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TRANSLATION, NEGOTIATION, STRATEGY: SHARED OWNERSHIP OF THE ONE-SHOT AGENDA

HARUKO YAMAUCHI AND LINDA MILES

INTRODUCTION

Before becoming academic librarians, we both worked for over ten years in (different) arts education non-profit organizations in New York City. Our organizations built partnerships between teaching artists and classroom teachers in K-12 public schools. Working with educators from vastly different fields of expertise, we saw that while teaching partners may want to collaborate in good faith and care equally about student learning and success, they also bring with them radically different assumptions, priorities, and vocabularies. Nurturing these partnerships included the facilitation of planning meetings in which educators from starkly different disciplines could share their desires for students' development and contribute insight from their respective disciplines in order to build a shared foundation of learning goals.

Like other teaching librarians, we now navigate collaborations with faculty colleagues from a range of disciplines, often in the context of teaching one-shot research workshops. The determination of learning goals can be a fraught process, whether it is in collaborations in which the parties are new to each other, or in long-standing partnerships that have fallen into a routine that may or may not continue to best serve students' learning needs. We developed the following role play exercise as a way to help fellow teaching librarians uncover strategies for expressing their own agendas within these negotiations, and for hearing and translating the aims and motivations of disciplinary faculty.

WHY ROLE PLAY? WHY IMPROVISATION?

Having led professional development sessions for teaching artists and classroom teachers, and having observed many hours of theater workshops, we knew that stepping into an unaccustomed role during an exercise is a low-stakes but effective way of trying out someone else's perspective, and can activate one's sense of empathy. If the nature of acting is living truthfully in imaginary situations, a simple role play offers a small-scale chance to try on another's truth and force oneself to think and say things that break from the routine.

The nature of improvisation encourages participants to loosen up and react without over-planning or over-anticipating what their conversational partners will say, a looseness that allows for discovery in the moment. Two of the most crucial rules of improv are: always say yes, and always make your partner look good. By "saying yes," we of course do not mean that the character in the role play will concede all terms of negotiation, but rather that all the actors will do their best to create a shared reality; if, for instance a disciplinary faculty character expresses concern over her students' struggling to understand a particular concept, the librarian character should not dismiss this challenge as unimportant. Helping one's partner "look good" generally means to honor the other actor's choices and allow each person to shine in the performance, but in our scenario also meant to help the other characters save face, and feel that they, too, are benefitting from a productive negotiation. Both rules help to create an expectation of cooperation, even when playing out a scenario in which two characters want different (if not opposing) things.

DEVELOPMENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE EXERCISE

In the months leading up to the LOEX conference, we conducted the workshop twice, with two different small groups of local colleagues. These trial runs mainly helped us to improve our transitions and work out minor logistics, but they also confirmed

the usefulness of the role play exercise to shake up one's thinking about collaboration. One librarian said that she had not previously gone into such discussions thinking consciously of her own goals, and had mostly responded to the classroom faculty's lead. She found it empowering to go into a negotiation with her own learning agenda in mind.

The workshop opens with a brief conceptual framing, moves through a simple warm-up exercise, followed by two rounds of the central improv activity, and finally small-group reflection and whole-group sharing and strategizing (see Appendix A). After brief introductions and a rationale for using role play and improvisation, facilitators help participants form groups of three and lead them through a warm-up based on the common theater exercise of carefully watching and mirroring a partner's movements. The trios are prompted to challenge themselves: what can they do together as a team? What kinds of movements can they use? They are also encouraged to allow leadership to shift among all three without using verbal communication.

After the warm-up, participants are asked what they noticed during the exercise. Many find that even if they are initially awkward, the non-verbal communication is effective in allowing leadership to transfer fluidly, with individuals figuring out how to give, take, and share agency. Noticing leading and following dynamics helps to segue into the primary improv activity, in which participants experience similar shifts of leadership.

For the improv, each trio member is assigned a task: playing the role of "librarian" or "classroom professor," or observing the interaction. Observers are given a worksheet (Appendix B) that asks them to note the librarian's strategies: for communicating what s/he wants; for eliciting the classroom professor's perspective; and for furthering the mutual development of learning objectives and an activity. The role players are each given a "dossier" (Appendix C) that describes their shared setting, including type of institution and geographic context, and an underlying personal motivation that is not shown to their partner (in the librarian's case, the motivation is connected to one of the ACRL Framework's threshold concepts). The dossier reminds the librarians that they want to express their priorities for student learning, understand the professor's priorities, identify commonalities, and bridge the gap. Professors are reminded that they want to briefly describe their research assignment and the kind of library instruction they think would be useful. Both are reminded that the shared goal of their meeting is to agree upon at least one student learning objective and the main activity for the workshop.

