitators developed an activity where participants would vote and assign each other different “awards” to win. Examples of awards include “Most Valuable Performer”, “Most Physically Expressive”, and “Spicy Award: Most Sassy”. After compiling votes, participants were awarded their respective awards and had their photograph taken, which would later be used in the calendar page.

After the first five weeks, the remainder of the fall semester sessions were centered around role rehearsal and performance opportunities. Performance opportunities included a Halloween Performance and Holiday Showcase. The group performed a lip sync for the Halloween Performance and a lip sync and scene for the Holiday Showcase. Lip syncs were selected as a performance type due to their theatrical nature and participants’ enjoyment of music. The scene served as a traditional theater vehicle and example of standard theater practice. Details of each performance are included below.

### Performance Opportunities

#### HALLOWEEN

Theater Group was asked to perform at an annual Halloween Party hosted by the Eleanor M. Saffran Center for Halloween. The opportunity was posed to the group in an open discussion, where facilitators explained that the performance was optional and low stakes. One facilitator suggested lip-syncing “Thriller” for the performance, as it was a familiar song for participants and on-brand for the party. The group unanimously voted to perform “Thriller” and seemed excited about the opportunity, as evidenced by their comments and reactions. The “Thriller” music video was shown to the group to familiarize them with the song and movements, as well as to provide inspiration for the performance.

The group had one session to choreograph and rehearse “Thriller” before the performance. A shortened, 3 minute 28 second version of the song was used and found on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ayufd3o8wHA>), as the original song was 5 minutes 58 seconds and the music video was 13 minutes 43 seconds. The majority of the session was devoted to rehearsal, other than a short warm-up activity and discussion about roles, costumes, ideas, etc. Participants were given the option to act as a “townsperson” or “zombie/monster” and selected their preference. One participant, who had previously expressed interest in narration and voice work, performed the Vincent Price narration. PT was heavily involved, and the PT supervisor led the group through a series of choreographed moves. The choreography was modified for people with mobility impairments. For example, movements with heavy arm movement (e.g., overhead clap) were simplified for participants with hemiparesis so that they could extend their arms as high as they could. The group expressed that they were much more confident with PT dancing alongside them. When not performing choreographed moves, participants were encouraged to move about, use gestures, incorporate their improv skills, and stay in character.

On the day of the performance, the group met for a final dress rehearsal prior to the performance. Participants were given costume pieces, such as medical wrap to transform them into mummies, and encouraged to dress up. Once participants finished rehearsing, they went to the party and performed in front of a large group of partygoers. During the performance, the PT supervisor did not model the choreography. As a result, some participants had difficulty performing the choreographed moves. Despite this, participants incorporated a variety of facial expressions and gestures into their performance and seemed to enjoy themselves, as evidenced by their reactions and laughter throughout the performance. Participants were proud of their performance and received a large applause.

The performance was recorded by M.D. to share with participants at a later date and preserve for reflection. When participants viewed the video, they were supportive of each other's performances and commented on each other's gestures and moves. They were proud of the performance, as evidenced by their feedback to facilitators and the group.

#### HOLIDAY SHOWCASE

At the beginning of the semester, participants were offered the opportunity to perform in a final showcase and present it during the Communication Sciences and Disorders Department's annual holiday party. Multiple group discussions were held to determine the nature of the final showcase and decide what material would be performed. After considering participant suggestions from pre-group evaluations and group interest, facilitators decided that participants would perform two lip-syncs and a scene for the final showcase. Since the performance would be at a holiday party, a variety of holiday scenes and songs were presented to the group, as well as their suggestions from the pre-group evaluations. To avoid any conflicting religious views,

facilitators attempted to choose holiday songs and scenes that were relatively non-denominational, such as “Winter Wonderland” and “Frosty the Snowman”.

Participants each received a ballot to vote for what they wanted to perform. Each ballot included five “Holiday” and “Non-Holiday” options for both the lip-syncs and scene, as well as the option to write-in other suggestions. This provided participants with input and allowed them to be a part of the decision-making process. Participants were instructed to vote for their top two scenes and lip-syncs. Votes were tallied and the results were as follows: “Stop in the Name of Love” and “Winter Wonderland” for lip syncs, and the final scene of “It’s A Wonderful Life” for the scene. Participants seemed happy with the results, and no participant expressed negative emotions or feedback.

Rehearsals for the final showcase began after the Halloween performance. Three rehearsals were dedicated to the final showcase, as well as an additional, optional rehearsal on Thursday, December 5<sup>th</sup> for participants after Theater Group officially concluded on Thursday, November 21st. After the first rehearsal, “Stop in the Name of Love” was removed from the program to avoid overwhelming participants with too much choreography. Learning two pieces was challenging for many of the participants. Thus, reducing the number served to minimize participant stress. Session plans for the final showcase rehearsals generally included a warm-up activity, followed by the lip-sync and scene. Time was split evenly between both pieces. One facilitator (J.F.) headed the lip-sync while the other (M.D.) was responsible for the scene.

For the lip-sync, two verses were cut from “Winter Wonderland” to shorten the song for participants; these verses included the bridges (e.g., “In a meadow we can build a snowman...”). These cuts resulted in four verses for participants to perform. A track was created on Adobe Audition, using Dean Martin’s version of the song, which seemed most familiar to the

participants. To encourage ownership of the performance, group members were divided into two groups, each of which choreographed two of the four verses. Participants' choreography was implemented, and PT helped modify and block movements. Props, including bells and fake snow, were added to the performance to enhance the theatricality of the lip-sync. A PowerPoint with the song lyrics and choreography was created to assist participants throughout the performance and serve as a visual aid.

For the scene, a modified script was created based on the original film script. Script language was adapted to fit language abilities of participants. The scene was shortened to account for total performance time, resulting in a 5-to-6-minute scene; the montage of George Bailey running through the snow was cut. M.D. selected roles for participants based on participants' language abilities (reading and verbal expression), interests, and group participation/engagement. Due to the limited number of participants, several characters from the film were removed and facilitators were cast as minor roles. Scripts were created for each participant, color-coded with their lines and character. During rehearsals, visual cues were written into scripts to denote actions (e.g., "\$" for when to throw money).

The scene was first rehearsed as a "read-through", an initial rehearsal of a play at which actors read their parts from scripts. Prior to reading the script, participants were shown the actual scene from the film and given background information. After the initial read through, the facilitators decided to produce the scene as a "staged reading". In staged readings, actors read from their scripts and minimal stage movement is included. This form of theater was chosen to avoid overwhelming participants with too much blocking and to ensure participants were given sufficient support throughout the scene. Blocking of the scene resembled that of the lip-sync, so that participants could remain in their designated places. Facilitators were placed amongst

participants to help assist with page turning and cueing. Props for the scene included fake money, a book, and a bell. Each participant was given money to throw out during the scene when characters give their money to George.

