

An English Language Curriculum Proposal for the Extensive Education Center at Chin-Yi Institute of Technology

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Abstract

As an English teacher, the author would like to propose English curriculum for an oral communication class to the Extensive Education Center at Chin-Yi Institute of Technology. English Conversation (A) is a beginning course designed to help students develop confidence and skill in using English for communication. English Conversation (B) is designed for the higher beginning-level adults who want to develop oral communication skills. Both classes are non-degree intensive evening programs spread over a term of three months, meeting three days per week. Aims of this program are to encourage students to express their personal ideas in English, to develop students' oral fluency through listening and speaking activities, and to help students think critically.

By using minimal pairs accompanied with pictorial illustrations, teachers conduct oral-aural drills. Additionally, two other approaches are often adopted to teach beginning and higher beginning-level adult learners: audio-lingual and grammar-translations. Students have an opportunity to assess their progress. Every four units, students are asked to fill out a follow-up checklist; in a limited time; to test their listening comprehension. One of the techniques in Classroom Assessment Techniques (Angelo and Cross, 1993) is Memory Matrix. It can assess students' recall of important course content and their skills at quickly organizing that information into categories provided by the teacher. By quickly looking over the students' completed matrices, the teacher can identify problem areas.

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English Conversation (A) and (B)

Beginning-level oral communication (A)

Higher beginning-level oral communication (B)

3 hours of small group discussion

2 hours of lecture

Weekly film series

Units: 8

Special Features:

In recent years, co-education has a corner on the educational system in Taiwan. Co-operation is the process of working with other organizations and individuals to achieve mutual benefits. Many of the organizations have sought to supplement their professional expertise through co-operative arrangements with educational institutions. Co-education programs fall into two categories: degree and non-degree. In degree programs, students enroll in school, strive for a long period of study, and finally obtain their diplomas. By contrast, non-degree programs refer to short-term training designed to raise the learners' level of competence and the productivity of the enterprises.

Adult learning is problem-centered. Adults insist that learning have relevance and value. Therefore, the teacher must be more person-centered than subject-centered, and curriculum development is designed to meet adult learners' job-related needs or personal needs (Robinson, 1994). Co-education as provided by the Extensive Education Center in Chin-Yi Institute of Technology and Business is a non-degree program. English Conversation (A) and (B) are intensive evening courses spread over a term of three months; meeting three days per week. The number of students is restricted to 20.

Course Description:

English Conversation (A) is a beginning course designed to help students develop confidence and skill in using English for communication. Course content revolves around the lives of young people and their circle of family and friends. While learning about the characters, students practice listening and reading in context and develop oral communication skills by expressing personal opinions about their lives. English Conversation (B) is designed for higher beginning-level adults who want to develop oral communication skills. Aims of this course are to encourage students to express their personal ideas in English, to develop students' oral fluency through listening and speaking activities, and to help students think critically.

Teaching Methods:

In oral communication class, the student's pronunciation and enunciation depend greatly on the degree of confidence the student feels about the way a word should be uttered. If confident enough, the student may be prompted to use a created word as needed. Lacking confidence, a student may avoid using that word, seeking a substitute word. This necessitates intensive oral-aural drill using minimal pairs of front vowels accompanied with pictorial illustrations. As the student gradually learns the function of speech organs, s/he begins to auditorily differentiate and assign phonemic values to sounds that had always seemed to sound alike (Zachariou, 1978).

Besides minimal pairs, two other approaches are often adopted to teach beginning and higher beginning-level adult learners: audio-lingual and grammar translation. With the audio-lingual approach, the purpose of ESL literacy practice is to teach students to read aloud all the English they already know. The usual procedure is for students to learn a dialogue orally and then read it. According to Paulston (1972), there are three types of pattern drills designed for English conversation class: mechanical drills, meaningful drills, and communication drills. A mechanical drill is one where there is complete control of the response, and there is only one correct response. For example, the pattern "There is" might be used. A pattern drill of this type would look like the following:

There is a -- book on the table.

There is a --- pencil on the table.

There is a --- pen on the table.

The purpose of mechanical drill is to develop the students' ability to manipulate linguistic tasks. This drill is extremely helpful to beginning adult learners. Chinese students are usually shy about speaking in class; they don't want others to hear their mistakes. Practicing in chorus can help them overcome such fears and also can force them to open their mouths. Seeing that the students have already mastered the skill, the teacher should move to more meaningful drills. In conducting this drill, the teacher gives cues to the students with an answer:

Teacher: Dr. Smith is in his office.