After a brief reminder of the two aforementioned rules of improv—always say yes to the reality your partner presents and always make your partner look good—the trios get down to work. Facilitators circulate to observe and clarify any directions if necessary, and to keep scenarios moving forward if a group gets stalled. After eight minutes, facilitators ask groups to pause their conversations, and participants are prompted to switch roles. Each new observer takes up a blank worksheet, and a new round of improv begins.

Following the second improv round, each trio discusses what they experienced and observed, using a worksheet (Appendix D) to note the librarian's strategies to express her/his point of view, pull out the professor's perspective, and to bridge the gap between the two. Facilitators urge the groups to report concrete examples of what those strategies looked like in practice. Whole group discussion follows, and finally an "exit ticket" (Appendix E) asks participants to indicate: their beliefs about the relative amount of control that professors and librarians should and actually do wield within these negotiations; to reflect on their experience of the role play; to share their "take-aways" from the workshop; and to report demographic data about their institutional context and years in the profession.

LOEX SESSION AND WHAT PEOPLE TOOK AWAY

Overall response to the May 12th LOEX workshop was very positive, with about a third of exit ticket respondents describing the experience as different, useful, interesting, challenging, rewarding, and eye opening. The whole group discussion focused primarily on negotiation strategies, then moved quickly to actual experiences with librarian-faculty relationships, and suggestions for informing future practice with lessons learned through the improv exercise. Many participants expanded on ideas from the discussion in the exit ticket survey. Participants identified such strategies as: active listening; selectively repeating back goals espoused by their negotiation partner; using reference interview skills to elicit information and clarification; offering "multiple activities or options" and then subtly guiding the decision making; and sharing observations of student needs and behaviors from their own experience.

Persistence was highlighted as an important and successful strategy. Participants noted that some librarians feel obliged to capitulate to every demand in order to conform to their image of librarianship as a service profession, and at least one improv trio found this tendency challenging during their role play. On the other hand, some participants playing a classroom professor were surprised to find themselves frustrated when their librarian partner was unwilling or unable to give them what they wanted. Noting that intellectual understanding of the goals of their partner was not enough, one participant suggested, "Maybe bring more empathy." One approach offered by a participant, which received widespread endorsement within the room, was to remind faculty partners of shared institutional goals related to student learning. As one person elaborated, they might find "common ground" through articulating shared goals for "connecting with students and creating a relevant experience."

Challenges included disciplinary faculty articulating either unreasonably large expectations for what might be accomplished in a one-shot workshop or, on the other extreme, overly narrow and specific expectations. Both such situations proved challenging in different ways. In some cases, the improv revealed that there was a mismatch between the source requirements and students' level of understanding (and/or the assignment's demands), or that there had been inadequate scaffolding to ensure that students were well prepared.

Facilitators asked everyone to compare their dialogue within the role play to their actual experience in their institutions. Participants noted that they often communicated more via email than face-to-face conversations, and that they had fewer discussions with long-standing partners, for whom "do what you normally do" may be the extent of the planning conversation. Take-aways from the workshop included reaching out anew to long-term partners (one respondent wrote, "need to meet with faculty even if I have to go to their office to re-figure out what I am doing for them"), making a greater effort to meet face-to-face, and finding "different ways to get a foot in the door" and to communicate more frequently with faculty collaborators.

WHAT WE LEARNED

We were surprised by the number of individuals, both in our trial runs and at LOEX, who found aspects of the experience uncomfortable. There was a particularly high level of discomfort with the mirror warm-up. In the words of one participant, "While the warmup was initially uncomfortable, it did what it was supposed to do by helping participants open up to each other." About a quarter of those who filled out an exit ticket mentioned feeling awkward or uncomfortable at some point during the workshop, although they also described the experience as "rewarding," "helpful," and "useful."

Whether it was moving their bodies, acting out a character, or improvising a dialogue that caused these reactions, some level of moving out of one's comfort zone may be unavoidable or even desirable. However, in future iterations of the workshop, we will help participants ease into the warm-up by first asking them just to try small movements of the face and head before enlarging their gestures. We also observed that although the rules of improv that we introduced—saying "yes" and making your partner look good—are extremely helpful restraints on individuals determined to push through their own agenda, many librarians struggle instead with a tendency to bend over backward to conform to a professor's wishes. In future iterations, we will place more emphasis on the importance of trying different strategies, staying loose, and feeling free to invent new possibilities.

