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### Training teachers with English teaching methods



*I am a non-native English teacher, lecturer and researcher living and working in Lyon, France. My mother tongue is Romanian. I am specialized in legal English and compared legal languages (English, French, Romanian, Portuguese and Spanish) in particular, but I also teach English law, the European Union institutions, English for human rights, English for communication, business English, medical terminology and general English at the University of Lyon. I obtained my PhD in 2007 at the University of Lyon on the question of the influence of the French legal language and culture in Europe, more precisely in Romania, Portugal and within the institutions of the European Union, as confronted to the English language. I am an associated member of the CRTT (Centre for research in terminology and translation) at the University Lumière Lyon2. Previously, I had been a legal interpreter and translator with the European Commission during Romania's pre-accession to the European Union.*

In March 2010 I had the opportunity to experience another kind of English teaching which proved to be extremely rewarding and challenging. For the first time, the Rectorat of the Académie of Lyon<sup>1</sup> and the English Vocational Training Department of the University Lumière Lyon2 organised an intensive training week in English for secondary- and high-school teachers of various non-linguistic disciplines, which is known in France under the name “teaching DNL”.

#### **I. DNL teaching**

As of 2004, French teachers of non-linguistic disciplines have the possibility to obtain a complementary certificate which allows them to teach their subject in a language different

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<sup>1</sup> “Rectorat d'académie” is an administrative board grouping together French schools within a region, run by a “recteur d'académie”.

from the French language to students from European section classes, that is classes in which language teaching is emphasized as an important part of the general curriculum.

The European sections were created in 1992 and are aimed at improving the French way of teaching languages. The main objective of this project is threefold: to strengthen the teaching of a foreign language in secondary schools and high-schools; to teach a subject such as maths, economics, history, geography, law, physics, chemistry, etc. in a given foreign language: this is called “a non-linguistic discipline”, abbreviated into French as “DNL” (*discipline non-linguistique*); to provide the students with further knowledge of the country of the language they learn. The students in the European sections may study English, German, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, and Portuguese. The European sections have been very successful, with an increase of 47% in the number of students who chose to study in a European class in 2010, compared to 2005<sup>2</sup>.

As concerns the teachers who want to become certified DNL teachers, they have to take a complex examination, both oral and written, which is designed to assess several skills and abilities, as follows:

- specific knowledge about the European sections and their organisation;
- fluency and working knowledge in the foreign language they intend to teach;
- knowledge of the foreign culture related to the language they intend to teach, as well as notions of intercultural management;
- awareness of specific methods of teaching their discipline in a foreign language;
- intercultural and multidisciplinary awareness.

## II. The intensive training week in Lyon

The intensive training week that took place in Lyon and to which I participated, together with five other English trainers (I was the only non-native), was specifically designed to prepare the trainees – secondary- and high-school teachers – to their oral examination in English. It lasted from February 28<sup>th</sup> until March 4<sup>th</sup> 2010 and was organised for a number of twenty-three trainees who were teachers of various disciplines such as: Iron & Steel Industry, Automation, Physics & Chemistry, History, Secretarial skills in Sales, Mechanical Engineering, Merchandising in Sales, Maths, Economics and Management, Electrical Engineering, Customer Relations in Sales, Industrial science, Accounting, Economics and Law, Sports, Science of Engineering. Their English levels were A2, B1/B1+, B2/B2+. All but three of the trainees successfully passed their oral examination in English and became certified DNL teachers.

The training covered various aspects of the oral exam preparation. During the first day, the trainees were organised into three small groups and had to present themselves and the discipline they taught, in English and in front of a camera. Another filmed oral presentation was recorded on the last day of the training week and thus the trainees could see the difference and become aware of the progress they made during the week. For the rest of the week, the trainees were divided into two groups. My colleagues and I talked about our professional experience as English teachers and we emphasized the following points:

- the system of education in the English-speaking world: a comparison with the French system;
- objectives and teaching methods in a DNL class;
- sharing teaching methods;
- identifying possible difficulties in a DNL class;
- grammar: the tenses in English;

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<sup>2</sup> Source : Emilangues : <http://www.emilangues.education.fr/questions-essentielles/>

- language in use: classroom English: explaining, clarifying, asking, etc.;
- teaching terminology;
- using one's voice: intonation, rhythm, pauses, pronunciation;
- visual materials used in class;
- communication techniques;
- assessment of the intensive training week.

