

FIELDD R REPORT

Ozer Gokmen from Crooked House ran an online drama project with international participants from 2022 to 2023 using the workshops in Digital Drama Workshops. Three months into the project he wrote this report.

INTRODUCTION

Our INTER/ACT sessions started on August 22, 2022 with 17 participants from six different countries. Some participants could not continue due to their workload, we are currently continuing with 15 people from Belarus (1), Egypt (1), France (1), Russian Federation (2), Spain (1) and Turkey (9). The majority of the participants have experience in acting. There are nine trained actors among them. Three of the participants are filmmakers.

We hold workshops every two weeks, on Monday evenings, between 8.00PM and 10.00PM in GMT +1 Time Zone. Workshops are held via Zoom.

We are using/trying the exercises in the online workshops booklet of Digital Drama Workshops (DDW). Workshops are held in English. None of the participants' native language is English and the language levels of the participants vary.

The initial contact with the participants was made via an invitation e-mail. Participants asked a WhatsApp group to accelerate the communication. Both WhatsApp group and e-mails are being used for updates.

EXERCISES

Since it is a newly formed group and in the beginning everyone was kind of a stranger to each other, we started with icebreaker exercises first. These exercises were not selected from the booklet. After 2 weeks of warming up and getting to know each other, we began to use DDW workshops. However, not every workshop was implemented exactly; sometimes the explanations of exercises took a long time and occasionally there were delays because participants needed extra time while devising their pieces. Language factor was active in both incidents.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

After the fifth meeting on October 17, 2022, a feedback form was sent to the participants via Google Forms and they were asked to fill in anonymously. In this form, they were asked about their expectations when they decided to take part in the project, their ideas about working with people from other countries with similar disciplines to themselves, things that could be better in this project and their open suggestions. Some participant comments are as follows;

What were your expectations when you agreed to take part in this project?

“When the project came to me as the first email what I thought was that there were people with whom I could create and produce things. I felt the awareness of working with people from different cultures with the thoughts and ideas of different perspectives. I will also be able to improve my English. I thought it was a project I could implement.

“Being active in English. Choosing a topic that we all agree with then about that topic thinking and improving then finally turn that topic into a short movie or something else that we can make an impact.”

How did it feel to work with people from different countries/cultures?

“It’s just amazing to be around people from different cultures and backgrounds; I believe that mixing is increasing the experience to the best scenario”

“It made me feel the dynamics of being tolerant and respect cultures religions, races, languages, etc...”

“It’s great, exchanging ideas with creative people from different cultures and watching their performances gives different awareness. It’s good to understand that there are common symbols in some artefacts.”

Did the exercises we do have any gains outside the workshop?

“I have transferred what I have learned so far to my other friends. We recently formed a team of 8 people who came together independently. On developing each other under the theme of theatre. -Helped in creating active space. -It helps to awaken my imagination. As the trigger state. -As I said first, I find it valuable from the concrete side to be able to convey these exercises to other people.”

“Of course! That’s an opportunity to create without risk and the energy of the group and the facilitator made me reconnect again with theatre gaming!”

What could be better?

“I think that starting our lessons with simple exercises is very good and helpful. For the next study, it would be very good to learn about the subject before the lesson. It may be better to come prepared for the subject we are going to discourse.”

“I never thought about what would be better. The only problem for me is being at home doing this late at night. It’s also a little annoying that my family is listening to me. Apart from that, I think the training is very enjoyable.”

Important Points

- ◆ Bringing creative people from other cultures together is a safe bet. They are inspiring each other. So far, every participant was quite engaged and eager to explore what others would bring to performances.
- ◆ The online exercises we used in the workshops offer the participant a playground that is similar to the exercises used in face-to-face workshops. This reduces the handicap of being online.
- ◆ We preferred to meet every two weeks instead of every week. While this was a good frequency for majority of participants, it was stated that it was not frequent enough for some.
- ◆ We have a team of 15 participants from six different countries. The time schedule we chose to fit every time zone reaches 3-hour differences in wide geographies. This is an obstacle to being a full squad at all times.
- ◆ Since the English level of the participants is not at a standard, some exercises need to be explained several times. This repetition can cause boredom for those who already understood the instructions. As a solution to this, the workshop plan that will be held that week can be shared in advance, but this will prevent the surprise factor that might be necessary for some of improvisation exercises.

The workshops we used (DDW) were well organised and within harmony with themselves. The general scheme of the workshops gradually carrying the participants to a final devising that they can use what they explored in previous exercises. Time management wise I found the exercises little bit more tense than planned I would say. More time needed to give instructions and answer questions, explain certain points etc. This might be related to the language issue that I mentioned above. Occasionally I had to take out one of the exercises from certain workshops to fit the 2-hour plan that we had with the group.

Finally, I can say this project gave results that exceeded my expectations so far. We did not feel the handicaps of working online that harsh. Although we have only had 5 sessions, it is already possible to talk about some team harmony of the group; they are highly motivated and willing to work together.