On the day of the holiday showcase performance, participants had a final dress rehearsal prior to the performance. Participants brought costume pieces, including scarfs and hats, to wear during the performance. The group planned to present the Lip-Sync PowerPoint to help support participants during the performance. However, due to technical difficulties in the performance room, this was not possible. In addition, the music could not be played through the room speakers. As a result, M.D. presented the PowerPoint on a laptop in the front of the room, as well as the music. Because the music was played from the laptop rather than the room's speakers, it was difficult for participants to hear the music. Regardless, participants seemed to enjoy the lip sync, as evidenced by their comments and feedback following the performance. After the lip sync, participants changed out of their winter costumes and collected their props before starting the scene. One participant, whose role was the "Narrator", was absent due to a family emergency, so M.D. assumed their role.

After the conclusion of the performance, the participants received a large round of applause. Participants seemed to be proud of their performance, as evidenced by their feedback and comments. One participant said, "I thought it went really well. We did a good job." The performance was recorded by M.D. to share with participants at a later date and preserve for reflection.

### Data Collection

Pre- and post-testing procedures were identical to those used for the summer pilot program. The primary group facilitator wrote reflections for all sessions. Because session

planning was divided between the two group facilitators, the primary group facilitator focused on the activities she planned. M.D. analyzed the other facilitator's activities but did not include a rationale since she did not plan the activity.

## RESULTS

Table 7 illustrates the means, SDs, and effect sizes for CCRSA ratings before and after the fall theater group. No large effect sizes were reported, and only one medium effect size was reported (public speaking). Overall, there appeared to be a negative trend for both the CCRSA and performance confidence. There was a difference of -2.06 between the CCRSA average pre-group and post-group. Of note, the greatest differences between pre-group and post-group were evident in the performing confidence group, including public speaking (-14.50), expressing myself (-10.13), and performing (-8.96).

Table 7: Effect Sizes of Participant-Reported Outcomes for Fall 2019

	Pre-Group		Post-Group		Effect Size
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
CCRSA					
Talk with people	75.63	22.32	80.00	16.90	0.22
Stay in touch with family and friends	71.88	18.47	70.00	23.30	-0.09
Included in conversations	64.38	22.04	63.75	19.96	-0.03
Follow news and sports	83.75	9.26	82.50	14.88	-0.10
Follow movies	88.13	9.91	87.50	15.81	-0.05
Speak on the telephone	73.75	22.32	66.25	14.08	-0.40
Understand you	69.38	17.27	67.50	23.15	-0.09
Make your own decision	78.13	12.82	73.75	25.60	-0.22
Speak for yourself	70.00	19.82	67.50	31.05	-0.10
Discussions about finances	79.38	11.88	75.00	17.73	-0.29

<b>Average</b>	75.44	10.41	73.38	13.88	-0.17
Performing Confidence					
Public Speaking	69.50	16.15	55.00	28.44	<u>-0.63</u>
Performing	72.25	24.47	63.29	33.31	<i>-0.31</i>
Expressing myself	81.38	20.84	71.25	20.62	<i>-0.49</i>
Expressing thoughts and opinions	77.13	24.09	69.50	19.59	<i>-0.35</i>
Theater Subtype Interests					
Improv	82.13	15.27	83.88	19.59	0.10
Theater Games	84.88	14.40	86.00	10.80	0.09
Role Rehearsal	86.13	19.72	85.75	12.20	-0.02
Theater Production	68.50	27.52	69.14	16.20	0.03

Note: Italic items indicate a small effect size, underlined items indicate a medium effect size, bolded items indicate a large effect size.

### Evaluation of Specific Activities

The following narratives demonstrate sample self-reflections. For every activity, rationale, modifications, and outcomes were included in the reflection. Outcomes varied in length depending on the activity and its success. In addition, outcomes included whether the activity should be repeated for future use.

#### 1. “YES, AND...” (IMPROV) – Appendix 15 (p. 59)

This activity was implemented during the third session of the fall semester. The goal of the activity was for participants to develop a cohesive story by adding onto other participants’ sayings by using the phrase, “yes, and...”. “Yes, and...” is a principle rule of improv and is based upon the action of agreement; it requires participants to accept and add to the ideas of others. This brings participants together and builds a strong group dynamic. With emphasis on agreement, collaboration, listening, and focus, this activity seemed applicable to PWA. Each

participant had the opportunity to engage in the conversation by adding to the story, thus promoting turn-taking as well. In addition, this activity may be linguistically and cognitively challenging for PWA, as participants have to rely on their working memory and word-finding abilities to continue the story. Therefore, the use of gestures and word banks were included for additional assistance and to add dual forms of communication for participants.

After participants were given the instructions for this activity, participants seemed hesitant to attempt it. Due to miscommunication from the facilitator, participants thought they had to repeat every sentence of the story, rather than the sentence of the person next to them. After clarification, participants seemed relieved and ready to participate. The activity began with the prompt “Last week, I went to the store” and gradually progressed into an elaborate story about car repairs, a party, and pears. For the most part, the story followed a natural path, and all contributions were relevant to the story. Each participant gave an accompanying gesture when adding sentences to the story, with PT helping to facilitate gesture creation. Participants needed additional time to think about their sentences and build connections, which was expected prior to the activity beginning. At the end, everyone acted out the complete story, incorporating the gestures used for each sentence.

Some participants expressed during the activity that “it was difficult” and that it was “not their favorite”. Due to the challenging nature of the activity, this did not come as a surprise. Facilitators decided that this activity should not be repeated. Instead, the idea of “Yes, and...” should be touched upon in a different activity that would allow for more support with words and actions.

2. “WHO AM I?” (THEATER GAME) – Appendix 5 (p. 49)

This activity was implemented during the third session. Participants were positioned in a circle, with one “Master” whose role was to guess the speaker. One speaker would say “Hello” per round, with the goal of masking their voice to dupe the Master. This activity focuses on voice use and building communication confidence. It promotes an open environment of silliness and fun as participants are encouraged to modify their voices (e.g., tone, pitch, volume) to be less recognizable. By reinforcing the idea that the group is a safe space, participants are encouraged to take risks, hopefully leading to increased self-confidence. From a voice perspective, this activity promotes different voice uses, such as projection and inflection. For more quiet participants, this activity challenges participants to project their voices and speak loudly.