The trainees' evaluation of the intensive training week was positive and they were generally satisfied with the information they received. They also expressed a little frustration as regards the duration of the training, and said they would have preferred a two-week-training session. As far as the content of the training week goes, they would have liked more conversation classes and more oral practice of the English tenses. It is true that most of them, as most of the French people in general, do not have the possibility to be emerged in an English-speaking environment, lest they go to an English-speaking country. If we take the example of the listening skills, in comparison to a country as Romania, for instance, where English is largely present on TV with films and other various broadcasts which are not dubbed but subtitled; on the radio, with a predominance of songs in English; in cinemas, where again the films are always shown in their original version, France appears as a mono-lingual country where everything or almost is in French only, as most films or other broadcasts in English are automatically dubbed. The French student has to go to great lengths if he wants to learn English, whereas the Romanian student is helped in his learning process by the facility that he has to be in constant contact with the English language, by just turning his TV or radio on, or by going to the cinema. The Romanian student is used to hearing English on a daily basis, most of the time unintentionally, whereas the French student is almost always limited to his two-hour English class a week, or even less, and has to make real and conscious efforts to practise his English skills, which leads to frustration, lack of time and enjoyment, financial pressure, etc. If, to this not so glorious picture, we add the teaching methods which are mainly based on developing the writing and reading skills, then we should not be surprised at the students' levels in oral English or at their lack of willingness to actually speak in English. The lack of oral practice leads to lack of courage when expressing one's opinion in English, and this is one of the points we tried to unchain and thus improve during the intensive training week.

### **III. Teaching terminology and using visuals**

During the intensive training week I was in charge of two workshops: teaching terminology and using visuals. For both, I used my double experience as a teacher but also as a former student who learnt English in primary and secondary school, in high-school and at the university from native and non-native speakers. I talked about my methods but also about my teachers', about what I had learnt from them and how I applied this later when I became a teacher myself. I provided trainees with concrete examples of my teaching materials, experience and methods, and they shared with me valuable information about their way of teaching their disciplines. In groups, the trainees prepared lesson plans and discussed challenges and possible angles. Then they orally presented their lesson plans and played their lessons as teachers, while the other trainees were playing the roles of the students. Hereinafter are some of the aspects we dealt with during these two workshops.

### **i. 1<sup>st</sup> workshop: Teaching terminology: a few approaches**

#### **1) Use of supports:**

Board and markers

Paper documents: texts, exercises, etc.

Visuals: videos, DVDs, slides,

Audios: CDs, recordings, radio shows, etc.

Authentic materials: newspaper articles, book extracts, objects from everyday life or related to the discipline, news bulletins, official papers, etc.

#### **2) Type of exercises:**

Fill in the gaps, True or false, Matching, Multiple choice fill in the gaps, Multiple choice questions & answers, Questions & answers, Identify the odd one out, Give the best title to the text / paragraph, Create new words from a base-word, Brainstorming, etc.

#### **3) Tips for working with your students:**

Privilege group work: even shy people talk in small groups!

Ask students to look up terms in a dictionary as homework

Mix non-related fields to your field: e.g. teach quantities through a cake recipe.

Use your students' pen-friends (if they have any)

Use visuals and audio documents

No vocabulary lists!

Endorsement: bring in a lawyer friend if you teach legal English, or a secretary friend, or an engineer, to talk to your students, etc. E.g.: L. Groebel, journalist and writer, teaches interview techniques in the USA and he brought in Al Pacino for his students to interview him!

Use everyday objects, concrete situations that students can relate to, e.g. job ads.

Use your own creativity: create your own class material, invent your lesson, use your hobbies and things you like doing, use songs, films, documentaries, etc.

**4) Resources:** CLIL website, Emilangues website, BBC website – learning English, Hands-on science (Canadian website for Chemistry and Biology), [www.glencoe.com](http://www.glencoe.com) (USA history), Onestepenglish website, National Geographic video about the Kansai airport on youtube: civil engineering, Time, Newsweek, The Financial Times: management, maths (graphs, statistics), Poster and video ads on the Internet: marketing and advertising, BEC: Business English Cambridge, TOEIC: Business English: management and marketing, ILEC and ILEC website for English for Law, Cambridge and Oxford English for specific purposes methods (Decitre): management, business, sales, marketing, telephoning, Filmeducation.org: activities based on films (human rights, law, managers, employees, sales, etc.), online newspapers in English, online TV channels: BBC, CNN, CBS, ABC, etc.

#### **5) Classroom language for teachers:**

Now I'd like you to get into groups of.../form groups of.../ work in groups of...

Please go to page.../have a look at...

Let's do a brainstorm about...

I'll let you think about it for 5 minutes and then...

Right, have you finished your task?

Let's see what your conclusions are/what you've come up with!

Who wants to be first/start/ go first/ break the ice?

Have you got any questions?