The exit ticket survey also offered interesting findings about who participants believed should most determine the learning agenda, and who they believed actually does so. Our sample size was small (n=20, out of 21 workshop participants) and the results are not statistically significant, but they are thought-provoking. Unsurprisingly, most respondents (11, or 55%) believed that there should be completely equal partnership. However, our own assumptions as investigators became apparent when we were surprised that seven (35%) of our respondents felt that the course professor should have more say than the librarian.

Asked about how the learning agenda is actually determined, over half (55%) believed that the course professor had more influence, with ten (50%) saying that the professor had "somewhat more say" and one (5%) that the course professor "strongly determines" the goals. Of the 45% who believed that the librarian had greater influence, seven (35%) felt that the librarian had "somewhat more say" and two (10%) that the librarian "strongly determines" the goals. The significant number of people who believe that librarians have more influence appears to be at odds with sentiments expressed during the whole-group discussion, as well as with our assumptions as the workshop designers, as the problem we imagined that the workshop would address was that of librarians' feeling that they lacked adequate influence over the content of their one-shot workshops. In retrospect, we suspect that the high number of people reporting greater influence on the part of librarians reflects many course professors' indifference to library workshop content and lack of engagement in planning.

Comparing respondents' answers for the two questions (who should determine vs. who actually determines the learning agenda), nine (45%) believed that course professors have more say than they should, seven (35%) believed that librarians have more say than they should, and four (20%) believed that both sides have the right amount of influence. These findings have helped us to see some of our own assumptions and provided a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of librarians at different institutions.

CONCLUSION

Our experience facilitating this workshop and participants' feedback gave us new evidence of the empathy-stimulating effect of role play, the brainstorming that is spurred on by improvisation, the energizing nature of gathering colleagues to share and generate strategies, and the value of preparing for negotiations with faculty by first clarifying one's own learning goals for students. A number of exit ticket respondents said that they were interested in conducting a similar workshop for their colleagues, and one said that s/he would like to adapt it to create an improv exercise for students. We will be conducting this workshop again as part of a professional development day for CUNY librarians this June. We are encouraged by the enthusiastic response that we have received so far, and hope that this exercise and others like it will continue to be of use for our fellow teaching librarians.

APPENDIX A

Final lesson plan

Participants will:

- be able to analyze classroom professors' language about student assignments and needs in order to identify commonalities between classroom professor and librarian perspectives and the Framework for Information Literacy.
- be able to strategically express their own educational agendas for classes in order to negotiate with classroom professors about specific learning goals for information literacy one-shot sessions.
- be able to facilitate development of a shared understanding in order to lay a foundation for co-ownership of the student learning agenda.

5 min	10:15 – 10:20	Arrive/settle Share agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intro ourselves • Why role play? • Why improv?
3 min	10:20 – 10:23	Short theater exercise -- collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mirror exercise in triads <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Non-verbal ○ Leadership will be fluid; without talking/concentrating figure out how it may be transferred ○ Be aware and respond ○ Try different things together--high/low, fast/slow, etc. ○ Challenge yourselves as a team ○ Where can you go together as a group?
18 min	10:23 – 10:41	Improv	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intro (1 min): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transitioning from non-verbal to verbal ○ May observe that leadership shifts and transfers during the negotiation ○ Goals – strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lib strategies for communicating what he/she wants ▪ Lib strategies for understanding of prof's perspective ▪ Strategies for negotiating learning objective(s) and activity • How this is going to work (2 min) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2 roles + observer ○ Own your situation/motivation! ○ Always say “yes” (basketball → baseball) ○ Always make partner look good • Hand out a dossier/worksheet to each participant/as you group them in 3s <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ each participant has 1 min to read the dossier, and jot down a few notes • Improv #1 as observer takes notes (8 min) • Switch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Librarian hand to observer ○ Professor hand to librarian ○ Observer hand the blank form to professor • Improv #2 (6 min)
5 min	10:41 – 10:46	Small-group debriefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefly intro worksheet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Overall strategies observed ○ Specifics -- evidence
16 min	10:46 – 11:02	Whole-group discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection on taking on a character; taking up someone else's perspective; using improv for this purpose share insights • Biggest challenges for librarian? • Most surprising/striking about the negotiation? • Connections to real-life experience in the field? • Concrete ideas to employ in your own collaborations?
2 min	11:02 – 11:04	Exit ticket (for us); plus the LOEX form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-page worksheet

APPENDIX B

Observation Worksheet

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Observer

Your task:

- Use the following worksheet to observe what the librarian says and does.
- Please try to be as concrete as possible.
- Your goal for now is not evaluation or judgment—analysis will be done later.
- The focus is on the librarian, but if you'd like to jot down notes on things the classroom faculty says or does, you can add them in the notes section.