Originally, the plan was to have all participants sitting, with the one speaker approaching the “Master” at a time. However, to mask who the speaker was, facilitators encouraged participants to start stomping on the ground to add extra noise. The task evolved to all participants moving around the room so that the “Master” could not detect where the speaker was coming from. Additionally, these modifications kept participants engaged and active throughout the activity. Facilitators ensured that each participant had a turn in each role, and that the “Master” was regularly changed to maintain interest and engagement. Participants seemed to enjoy this activity. Some participants were very good at modulating their voices. In the future, facilitators should emphasize vocal modulation techniques and potentially include rounds in which certain features are manipulated (e.g., change volume, change pitch, etc.).

### 3. “IT’S A WONDERFUL LIFE” (ROLE REHEARSAL)

First, facilitators provided participants with a synopsis of “It’s A Wonderful Life” and explained that the group would be performing the final scene. Then, the scene was presented on the projector for participants to watch. Afterward, participants were each given a script, which

included highlighted lines and assigned scripts. Facilitators explained that the script was modified (some characters and lines were cut) because there were more characters in the scene than members in the group and due to scene length.

Character parts were assigned prior to the session. Casting decisions were based on participants' experience, interests, and abilities. No participant seemed to dislike their role or express disinterest. One participant noted that they only had one line. When the facilitators asked if she/he would like additional lines, the participant laughed and said no. Because there were too many roles for the number of participants, facilitators were cast into the scene as well, playing the roles of Zulu and Mr. Martini.

After watching the video, there was only enough time to read through the script once, as a "read through". Participants read through the script independently; facilitators were on hand to assist as needed. Participants expressed excitement about enacting the scene. Participants were reminded that they were not required to memorize their lines and that the performance was meant to be fun.

### **SUMMER 2019 & FALL 2019 COMPARISON**

Six participants enrolled in both the fall and spring groups. Their pre- and post-group scores from both sessions were compared. The patterns of change differed in the summer and fall groups, sometimes showing change in opposite directions. Averages for the CCRSA and performing confidence are shown in Table 8 below. For the CCRSA, average scores increased from pre to post treatment in the summer but declined from pre to post treatment in the fall. Similarly, changes were in opposite directions from pre to post treatment in performing confidence in the summer and fall sessions. Theater subtype interests tended to increase from pre to post treatment in the summer but showed minimal changes in the fall.

Table 8: Comparison of mean scores of Summer and Fall Participants

	Summer 2019			Fall 2019		
	Pre-Group	Post Group	Effect Size	Pre-Group	Post Group	Effect Size
CCRSA						
Talk with people	68.33	70.00	0.09	65.00	86.67	<b>0.93</b>
Stay in touch with family and friends	70.00	70.00	0.00	70.00	78.33	<i>0.41</i>
Included in conversations	58.33	63.33	0.18	68.33	38.33	0.00
Follow news and sports	75.00	80.00	<i>0.31</i>	85.00	86.67	0.14
Follow movies	81.67	81.67	0.00	90.00	93.33	<i>0.29</i>
Speak on the telephone	71.67	73.33	0.09	86.67	73.33	<b>-0.85</b>
Understand you	73.33	70.00	-0.18	70.00	68.33	-0.08
Make your own decision	85.00	90.00	0.31	83.33	60.00	<b>-0.85</b>
Speak for yourself	71.6	78.33	<i>0.34</i>	71.67	70.00	-0.06
Discussions about finances	81.67	83.33	0.09	86.67	80.00	<u>-0.51</u>
<b>Average</b>	73.67	76.00	0.18	79.17	77.83	-0.12
Performing Confidence						
Public Speaking	78.42	70.83	-0.39	74.33	57.50	<u>-0.66</u>
Performing	55.83	90.67	<b>1.09</b>	81.33	61.17	<u>-0.58</u>
Expressing myself	78.33	91.50	<b>0.76</b>	85.17	78.33	-0.37

Expressing thoughts and opinions	64.17	85.50	<b>1.08</b>	82.83	7.67	-0.32
Theater Subtype Interests						
Improv	77.25	9.50	<b>0.87</b>	87.83	90.17	0.16
Theater Games	69.58	79.50	0.25	89.83	89.67	-0.02
Role Rehearsal	86.08	96.33	<u>0.73</u>	89.83	89.33	-0.03
Theater Production	63.00	69.17	0.16	71.33	72.33	0.04

Note: *Italic* items indicate a small effect size, underlined items indicate a medium effect size, **bolded** items indicate a large effect size.

## FALL 2019 DISCUSSION

Through a mix of improv, theater games, and opportunities for role performance, participants were exposed to three of the four theater subtypes in the fall session (theater production was not included). As indicated in pre- and post-group evaluations, interests in improv and theater games increased. On the contrary, interests in role rehearsal decreased slightly (-0.38). This mostly reflects repeating participants who had already learned about the different subtypes over the summer, as the two new participants' interests increased.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of participants expressed interest in performing at events again.

Interestingly, self-reported outcomes revealed declines from pre- to post-group for both the CCRSA and performing confidence. Of the ten categories in the CCRSA, only one (talking with people) showed improvement; all of the other categories showed a decline. Moreover, all categories of performing confidence declined post-group as well. In regard to individual participant scores, three of the eight participants' average CCRSA scores increased, while the remaining participants' average CCRSA scores declined to varying degrees.

Qualitatively, there were notable changes in participant engagement. Throughout the fall semester, participants became less inhibited and more confident during sessions. The group members were more willing to step outside their comfort zones and make bold decisions during scenes and improv. One participant, who had been the quietist and most timid at first, became the most out-spoken member of the group. In addition, participants were able to effectively build off each other's actions and scenes and required less facilitator intervention as the weeks progressed, especially returning members from the summer. In addition to participant-reported outcomes, open ended questions and testimonials were used to capture the impact of the theater group.

Sample responses from open ended questions included:

1. "I really really liked theater, and I think it causes a person to step outside comfort zone and be someone else or themselves. It's really fun. Sometimes stepping out of comfort zone can be scary at first, but once you get into it, it's exciting or exuberating. Especially with walks, you can really be anyone. It's energizing, stimulating, and so much fun. I'd like to explore more and learn more ways of being not who I am.
2. "I don't know if we have the time to get into Shakespeare, but I'd like to increase the substance and challenges of group. I like to prepare for group, and there is benefit in preparing in advance. "
3. "I am like the group. The theater is good for all of us. Many group for brain, wake up."
4. "It's much better than the first one because we're doing the acting for *Thriller* and *Winter Wonderland*. We all had lines to say. We all had small lines and props....

[Award] is small and nothing but paper, but it reminds me of before the stroke. I'm glad I did it."

5. "Brilliant!"

As evidenced by participant feedback, participants enjoyed the group. Furthermore, one participant requested further challenges for the group. While this feedback will be considered in the future, it is important for facilitators to consider the physical and language abilities of the group.

