

ORAL EXPRESSION AND COMPREHENSION PROGRAMME 131

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INTRODUCTION

This is a sample programme for teaching Oral / aural Expression and comprehension to first year students at the Institute of Translation and Interpretation, University of Algiers. It answered a call for contribution made by the Algerian educational authorities in order to organize the Second National Conference on Higher Education in 1987.

This contribution, however, does not intend to describe a model class or course in teaching Oral / aural English. It rather suggests a plan or format taking into account time, class, and evaluation management. The programme has been designed according to a personal experiment which was carried on with the participation of a particular population of students at the Institute of Translation and Interpretation.

Total number of hours: 90 h/ 3hours per week.

1- LISTENING COMPREHENSION / 12 h: a guided activity.

1- TEACHER READS TEXT ONCE.

- Emphasis is being put on listening and ear-training;
- Short-term memory is tested through the students'.

- ability to recall known vocabulary;
- ability to memorize unknown vocabulary;
- ability to recall text's sequences and events;
- ability to answer factual questions about the text;

2-TEACHER READS TEXT A SECOND TIME

- Students (one taking over the other) reconstruct or restate the text in their own words or using the newly learnt vocabulary;
- text handed out to allow students to read orally or silently and to check missing information;
- Deep structure of text discussed briefly.
- Students are asked to answer inferential questions;

3- NATURE OF THE TEXTS

- British and American culturally related texts;
- Cross cultural texts;
- Literary material: descriptive, narrative, dialogues;
- Material from the press: informative, etc.
- Technical material and specialized: banking, finance, commerce,

4- PROGRESSION: increasingly more difficult levels of texts.

5- EVALUATION: individual or collective (two to three students) interviews using the above procedure;

6- REQUIREMENT: one more examiner to cope with collective interviews.

II- COMMUNICATION SKILLS/ 22 h : autonomous or guided activity. Emphasis is being put on speaking:

- initiating linguistic acts;
- asking and responding to questions using varieties of the English language;
- practising colloquial grammatical patterns;
- practising structure patterns with idiomatic expressions.

I- PROCEDURE:

a) Formal and autonomous activities:

- i) Mini research tasks: papers or reports prepared at home and read in class under the form of talks. Time: 20 min.
- ii- Book reviews: short novels, short stories, poems, 1 to 2 pages technical material to comment on (time: 15 min).

In both tasks, all students and teacher know about the topic and are allowed to inject themselves in the talks, interrupt, ask questions, add information.

b)- Informal guided activities:

i- Dialogues:

- excerpts from literary works;
- excerpts from telephone conversations;
- giving directions;
- culturally related aspects of the English language in)
greetings,
farewells,
condolences,
congratulations,
enquiries,
information.

ii- Round- tables:

on various topics ranging from discussing proverbs, maxims and statements to story telling (films, human interest articles from the press- radio news, etc.)

posters and ads and pictures to comment on

NOTE: Short texts may be handed out as visual support to and incentive for starting conversation.

Role playing: autonomous and according to students' availability.

2- EVALUATION: one mark for each formal activity taking into account fluency, correctness and point. Pluses are given for individual and group participation in each autonomous activity: either the pluses end up in a participation mark or they serve to redeem a slighty under the average performance in other class activities.

III- VOCABULARY EXPANSION: 22 h: a semi-autonomous activity

1- Building up vocabulary through the learning of

- Commonplace idioms;
- Commonplace collective expressions;
- Commonplace comparisons;
- Verbal phrases;
- Prepositional phrases;

2- Workshops to check usage through paragraph writing.

NOTE: This section of the programme is rather intensive:

- teacher provides lists;
- each student (every week) checks meaning, phonetic transcription, usage and compares with similar counterparts in the other languages being learnt;
- a guided discussion takes place round usage;

3- EVALUATION: Each student gets a mark according to the thorough achievement of the task.

IV- READING COMPREHENSION: 12 h: a guided activity.

1- Purpose: help students acquire adequate reading skills and get them acquainted with the dictionary skill.

2- Material: selection of 1 to 3 pages of a short story or novel, or technical material.

3- Procedure:

i- Before starting the reading, some preview questions are being asked on the subject- matter. This preliminary task serves as a "warm up" and gives reasons to the students for reading the selections.

ii- oral or silent reading;

iii- learning of "word- attack" strategies to find out the meaning of difficult vocabulary without having recourse to the dictionary;

iv- the dictionary is used to find out denotative and connotative meanings of words which cannot be identified otherwise;

v- students recognize paragraph organization;

vi- students identify main ideas;

vii- students discover relationships between ideas;

viii- students make inferences and draw conclusions.

4- Teacher's task:

1- He/she reads the text in a meaningful way insisting on pronunciation, punctuation and intonation patterns and explaining how much these are important in meaning extraction.

5- **Evaluation:** Each student takes a reading comprehension test under the same procedure.

Conclusion

This programme is obviously intensive and straining. But it is effective, specially if applied with small groups of students.