Worksheet: Observer/Documenter

What did the librarian say and do to:

Communicate his/her perspective	
Draw out the classroom professor's perspective	
Identify commonalities and suggest ways to integrate an info lit agenda into the plan	

Notes:

Appendix C

Improv Dossiers (note that for use in workshops, these pages are cut so that each participant only sees the information for her/his own role).

Situation 1: Librarian

Your setting (same as for your partner): You work in a community college in a low-income, urban neighborhood

Your underlying motivation (you don't have to ever say these words, but they are what your character feels is important):

"I want our students to question the idea that traditional authorities are the only possible sources of truth, and to consider alternative voices and new media, particularly as their own communities are so seldom represented in academic literature."

Connection to the Framework: Authority is Constructed and Contextual

- Recognize that authoritative content may be packaged formally or informally, and may include sources of all media types

Your character's personal goal for this discussion:

- Express your priorities for student learning for a one-shot workshop
- Comprehend the classroom professor's priorities for student learning
- Identify commonalities between your two perspectives
- Bridge the gap

Your shared goal with your partner:

- Decide on at least one student learning objective for the workshop
- Decide on the main activity

Situation 1: Classroom faculty

Your setting (same as for your partner): You work in a community college in a low-income, urban neighborhood

Your underlying motivation (you don't have to ever say these words, but they are what your character feels is important):

"I want our graduates to go on to compete with students at four-year universities and to be able to use peer-reviewed, credible sources."

Your character's personal goal for this discussion:

- Briefly describe your research assignment and what kind of library instruction you think would be useful.

Your shared goal with your partner:

- Decide on at least one student learning objective for the workshop
- Decide on the main activity

Situation 2: Librarian

Your setting (same as for your partner): You work in a prestigious private university serving undergraduates and graduate students

Your underlying motivation (you don't have to ever say these words, but they are what your character feels is important):

"I want our students to allow their research to develop authentically, and not be tied to their first stab at a thesis statement."

Connection to the Framework: Research as inquiry

- Value persistence, adaptability, and flexibility and recognize that ambiguity can benefit the research process.

Your character's personal goal for this discussion:

- Express your priorities for student learning for a one-shot workshop
- Comprehend the classroom professor's priorities for student learning

- Identify commonalities between your two perspectives
- Bridge the gap

Your shared goal with your partner:

- Decide on at least one student learning objective for the workshop
- Decide on the main activity

Situation 2: Classroom faculty

Your setting (same as for your partner): You work in a prestigious private university serving undergraduates and graduate students

Your underlying motivation (you don't have to ever say these words, but they are what your character feels is important):

"I want our students to perform to high standards, and part of that is being able to present a well-organized outline well before their first draft."

Your character's personal goal for this discussion:

- Briefly describe your research assignment and what kind of library instruction you think would be useful.

Your shared goal with your partner:

- Decide on at least one student learning objective for the workshop
- Decide on the main activity

Situation 3: Librarian

Your setting (same as for your partner): You work in a large state university in a rural area

Your underlying motivation (you don't have to ever say these words, but they are what your character feels is important):

"I want our students to be aware that all expressions of knowledge are necessarily subjective to some extent, so instead of searching for 'completely objective' sources, they should be critically aware of every author's point of view as well as their own."

Connection to the Framework: Authority is constructed and contextual

- Develop awareness of the importance of assessing content with a skeptical stance and with a self-awareness of their own biases and worldview

Your character's personal goal for this discussion:

- Express your priorities for student learning for a one-shot workshop
- Comprehend the classroom professor's priorities for student learning
- Identify commonalities between your two perspectives
- Bridge the gap

Your shared goal with your partner:

- Decide on at least one student learning objective for the workshop
- Decide on the main activity

Situation 3: Classroom faculty

Your setting (same as for your partner): You work in a large state university in a rural area

Your underlying motivation (you don't have to ever say these words, but they are what your character feels is important):

"I want our students to use credible sources instead of the internet."

Your character's personal goal for this discussion:

- Briefly describe your research assignment and what kind of library instruction you think would be useful.

Your shared goal with your partner:

- Decide on at least one student learning objective for the workshop
- Decide on the main activity

Situation 4: Librarian

Your setting (same as for your partner): You work in a small, four-year liberal arts college

Your underlying motivation (you don't have to ever say these words, but they are what your character feels is important):

"I want our students to develop more sophisticated methods of looking for information beyond typing in keywords and grabbing the first results, whether they use our databases or the open web."

Connection to the Framework: Searching as strategic exploration

- Realize that information sources vary greatly in content and format and have varying relevance and value, depending on the needs and nature of research.