### **SUMMER AND FALL COMPARISON DISCUSSION**

When considering returning participants only, effect sizes in the Fall were greater than effect sizes in the Summer. This may be because one returning participant had significant declines in pre to post group scores for the Fall. When excluding their data, the effect sizes of several CCRSA categories changed, to varying degrees. Five CCRSA categories' scores decreased in effect size classification level, either from large to medium, medium to small, or small to none.

Although there were more negative effect sizes in Fall than Summer, returning participants expressed that they enjoyed how the fall was not a direct copy of the summer and that they enjoyed the performance opportunities. Some participants mentioned that they preferred the fall group over the summer group.

From the facilitators' standpoints, returning members performing skills and confidence improved from the summer and throughout the fall semester. Participants better understood theatrical concepts and applied knowledge to activities. For instance, they joined in scenes and were able to effectively improvise. In addition, they were more proactive in stepping into scenes and activities; they were not as hesitant as they were previously. As a whole, participants seemed

more comfortable with activities and were able to quickly adapt and engage in all theater subtypes.

## **OVERALL DISCUSSION**

For both the Summer and Fall groups, it was difficult to determine if changes in pre to post group scores were due to the group, extraneous variables, or self-report bias. Self-report studies are inherently biased by the person's feelings at the time they filled out the questionnaire. For example, if a participant feels bad on the day that they are filling out the questionnaire, there is a greater possibility that their answers will be more negative. In addition, responses to numerical scales on the evaluation were subject to individual bias to give an extreme or middle response to all questions. Thus, the use of numerical and Likert scales may have predisposed participants to respond in either an extreme or neutral manner.

Although Likert scale scores and participant feedback are both self-reported measures, there was an evident difference between the two. While many participants gave very positive feedback, their CCRSA and Theater Survey scores did not correlate. This may be due to the closed nature of Likert scales, as Likert scales offer a set range of answers to select. Moreover, participants who are confused by a question or who wish to respond in a way that is not available on the scale itself may not give reliable answers. On the contrary, open-ended feedback allows participants to respond in their own words and allow the talk about ideas that would not otherwise be explored. Participants could talk about any aspect of group and go into as much or as little detail as they wished.

Additional limitations of the present evaluation include small sample size and self-selection bias. With a small sample size, it was difficult to find significant relationships from the data. However, this was unavoidable due to the set maximum number of group participants and

size of PACT room. Participant self-selection bias is evident as well, since the participants chose to sign up for Theater Group.

The results of this program evaluation can be used in the future for PACT Theater Group, as well as other aphasia theater groups. Activities can be repeated and modified to add variety for sessions. As participants learn more about theater, session plans could advance and incorporate new elements of theater and more demanding role rehearsals. In the future, longer scenes could be rehearsed, and more improv techniques could be introduced.

Overall, more research needs to be conducted to evaluate relationship between aphasia and theater. As this is a developing field, there are a multitude of potential benefits for PWA that are undetermined at this time. In the future, theater subtype should be examined separately, and additional evaluation measures should be included. Lastly, having a larger number or duration of sessions may lead to greater benefits.

### Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the people with aphasia who participated in this program. I also thank Rebecca Vernon, Kevin Kruth, Dana Sarcinello, Keerstin Robinson and Nicholas Pohland who participated in the project, as well as Francine Kohen and Jamison Fanella. Special thanks to David Ingram, and Karen Castka, Ginette Abbanat, and the Adler Aphasia Center for their contributions to the study. This work was supported by Temple University Diamond Research Scholars Program and Temple University Honors Program. For more information, contact Madeline Dunne at [maddy@temple.edu](mailto:maddy@temple.edu).

## References

- Beideman Szabo, G., Castka, K., Abbanat, G., & Holland, A. (2010, Mar 1,). Aphasia center takes the stage. *The ASHA Leader* Retrieved from <https://leader.pubs.asha.org/doi/10.1044/leader.FTR4.15032010.34>
- Chapey, R., Duchene, J. F., Elman, R. J., Garcia, L. J., Kagan, A., Lyon, J. G., & Simmons Mackie, N. (2000). Life participation approach to aphasia: A statement of values for the future. *ASHA Leader*, 5(3), 4. doi: 10.1044/leader.FTR.05032000.4
- Cherney, L. R., Oehring, A. K., Whipple, K., & Rubenstein, T. (2011). "Waiting on the words": Procedures and outcomes of a drama class for individuals with aphasia. *Seminars in Speech and Language*, 17(3), 229-242. doi:10.1055/s-0031-1286177
- Côté, I., Getty, L., & Gaulin, R. (2011). Aphasic theatre or theatre boosting self-esteem. *International Journal on Disability and Human Development*, 10(1) doi:10.1515/ijdhhd.2011.007
- Davidson, B., Howe, T., Worrall, L., Hickson, L., & Togher, L. (2008). Social participation for older people with aphasia: The impact of communication disability on friendships. *Topics in Stroke Rehabilitation*, 15(4), 325-340. doi:10.1310/tsr1504-325
- Elman, R. J. (2007). The importance of aphasia group treatment for rebuilding community and health. *Topics in Language Disorders*, 27(4), 300-308. doi: 10.1097/01.TLD.0000299884.31864.99
- Green, B. (2012). *Impact of improvisation on interpersonal communication* Available from Dissertations & Theses Europe Full Text: Literature & Language. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1020121996>

LeDorze, G., & Brassard, C. (1995). A description of the consequences of aphasia on aphasic persons and their relatives and friends based on the WHO model of chronic diseases. *Aphasiology*, 9(3), 239-255.

Mickiewicz, E. (2017). Critical review: Is theatre an effective intervention method for people living with a communication disorder? *Slavic Review*, 76(1), 192-198.  
doi:10.1017/slr.2017.17

Morris, S. B., & DeShon, R. P. (2002). Combining effect size estimates in meta-analysis with repeated measures and independent-groups designs. *Psychological Methods*, 7(1), 105-125. doi:10.1037//1082-989X.7.1.105

Stamatoplos, A. (2009). Improvisational theater as a tool for enhancing cooperation in academic libraries. In D.M. Mueller (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 14th National Conference of the Association of College and Research Libraries* (pp. 65-70). Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries.

Spolin, Viola. (1999). *Improvisation for the theater: A handbook of teaching and directing techniques*. Northwestern University Press.

Welsh, R. C. (2014). *On improvisation, learning, and literacy* Available from Publicly Available Content Database. Retrieved from  
<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1615446252>

## Appendix

**THEATER GAME**Action ActivityInstructions:

All participants will be given an action word list. The facilitator will explain how actions are used to move scenes and that this sheet will be useful throughout the theater group.