Student 1: Where is Dr. Smith?

Student 2: Dr. Smith is in his office.

Student 1 has certain options in constructing meaningful language, but the question must be appropriate to the cue. Student 2 is only involved in mechanical repetition drill, but gives a formal completion of the dialogue. As students progress successfully, the teacher should give them more freedom to speak. Therefore, communicative drills are conducted where there is no control of response. Students are free to choose what they want to say. With such drill, the teacher can ask students more interesting questions. For example:

Teacher: How many people are there in your family?

Student: There are four people in my family.

Teacher: Who are they?

Student: My father, my mother, my brother, and me.

When the teacher applies the drill, it is better to do so in an orderly progression; that is, the teacher should go from mechanical to communicative drills. The purpose of the grammar-translation approach is to teach the class in the students' native language. Vocabulary lists, printed grammar rules, and sample sentences are provided for the students to translate. Students are asked to memorize verb paradigms and exceptions to grammar rules. With a positive classroom atmosphere, the teacher provides much practice and opportunity for students. They are encouraged to speak in English as **much** as they can. Especially in intensive courses, curriculum delves into depth over a wide breadth of learning. The well-experienced

teacher is aware of keeping curriculum development balanced between breadth and depth. Oral language activities rely heavily on storytelling. The uses of audio and video tape are strongly recommended to improve listening and speaking skills.

Six-hours of evening lab session per week, including a series of movies in the class, are designed to strengthen the student's proficiency and fluency in speaking and listening. Experts and scholars are invited to deliver bilingual speeches and academic reports in bilingual languages. Lectures are one of the basic methods for students to learn new concepts, theories, and the latest scientific developments and trends.

In the last week of each month, students work in a group of four or five. From their learning in class, students practice sentence pattern drills and grammar rules and make their own dialogues according to given topics. In front of the classroom, each group presents its conversation with role-playing. The teacher monitors student demonstrations and gives them any comments concerning their mistakes.

Schools also award certificates to those who have finished the English courses. Adults who have finished vocational or technical training are awarded job certificates. In Taiwan, any students striving for diploma or a certificate must take an examination prepared by the school.

Assessments:

Through listening tasks, students have an opportunity to assess their progress. After every four units, there is a short examination to test students' listening comprehension. For instance, as students finish listening to tapes, they are at once asked to fill out a follow-up checklist; in a limited time; that indicated their listening comprehension.

After several classes of teaching grammar rules on verb tense, teachers want to find out whether students can easily categorize the verb tenses they have recently learned. One of the techniques in Classroom Assessment Techniques (Angelo and Cross, 1993) is Memory Matrix. It can assess students' recall of important course content and skills at organizing information into categories provided by the teacher.

A Sample Memory Matrix for Be Verb Tense/Aspect in English

	I	You	S/he	They	We
Present tense					
Past tense					
Present participle					
Future tense					

By quickly looking over students' completed matrices, the teacher can identify problem areas.

Reference

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英語課程提案

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摘要

以一個英文教師的身份，建議勤益技術學院在推廣教育中心內，設計有關英語會話的課程。英文會話 A 班是基礎課程，作者設計這個課程，在幫助學生培養他們的信心，與使用英文會話溝通上的技巧。英文會話 B 班是為具有初級英文程度的成人所設計，該課程是訓練學生在會話上溝通的技巧。英文會話 A 班與 B 班是沒有學位的課程，該課程是三個月一期，一星期三天的晚間密集班。課程的目標是鼓勵學生用英文來表達個人的思想，再經由聽與說的學習活動去發展學生在說方面的流利性，並且從學習中有批判性的思考。

關於教學方法，教師可採用音標再配合插圖說明，再加以口頭及聽覺上的密集訓練。此外，教師可運用聽覺語音的訓練和文法翻譯來指導具有初級程度的成人學習者。學生在學習四個單元過後，得參加隨堂測驗來評估本身是否有進步。Angelo & Cross 所作的“教室評估技巧”一書中的記憶矩陣 (Memory Matrix)，老師可以評估學生是否對課程內容了解與迅速組織的技巧。