Is everything clear?

Did you understand the text/question?

Do you want me to repeat/speak more slowly/translate/explain?

Could you please describe this poster?

What are the things you didn't understand/get?  
Let's all have a look at/watch this video/DVD extract!  
Today we're going to do some listening...  
I prepared a slideshow with some questions I'd like you to answer.  
First you're going to work in groups and then you're going to share your conclusions with the rest of the class.  
Good!/Very good!/Excellent!/Bravo!/Good job!/Well done!  
Well, you could have done better, you know that!  
I've got some remarks about your presentation/pronunciation/use of grammar...  
I'd like you to find synonyms/antonyms/words that mean the same/ the contrary...  
Could you explain this in your own words?  
For the next time/week your homework is...  
Could you please stop talking!  
Please pay attention to your classmate who's talking now!

#### **6) A lesson on CVs and cover letters: a few ideas**

1) Brainstorm: Discuss with students, teacher writes important terms on board:  
What is a CV/CL? What elements do you put in a CV/CL? What are the differences between the English CV/CL and the French ones? E.g.: photo, gender, hobbies, sentences...  
2) Bring examples of CVs and CLs in English.  
In groups, students read them, analyse them, discover the differences.  
Good way of introducing new vocabulary through original documents.  
Teacher writes new terms on board.  
3) Vocabulary exercises  
Teacher brings short sentences and gives the equivalent in French together with the students.  
E.g.: Yours faithfully; Looking forward to receiving your answer; Leisure activities, etc.  
4) In groups, students write their own CV/CL.  
Teacher helps with terms, sentence structure, specific idioms, etc.  
5) In groups, students correct their CVs and CLs.  
Teacher checks every group + individually.  
6) Tips:  
You can use videos from the Internet (how to write your CV/CL, about job interviews...)  
You can also use film extracts that you know and which deal with CV/CL writing/difficulties.  
You can show students a « bad » letter and ask them to correct it.  
You can use a « fill in the gaps » exercise for either the CV or the CL.  
You can use specific textbooks adapted to your students' level.

#### **7) A lesson on English law: a few ideas**

1) Brainstorm for « Anglo-Saxon law ». Teacher guides and writes ideas on board.  
2) In groups, students read short texts on UK law and common law. They identify terms from the brainstorm in the texts. When students ask for the meaning of a term, paraphrase to explain and they will find the French equivalent by themselves.  
3) Ask students to find synonyms/antonyms.  
4) Listening: students listen to a short presentation on US law. They have to do a « fill in the gaps » exercise and answer « true or false » questions.  
5) In pairs, students do a matching exercise with US law terminology (matching the terms to their definitions)  
6) Video materials:  
« And Justice for All » (1979, by Norman Jewison)  
Beginning: description of American Courts  
Final part: closing plea of the defence counsel  
Students identify terms discussed in class.

Teacher stops the film from time to time and indicates terms or notions to students.

« The Devil's Advocate » (1997, by Taylor Hackford)

Scene: selecting the jury

Students watch how a jury selection is made, as they read about it in the texts they studied before.

« The Paradine Case » (1947, by Alfred Hitchcock)

Scenes: A British Court, the Crown Prosecutor's accusatory opening plea, the questioning of witnesses, the cross-questioning by the defence barrister, the closing statement of the defence.

Students identify terms and notions discussed in class.

Students are asked to take notes about the roles of each character and specific terms they use in their speeches.

## ii. 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop: Using visuals

**1) What:** Videos from the Internet, DVD extracts, posters, slideshows, role cards for role plays, authentic materials: newspapers, magazines, cartoons, official documents: forms, contracts, recipes, etc., any concrete object related to your subject.

**2) When:** Anytime! Visuals have the strongest impact on individuals and groups. They attract attention and entertain at the same time. They go with our society

### **3) How:**

Visuals help you as a teacher: explain; introduce your topic/words/concepts; demonstrate; show; persuade; attract attention to your subject/topic.

Visuals help students: focus/concentrate; learn in an entertaining way; feel more at ease; see concepts in concrete situations; listen to words/sentences in real contexts; become familiar with culture difference: they bring about/trigger cultural awareness.

### **4) How can students use visuals?**

Ask students to do slide presentations and present them orally.

Ask students to make posters/ads in groups and then present them orally.

Ask students to analyse and then present a website/a company/an ad/a construction/ a project/a film/a method... using slides, videos.

Ask students to visit a museum/ supermarket/ monument and prepare a presentation using slides and videos.

Ask students to work on special events using visuals: last class before Christmas, last class before holidays, etc.