Start by going through each word and explaining what it means and how it may be used in a scene.

Have members go around the room acting out each action only by using the word “yes”.

## Boxing

Instructions:

With the whole group divided into pairs and all the pairs working at the same time, ask each pair to stand a few feet apart and perform an imaginary boxing match. Line up in two lines facing each other (similar to water balloon toss). One person “throws a punch”, and the other has to react as if they have been hit, even though the punch will have been at least a few feet from their faces. Participants don’t have to obey the rules of boxing, they can punch, kick, scratch, tickle, etc. etc., but each must physically react to what the other is doing.

It is important to stress that they must never touch each other or even get close to each other. Repeat activity with different pairings of partners - “speed dating”.

Character BingoInstructions:

Participants will each receive a character bingo card. Participants will each pull a character out of a bowl and must act it out without using verbal language. The rest of the group will guess who the character is by raising their hand, and the facilitators will select people to call out their guesses. Once a participant has correctly guessed the character, participants will cross off the character on their card (if on their card). Once a participant gets bingo, they must shout BINGO!

Begin the activity by modeling an example.

## Character Chain

Instructions:

This activity will incorporate characters from [Character List](#) and the pattern from Movement Circle. The activity will start with the facilitator assigning a character for the

group to act out from the list below. One participant will start by thinking of an action that is applicable to the character. Then, each participant must think of a different, unique action that still pertains to the character (actions can be accompanied by phrases). If participants and facilitators have thought of multiple actions, they may help others who may need assistance or who cannot think of action. Once the group has run out of actions, the last person must combine all of the actions into one-character performance.

Example:

- Cowboy
  - Put on cowboy hat
  - Tilt hat
  - Lasso in hair
  - Lasso a cow
  - Ride horse
  - Draw gun
  - Spin gun
  - Line dance

### Emotion Backstory

#### Instructions:

Create a series of [cards](#) with emotions on them (include word and picture of emotion) and put in a hat. Participants will each pick an emotion out of the bowl, read it aloud, and come up with a reason/scenario as to why someone may feel that way. The group will then act out that scenario.

After the scene has concluded, the next person will draw a different scenario out of a bowl and continue this process.

Example: “Happy” → Someone may be happy because they just got a job promotion → Group will act out the job promotion

### Exaggeration Circle

#### Instructions:

All players start in a circle. One player starts a little gesture, with or without a little sound. The next player takes it over and makes it bigger. The last player does the whole thing to the extreme.

As a practice round, one facilitator will start a gesture, and will encourage participants to overexaggerate and give examples. Each participant will have the opportunity to start a gesture.

Make sure the players stick to the original gesture/sound, and don't just do their own thing. We should be able to see the movement grow organically.

### Find Your Partner!

#### Instructions:

Participants have a piece of paper with a word on it taped to their back. They do not know what their word is. Participants find someone in the room. They then act out what is on each other's cards. They can ask each other one yes or no question and then move on until they find their pair.

- salt and pepper
- ketchup and mustard
- cat and dog
- pitcher and batter
- conductor and violinist
- hot and cold
- hug and kiss

### Mirror Circle

#### Instructions:

One participant goes to the center of the circle and acts as the first leader. Another participant volunteers to be the follower. The follower then becomes the leader and someone new becomes the follower. This cycles through until everyone gets a turn being a leader and the follower. The leader should make very slow and deliberate movements that the follower can easily mirror. A final challenge round has no leader and no follower as the pair must focus and feel together what movement they would like to make.

### Mirrors

#### Instructions:

Pair participants up and assign them as A and B. Tell A's that they are looking in the mirror. Encourage participants to move very slowly. B's are the mirror and must follow A's every movement. PT to help support individuals with hemiparesis and/or other mobility limitations during activity.

After a minute or so, participants will switch so that A becomes the mirror. After both A and B get to be the leader, tell them that neither is the leader or follower. Remind participants to go slower a few times (whiteboard).

Repeat activity with different pairings of partners.

### Movement Circle

Instructions:

All participants sit in a circle. One participant is chosen to start the game with a simple gesture (e.g., brushing teeth, drinking tea, etc.).

Participants sit in a circle with eyes closed. Participant starting mime taps person to right and shows them mime. Once they are done, the first participant closes their eyes and the second participant taps participant on right and mimics first person's mime. Continue around the circle until the last person completes mime.

The first person compares the original mime to the last mime for the group to compare.

1. Shopping
2. Going bowling
3. Building a campfire
4. Filming a movie
5. Ironing a shirt
6. Driving a car
7. Making a pizza
8. Sewing a dress
9. Flipping pancakes
10. Mowing a lawn
11. Folding laundry
12. Playing football
13. Waiting to take an exam
14. Sunbathing
15. Playing a board game

### Name Gesture

Instructions:

Start in a drama circle.

Facilitator models/starts by saying their name with an action. Then ask the group to follow the example, and then to pass it on to the next student, etc. This repeats for each participant, creating a chain.

Continue until everyone has been introduced.

### Name Gesture Letter

Instructions:

Start in a drama circle.

Facilitator starts by saying their name followed by an action/thing starting with the same letter as their first name (e.g., M - milking a cow, money). Then ask the group to repeat the name and action. Then, the next person will introduce themselves with their name and an action, as well as the person prior. Continue until everyone has been introduced and the group has copied.

At the end, challenge members to name every participant's name/action.

### The Passing Game

#### Instructions:

Participants sit in a circle. The leader suggests an imaginary object to be passed around in a circle. This object is passed around from person to person with different restrictions each time. The idea is to try to keep it from falling and to indicate its size and weight by the action.

- a small pea
- a sack of potatoes
- a dirty sock
- a bowling balls

### Who Am I?

#### Instructions:

Start in a circle. Choose one participant to be "Master" and have them close their eyes. Everyone else in the circle will go one at a time (selected secretly by tap by one facilitator) saying "Hello" to the master in different voices. After each person says "Hello", the Master will open their eyes and try to identify the owner of the voice. Give the Master a cheat sheet with all participant's names. If the Master guesses the participant correctly, they will continue to be the Master. If the Master guesses incorrectly, the participant who duped the Master will become the new Master.

The goal of the game is to become the Master and stay as the Master for as long as possible. Encourage participants to play with tone, pitch, and accents.