Your character's personal goal for this discussion:

- Express your priorities for student learning for a one-shot workshop
- Comprehend the classroom professor's priorities for student learning
- Identify commonalities between your two perspectives
- Bridge the gap

Your shared goal with your partner:

- Decide on at least one student learning objective for the workshop
- Decide on the main activity

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Situation 4: Classroom faculty

Your setting (same as for your partner): You work in a small, four-year liberal arts college

Your underlying motivation (you don't have to ever say these words, but they are what your character feels is important):

"I want our students to learn correct citation formats."

Your character's personal goal for this discussion:

- Briefly describe your research assignment and what kind of library instruction you think would be useful.

Your shared goal with your partner:

- Decide on at least one student learning objective for the workshop
- Decide on the main activity

Situation 5: Librarian

Your setting (same as for your partner): You work in a trade school in a mid-sized metropolitan area

Your underlying motivation (you don't have to ever say these words, but they are what your character feels is important):

"I want our students to be able to learn how to learn in new situations, especially since the job market they are preparing for changes constantly."

Connection to the Framework: Research as inquiry

- Consider research as open-ended exploration and engagement with information, and value persistence, adaptability, and flexibility.

Your character's personal goal for this discussion:

- Express your priorities for student learning for a one-shot workshop
- Comprehend the classroom professor's priorities for student learning

- Identify commonalities between your two perspectives
- Bridge the gap

Your shared goal with your partner:

- Decide on at least one student learning objective for the workshop
- Decide on the main activity

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Situation 5: Classroom faculty

Your setting (same as for your partner): You work in a trade school in a mid-sized metropolitan area

Your underlying motivation (you don't have to ever say these words, but they are what your character feels is important):

"I want our students to do well in class and be able to pass their certifications so they have a better shot at landing a job."

Your character's personal goal for this discussion:

- Briefly describe your research assignment and what kind of library instruction you think would be useful.

Your shared goal with your partner:

- Decide on at least one student learning objective for the workshop
- Decide on the main activity

Situation 6: Librarian

Your setting (same as for your partner): You work in a mid-sized 4-year college situated in a small town

Your underlying motivation (you don't have to ever say these words, but they are what your character feels is important):

"I want our students to seek out a variety of perspectives, including those they are not familiar with, instead of starting their research looking for sources that will support what they already think."

Connection to the Framework: Scholarship as conversation

- Seek out many perspectives, not merely the ones with which they are familiar, and recognize they are often entering into an ongoing scholarly conversation and not a finished conversation.

Your character's personal goal for this discussion:

- Express your priorities for student learning for a one-shot workshop
- Comprehend the classroom professor's priorities for student learning
- Identify commonalities between your two perspectives
- Bridge the gap

Your shared goal with your partner:

- Decide on at least one student learning objective for the workshop
- Decide on the main activity

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Situation 6: Classroom faculty

Your setting (same as for your partner): You work in a mid-sized 4-year college situated in a small town

Your underlying motivation (you don't have to ever say these words, but they are what your character feels is important):

"I want our students to be able to show me they've done some research by citing at least fifteen peer-reviewed articles."

Your character's personal goal for this discussion:

- Briefly describe your research assignment and what kind of library instruction you think would be useful.

Your shared goal with your partner:

- Decide on at least one student learning objective for the workshop
- Decide on the main activity

APPENDIX D

Worksheet for Small-Group Debrief

Brainstorm together—all three group members:

What strategies did the librarian employ to:	Strategies	Evidence – what do those strategies “look like”? – what’s involved?
Communicate what he/she wanted to get out of the negotiation?		
Come to an understanding of the classroom professor’s perspective?		
Help determine student learning objective(s) and activity?		

Work together to answer these questions:

<p>What were the biggest challenges for the librarian?</p>
<p>What was most surprising or striking about the negotiation?</p>

APPENDIX E

Exit Ticket

Who do you believe **should** most determine the learning agenda for a one-shot library workshop?

Librarian should strongly determine Librarian should have somewhat more say Completely equal partnership Course prof. should have somewhat more say Course prof should strongly determine

In your experience, on average who **actually** determines the learning agenda most for one-shot library workshops?

Librarian strongly determines Librarian has somewhat more say Completely equal partnership Course prof. has somewhat more say Course prof strongly determines

Reflection

What was it like for you to engage in this workshop?

What is one thing you will take home from this workshop?

Information about you

Do you work in :

- a two-year college
- a four-year liberal arts college
- a university with graduate programs
- another kind of institution: _____

How long have you been a librarian?

- <1 year
- 1-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-15 years
- 15-20 years
- > 20 years