### **5) Examples that I use in class:**

a) Marketing: Carrefour Planet – the new marketing concept

Students go and visit the supermarket and then make oral presentations in groups using slides, videos, pictures.

b) PR and organizing an event: students work in groups and have to organize an event that has to do with the English-speaking culture, following given instructions.

Visual example I used: « People I Know » (2002, by Daniel Algrant) film extract about an event organizer in New York and his young assistant.

c) « An Introduction to Human Rights » lecture I gave to engineering students:

I used: slides, videos about refugees, asylum seekers, video about rural slavery in Brazil, pictures of human rights leaders and artists, songs about human rights, Martin Luther King's speech « I have a dream » – audio with the script projected.

### **6) Films that I use in class:**

“City Hall” (1995, by Harold Becker) - communication in politics and administration, crisis communication

“And Justice for All” (1979, by Norman Jewison)- legal English, US Court  
“The Paradine Case” (1947, by Alfred Hitchcock )- legal English, UK Court  
“The Devil’s Advocate” (1997, by Taylor Hackford) - legal English  
“The Merchant of Venice” (2004, by Michael Radford) – legal English in the Elizabethan times  
“People I know” (2002, by Daniel Algrant) – PR, event planning, communication  
“A Guide to Recognizing Your Saints”(2006, by Dito Montiel) - teens, anti-social behaviour  
“Black And White” (1999, by James Toback) - social phenomena, white teens imitate rap and hip-hop black culture in the US  
“Outfoxed” (2003, by Robert Greenwald) - TV, media and politics in general  
“An Inconvenient Truth” (2006, by David Guggenheim) - environment, numbers, statistics  
“Supersize Me” (2004, by Morgan Spurlock), “Fast Food Nation” (2006, by Richard Linklater) - nutrition, fast food, management meetings  
“Gandhi” (1982, by Sir Richard Attenborough), “Philadelphia” (1993, by Jonathan Demme),  
“Blood Diamond” (2006, by Edward Zwick), “The Constant Gardener” (2005, by Fernando Meirelles) - human rights, employment  
“The Insider” (1999, by Michael Mann) – freedom of the media, contractual obligations, tobacco industry  
“Darwin’s Nightmare” (2004, by Hubert Sauper) - human rights, environment, EU  
“Any Given Sunday” (1999, by Oliver Stone), “Invictus” (2009, by Clint Eastwood), “Million Dollar Baby” (2004, by Clint Eastwood), “Tyson” (2008, by James Toback) - sports  
“The Absent Minded Professor” (1961, by Robert Stevenson)- chemistry  
“I.Q.” (1994, by Fred Schepisi)- maths (Albert Einstein)  
“Wall Street” ( 1987, by Oliver Stone) - business  
“Dr. Strangelove” (1967, by Stanley Kubrick) - chemistry  
YouTube video bios: Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Gandhi, etc.

## 7) Tips:

*You as a teacher:*

You can be a « visual » for your students:

E.g. Sports: describe your moves, positions, equipment; Management: bring you own CV/CL and discuss them with students; Talk about your own experience.

*The students:*

Ask the students to work and talk in class more than you.

Ask the students to create and use visuals. They love it!

Your principal task is preparing your lesson and guiding your students in class.

Ask your students to prepare oral presentations using visuals at home, to search for information before coming to class.

Ask your students to work in pairs/groups.

Emphasize speaking in class and writing/searching for information at home.

Ask the students to play roles, maybe film them or record them if you have the necessary material.

E.g. Secretary: telephoning, receiving clients, discussing the manager’s agenda, etc.

Sales: receiving customers, after-sale/customer service

Law: lawyer-client meeting, lawyer-lawyer meeting

Engineering: talking about a project, going to work abroad, etc.

Maths, Chemistry: two famous scientists meet

Sports: two sportsmen/women’s conversation, two sportsmen/women training together.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

As a teacher of English for specific purposes, the intensive training week for the DNL teachers helped me further develop my training and interpersonal skills and learn from my colleagues teachers of non-linguistic disciplines, for which I thank them. I also thank my fellow trainers for their team spirit, resourcefulness and availability. Through the intensive training, we tried to provide the trainees with the necessary tools and ideas that would help them overcome most of their difficulties for their oral examination as well as for their class teaching. These difficulties laid mainly in their lack of confidence as concerns their oral skills originated from the lack of practice, lack of vocabulary, specific or adapted to their discipline, need for more enhanced grammar practice (tenses in particular) and for new or more varied methods of teaching. We received positive appreciations from the trainees and, as a result, another training session for DNL teachers will be organized in the spring of 2012 by the English Vocational Training Department of the University Lumière Lyon2.