### Whoosh

#### Instructions:

All participants sit in a circle. One player starts by holding an imaginary "whoosh" ball and passing it to the person next to them while saying "whoosh". This pass can be done in a variety of ways (e.g., pushing, tossing, bouncing, etc.). His or her neighbor then tries to do exactly the same and must copy the movement and sound of the whoosh (e.g., if

participant starting says whoosh really quietly and gently tosses imaginary “whoosh”, the next participant must do the same and cannot change). Encourage participants to pay attention to voice (tone, inflection, loudness, etc.) and gesture (size, space, effort, etc.). As the whoosh goes around the circle and starts to deviate from the original “whoosh”, participants must react to the change (similar to Movement Circle). Continue the whoosh around the circle one more time, then discuss how it changed over the course of the circle. Then, restart with new participants starting the “whoosh”. Full activity will be completed three times (three different whooshes).

PT to incorporate neuromuscular facilitation to help facilitate movement of gesture amongst participants; this will help preserve each “whoosh”. If a participant has difficulties “whooshing”, have them focus on the gesture, rather than gesture and voice.

### Wink Murderer

#### Instructions:

Everyone starts in a circle with their eyes closed. The facilitator will secretly pick a person to be the “wink murderer” while everyone’s eyes are closed by tapping them on the shoulder. Once a wink murderer has been selected, the game begins.

Everyone stands up and moves about the circle, making conversation. Each person must make eye contact with each other. The wink murderer must try to wink at other people.

If a person receives a wink from the murderer, that person must “die” by dramatically sitting down and returning to their seat. He or she is encouraged to wait a few seconds before “dying” in order to make it harder to tell who the murder is. The dead person must remain seated for the remainder of the game. “Living” players then go to the nearest seat and prepare for accusations.

If a participant thinks they know who the murderer is or have a guess, he/she may name the suspected murderer. There can be multiple suspects. The suspects can then give rebuttals to prove innocence. Then, the group must vote on which suspect they think is the murderer. The group must reach a majority to prosecute. If the group is correct and the suspect is the murderer, the round is over (a win for the people). If the group is wrong, the suspect must sit out and the game continues until the murderer is found.

### Winter-Themed Charades

#### Instructions:

Participants are given a piece of paper with a winter-themed activity on it. They must act out what is on their paper. When they are done acting this out, the other participants will

guess what their activity is. Encourage participants to ask another member to join them in acting out their activity.

- Unwrapping a disappointing present
- Making a snow angel
- Skiing (and perhaps falling)
- Getting in a snowball fight
- Building a snowman
- Warming up by the fireplace
- Ice skating
- Shoveling snow

## **IMPROV**

### Award Ceremony

As a group, brainstorm award categories/superlatives to vote on. Give examples below. After brainstorming and writing down award examples on the giant notepad, explain that next week, awards will be given out to each member and photos will be taken for the calendar page. Hint that there will be an activity attached.

Explain that each participant will receive an award and have the opportunity to make an entrance and accept their award. Announce what person is going to be receiving the award (“The next award goes to \_\_\_\_\_”), but do not announce what award. This will cue the person to leave the room (go near Keurig) and make an entrance once they are announced. They must react and enter as though they just won the award. Once a participant receives their award, they will create three poses/moves and get photographed (if they would like). After getting their photograph, the facilitator will announce the next award.

Each participant will receive an award.

### Award Examples

- Most dramatic
- Most expressive
- Best physicality
- Most comedic

## Character Cards

### Instructions:

Provide each participant with a character sheet. Going around the circle as a group, act out each character. Once you have gotten through each character, have 2-3 participants

volunteer to pick characters out of a hat and perform short improv for the group, as their character. Provide scenarios or starters if needed.

Point participants to the following character traits:

- voice (loud/soft/harsh? intonation?)
- Status (high/low?)
- Age?
- The way the body moves?

### Emotional Object

#### Instructions:

The group starts by sitting in a circle. Ask one participant to hold an imaginary *diamond necklace*. Tell them that it is beautiful and delicate and that they love it. Ask the group to pass it carefully around the circle, and see if they can each make it real for themselves.

When they have all had a go, ask them to pass an imaginary handful of disgusting *slime* around the circle and explore how they feel about that.

Then ask them to pass an imaginary photograph around, but as each person receives it, they must imagine it as a photograph of a person that they really live.

Then they can pass around an imaginary puppy.

Then they can pass an imaginary skull.

Then they can pass an imaginary toy from their childhood.

The game will end with an imaginary ticking bomb which is about to go off.

### Environment Walks

#### Instructions:

Participants will move around the room as if walking in the following environments:

- The first snowfall
- Kitchen on Thanksgiving
- After Thanksgiving Dinner
- Snowball fight
- Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade
- Watching a football game

Facilitators should encourage participants to use their whole body (eyebrows, shoulders, fingers, knees, feet, etc.) and think about all of the senses (e.g. what does it smell like?).

Environments will be announced by one facilitator and the other will write them on the whiteboard to further promote comprehension.

### Family Portraits

#### Instructions:

Divide the group into groups of 3-4 (based on seating). Assign each group a title for a picture that revolves around a type of family. Groups have a few minutes (2min - 5 min) to form a portrait based on the title. Remind participants to think about the characters involved in the picture and to talk to each other so that there are no repeat characters. They have to tell a story, even though they are frozen in place. Once each group has had enough time to plan their portrait, bring each group up to the front one at a time and yell out FREEZE! The end result should be a cohesive picture.

Each participant will receive a [Bingo Card](#) to use as a word bank and mark down answers.

#### Families:

1. The Football Family
2. The Baseball Family
3. The Pirate Family
4. The Superhero Family
5. The Technology Family
6. The Cheerleader Family
7. The Weightlifting Family
8. The Sick Family
9. The Super Villain Family

### Funny Walks

#### Instructions:

All participants move out to the back hallway of Weiss. One participant starts by creating a silly walk. All of the other participants must copy the original walk. After a couple of seconds, another participant will be called upon to do a different walk/movement. Then, all participants will copy the second walk. This will continue until each participant has had the chance to develop their own walk.

Encourage participants to use different heights and sizes for their walks. Movements can be inspired by emotions, characters, animals, objects, etc. PT to help support individuals with hemiparesis and/or other mobility limitations during activity.

## Greetings

### Instructions:

All players start milling about the room. You then ask them to greet each other, perhaps just by shaking hands. Players just shake hands, move on, and greet the next player they meet. After 30 seconds, one facilitator will freeze the group and then ask the players to greet each other in a more specific way. Possibilities are:

- greet each other like you greet a long-lost friend
- greet each other like old enemies
- greet each other like business executives
- greet someone like you drank too much coffee
- someone you have a secret crush on
- someone with bad breath
- greet as if one a cold day
- greet like suspicious spies

One facilitator will write each scenario on a whiteboard to show around the room while the other mills about the room observing participants and announcing when the switch scenarios.

## Honey Walk

### Instructions:

Participants will line up in a single file line in the hallway. Tell all participants that they will have to walk through different substances: participants are to move about in successively thicker substances. They will take turns following each other so that each participant will have a chance to be the leader. The leader starts by demonstrating the walk for the rest of the group. Once they get halfway down the hallway (marked by either an item or a facilitator), the next participant will go. Participants will walk through the following sequence:

1. Thin air
2. Misty fog
3. Thunderstorms
4. Snow
5. Ice
6. Honey
7. Jell-O
8. Quicksand
9. Mud
10. Wet cement

## 11. Hard cement

Encourage participants to really imagine moving about these substances and make each walk their own/ their own interpretation. They should be able to ‘feel’ the mist between their fingers, the honey in their hair, etc.

### Human Props

#### Instructions:

One participant starts by pulling a location out of a hat and reading it aloud. They will then begin a scene at the chosen location. The other participants then become the other objects in the environment. If the first participant recognizes the objects, he/she can start using the props built by other players in the environment. Encourage participants to go for the obvious: in just about any room, there could be a plant, a door, or a table. After each participant is incorporated into the scene, ask participants to say what prop they were acting out. Repeat each scene to refine and extend the initial performance.

Encourage the first participant to interact with the other “props”.

#### Locations:

- Gym: water cooler, work out machines, yoga mat, weights
- Park: bench, plants, trees, rocks, jungle gym
- Office: chair, desk, door, stapler, water cooler, papers, cubicle
- Living room: couch, coffee table, plant, door, rug, TV, fireplace
- Bus: steering wheel, radio, windshield wipers, lights, trunk, wheels
- Grocery Store: cart, shelves, box, conveyer belt, produce
- Classroom: whiteboard, desk, chair, door, clock, pencil sharpener,
- Movie Set: camera, lights, chairs, mirror, screen, props
- Birthday Party: cake, candles, balloon, present

Begin the activity by modeling an example.

### One-Line Starters

#### Instructions

Participants will assemble into groups of two scene partners. One participant will pull a starting line out of a container. This line will be the first line spoken in the pair’s improv; for non-verbal participants, ensure their partner starts the scene. That participant must not reveal the line to his/her scene partner until the scene begins.

#### Opening Lines:

1. Excuse me. I need to return this shirt for a refund.
2. Waiter, I didn’t order this for dinner.

3. Look, I know you hate this, but we need at least one good photo of you.
4. Officer, please, no! Don't give me a speeding ticket!
5. Oh! It is such an honor to meet you! Could I get your autograph?
6. Just rip the paper off! I can't wait for you to see this totally unique gift!
7. Please tell our viewers how you plan to spend your lottery winnings!
8. What's that smell?
9. What do you want me to do?
10. My muscles are killing me! Can't we take a break from this workout!
11. I'm sorry, but you're fired.

After participants complete their scene, the audience offers ideas and suggestions to incorporate back into the scene (additional background, like "You're Fired"). Then, participants will redo the scene.

To start the activity: 2 facilitators will model a short scene (1-2 exchanges), followed by suggestions, and then a longer (5-6 exchanges) scene. For all scenes, each scene member should aim for 3 turns. For non-verbal participants, these 3 turns include gestures, facial expressions, etc.

### One Word Story

#### Instructions:

Participants sit in a circle. One person says a single word to begin a story. The person to his/her right says another word, then the next person says another word, continuing around the circle. As the story continues, a facilitator will write out the story on a large sheet of paper, so participants can follow along. If needed, give participants [word banks](#) to help select words for the story. Provide object, action, and description cards and reference which card to use during the turn

### Pass the Prop

#### Instructions:

A physical object is passed from player to player. As each player takes the object, they use it in a way that is different from their intended use.

For example:

- A water bottle can be picked up, brought up to the eye while the player says with a pirate accent, "I spy the island with the treasure." This turns the water bottle into a telescope.
- A different player can pick up the water bottle, hold it in front of them and make the sound of a lightsaber while they say, "May the force be with you."

Try not to repeat actions for different objects (e.g., using hairbrush and water bottle as a cell phone). Encourage participants to look at the object (or it's parts) and see what inspires them.

Props (and example gestures):

- Hairbrush
  - Microphone
  - String instrument (guitar, violin, etc.)
  - Cell phone
  - Sword
  - Traffic controller
  - Magic wand
- Water bottle
  - Telescope
  - Lightsaber
  - Rolling pin
  - Foam roller (workout)
  - Weights
  - Lantern
- Book
  - Hat
  - Map
  - Drum
  - Computer
  - Mirror
  - Scanner
- Coat hanger
  - Hand replacement (Captain Hook)
  - Zipline
  - Hiking
  - TV Antenna
  - Compass
  - Ruler
- Stapler
  - Taser
  - Stress reliever
  - Men in Black Mind Eraser
  - Walkie Talkie
  - Door knocker
  - Sewing machine

### Simple Scenarios

#### Instructions:

Have a list of simple scenarios for participants. Have two-three members go up and pull a scenario out of a hat. They will have a minute to think of a scene and create a beginning, middle, and end. They can ask for feeder lines if needed to start.

1. Visiting the Dentist - "So, it looks like you have some cavities."
2. First day in a new job - "Hi Boss, I'm super excited to be here."
3. Having a photo taken - "Go over there so I can take a picture!"
4. Getting a haircut - "How much hair do you want cut off?"
5. Firing someone - "We're going to have to let you go."
6. Slow service in a restaurant - "Excuse me. We've been waiting for over an hour."
7. Waiting for the bus - "I wonder when the bus will get here."
8. Pulled over by a cop - "Excuse me, officer, why did you pull me over?"
9. Trapped in an elevator - "Oh no, the elevator stopped."
10. Job interview - "Thank you for coming in to interview for this job opening."

### Who, What, Where

#### Instructions:

Participants volunteer to create a short improv scene. They are assigned a character, an environment, and a situation. Scenes should show each element of who, what, and where. This can be performed in groups of 2-3 participants.

#### Who:

- Superhero
- Doctor
- Cop
- Cowboy
- Jock
- Criminal

#### What:

- Sick
- Break up
- Drunk
- Arguing
- On a date

#### Where:

- Job interview
- Bar
- Hospital

- Subway
- Trapped in an elevator

Yes, And...

Instructions:

Explain the “yes and...” principle of improv. One facilitator will begin the exercise by telling the first sentence of a made-up story. The player next to the facilitator must add to the story by replying, “yes,” repeating what the person before them said, followed by adding their own sentence beginning with “and.” With each “and”, there should be an accompanying action/gesture. This cycle is repeated around the group, with each player only repeating the sentence of the person before them until the story naturally ends. Once the story is completed, the group will perform the scene with one participant narrating the scene (D can be the narrator).

Example: “Last week, I went to the store.” → “YES, last week, I went to the store, AND I bought some apples” → YES, I bought some apples, AND they were delicious” ...

Prompts:

- I am so excited for Fall.
- I got lunch with friends yesterday.
- Last week, I went to the store.

One facilitator will facilitate the story development and the other will write the story on the large notepad. Participants can reference the [word bank](#) packet if they need ideas for how to continue the story or additional assistance communicating ideas or sentences.

Goals: Be explicit and think through prompts

Participant 1 must incorporate the direction into the scene and Participant 2 must follow and react. Backgrounds include the following:

- You`re nervous, happy, sad, afraid of the other
- You really have to pee
- The other smells nice/stinks
- You`ve been eating beans/garlic
- You are a bit deaf
- You lost your glasses
- You can` t stay awake (keep yawning)
- You have really high energy

## **ROLE REHEARSAL**

Baker and AttendantInstructions

Participants will each receive a copy of Baker and Attendant (written by E). Start activity by having group read through the steps listed on paper and ask what the person is doing (cooking and cleaning). Explain that participants will go around the circle performing each step at a time (e.g., all participants go around the circle demonstrating step 1). Each participant is encouraged to make the step their own and get creative (e.g., when mixing ingredients, they accidentally spill the batter). The goal is to have each participant complete the same action but make them unique to themselves (similar to Honey Walk reflection).

Steps

1. Wash your hands.
2. Put on your apron.
3. Turn on oven.
4. Get the pan or pans.
5. Get ingredients and utensils.
6. Set timer to bake.
7. Mix ingredients with electric whip.
8. Cook vegetables, macaroni and egg, sweet potatoes.
9. Take bill to kitchen.
10. Clean up.
11. Dishwashing - electric or manual.
12. Take trash bag out.
13. Sweep kitchen with brooms

Scene WorkInstructions:

Hand out scripts to participants (written by E). Give out scripts based on pairings/part assignments below. Explain that each participant will get to perform both scenes for the group. To start, read through both scripts as a group and establish the scene (who, what, where, etc.). Pairs are encouraged to be creative and interpret the scene in a novel way; encourage participants to think of a character and backstory.

## You're Fired

Instructions

This is a scene with 2 players, in which the lines are scripted. [Script](#) below:

- (1) {Knocks on a door}
- (2) Come in. You know why I called you?
- (1) {Indicates he/she does not know why} No

- (2) {Hands 1 a (mimed) piece of paper}
- (1) I thought you wouldn't take that into account?
- (2) You're fired.
- (1) Fine. I hated that stupid job anyway.

Have the participants play that scene. They need to stick to the script, but can really do anything as long as they don't add any lines. For non-verbal participants, they can gesture to act out the lines (message should still get across). Explain to participants that they must create the scene and establish the environment (where is the door, where is the desk, are they seated, etc.).

After the initial scene, add background to the scene to demonstrate how background can change the action of a scene. The facilitator will assign a background for the scene.

## **THEATER PRODUCTION**

### Build A Scene

#### Instructions:

Break the group into two groups. Both groups will be assigned to the same scene. In their groups, participants will have time to talk about the scene. Discuss who, what, where, when, weather, etc. and write down their ideas and create a short scene. Each group will have one PT and one SLP to facilitate. Remind participants that the key is to create a complete picture. They all have to work together, and each participant must be involved in the scene. Each group will then present their scene.

During performances, make notes of potential improvements on how to better the scenes. Examples include...

- putting more energy into their bodies and more expression in their faces.
- interacting with one another to increase the dramatic effect of the scene.
- establishing an environment

Directly after each performance, give notes and allow participants the opportunity to revise. Ask participants in the audience if they have any ideas or feedback too (what worked, what didn't work, etc.). Then, have the performing group complete the same scene again, this time with improvements.

#### Scene Ideas:

- Wild West
  - Who: cowboys, sheriff, bandit, cook, cow
  - What: showdown, herding cattle, cooking over a fire, arresting a bandit

- Where: at a saloon, field, around a campfire, town hall
- Weather: sweltering heat, raining/thunderstorms, cool
- When: sundown, early morning, afternoon, sunrise
- Beach trip
  - Who: surfer, people tanning, fish in the ocean, lifeguard, ice cream vendor
  - What: swimming in the ocean, tanning, getting stung by jellyfish, building a sand castle, buying ice cream, drowning
  - Where: in the water, sitting in a beach chair, on the boardwalk, in the sand
  - Weather: hot, cold, raining
  - When: early morning, afternoon, evening
- Reporters and photographers who sight a big celebrity
  - Who: reporters, photographers, celebrity, security, fans
  - What: taking pictures, signing autographs, interviews, protecting celebrity, attacking celebrity (crazed fan)
  - Where: movie premiere, on the street, award ceremony
  - Weather: hot, cold, raining
  - When: early morning, afternoon, evening, midnight
- Sporting Event
  - Who: athletes, coach, fans, food vendors
  - What: playing sport (what sport?), coaching, fans screaming, selling food, the team is winning, the team is losing, the teams are tied
  - Where: sports arena/stadium, on the field, in the stands
  - Weather: hot, cold, raining
  - When: early morning, afternoon, evening, midnight

### Human Machine

#### Instructions:

Split the group into two groups (split PT and Speech between groups). Each group will secretly be assigned a machine to enact (toaster, blender, airplane, computer, etc.). They will each get 3 minutes to plan as a group how they want to create their machine - facilitators help aid non-fluent participants to ensure they are involved in the discussion (use of whiteboards, paper, etc.). Each group member must be incorporated into the machine and have a gesture. PT to help support individuals with hemiparesis and/or other mobility limitations during activity. After planning time is up, Group 1 will present their machine to Group 2, and Group 2 must guess what their machine is after the performance ends (use word banks if needed). After group 1's performance, discuss the following:

- What was your part in making it?
- How could we make the machine better?
- Was it difficult to keep your concentration until everyone was creating the machine?

Repeat now with Group 2 presenting and Group 1 guessing.

### Magic

#### Instructions:

Give each participant a Magic sheet and explain that it is a list of words relating to “magic” (written by E). Divide participants into two groups and split between PACT Room and PT Room (divide facilitators between groups). Participants need to create a scene about magic and try to incorporate the words included on the list; encourage participants to use as many words as possible (aim for 3-5). Give each group paper and pen to write down ideas and scene/script. Each participant must be involved in the scene and have a role. Groups will have 10 minutes to create their scene. After 10 minutes, each group will perform, and the audience must guess what words were included in the scene (utilize sheets as word bank).