

**FINAL REPORT
FOR
CHINESE ESL LEARNERS
AT
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY**

**FOR HPT PROJECT
(ETEC 712)**

**EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

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May 13, 2006

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Abstract

Firstly, in the part of Summary of Needs Analysis, we summarize Chinese ESL students' English oral performance gap, analyze the reasons why they may have these problems, and then use literature to justify why we plan to conduct the target interventions. Secondly, in Pedagogical Philosophy of Instructional Design, we use “four component analysis”, “ARCS model”, “Constructivism model”, and “language strategy training model” to build up the pedagogical philosophy basis for the current project. Thirdly, in Instructional Design Plan, we identify and demonstrate the various elements of this instructional design package: context, goals, topics, materials, instructional media, and teaching methods. At last, in Instructional Design Sample, we illustrate some instructional samples used in this design. We also have sample materials in the appendices...

Part One: Summary of Needs Analysis

The Performance Gap

The following table identifies the gap between optimal and actual English oral performance of Chinese ESL students.

Table 1.1 the Performance Gap for Chinese ESL students

Optimal Performance	Actual Performance
To pronounce English correctly and clearly	Many students cannot pronounce English correctly.
To use appropriate vocabulary and grammar to clearly and precisely express ideas in academic fields and daily life situations.	Most students lack the active vocabulary to communicate effectively. They often make grammatical errors in English oral communication.
To know the basic norms used in western culture in order to avoid the unintentionally causing offense.	Students may unintentionally offend people from other cultures with inappropriate expression.

The Causes for the Performance Gap

1. Past learning experiences in China determine their prior knowledge in spoken English and affect their current study habits.
2. Cultural factors: Chinese students tend to be introverted, want to perform perfectly, and focus too much on their academic field instead of trying to improve their spoken English.
3. The vicious circle (incorrect pronunciation->embarrassment in communication->lack of practice -> no improvement in pronunciation) keeps repeating same errors.
4. Chinese students lack self-regulation and motivation in improving oral English.
5. Chinese is a big minority in Montreal and at Concordia University, so Chinese students tend to speak in their own language instead of practicing spoken English.
6. Bi-lingual environment in Montreal limits their access to linguistic resources.
7. Concordia University's ESL courses focus on writing.

The Rationale for Choosing the Target Interventions

In order to improve Chinese students' English oral proficiency, many factors should be considered: learners' prior knowledge, motivation, efforts, self-regulation, learning strategies, and their access to learning resources. "Give a man a fish and you will feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish and you will feed him for a lifetime." Language learning is a life long task, and we believe that helping students obtain effective language-learning strategies will greatly benefit them. The following paragraphs use literature to verify this rationale.

Language learning strategies refer to “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations” (Oxford, 1990, p. 8).

Effective language learners use a variety of learning strategies: making good use of practice opportunities, using guessing strategies effectively, adjusting affective factors in language learning, systematically exploring the target language system, and monitoring one’s own speech (Naiman, Frohlich, Todesco, 1975; Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, & Todesco, 1978; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1983).

According to think-aloud studies (Abraham & Vann, 1987; O’Malley & Chamot, 1990), effective language learners not only are aware of the strategies they use, but also understand why they use them. Therefore, they can adjust their strategies to learning tasks and their personal learning needs. Although less effective learners can identify their own strategies, they do not know how to choose appropriate strategies or how to integrate them into a useful strategy sequence (Block, 1986; Stern, 1975; Vann & Abraham 1990). Less effective learners can benefit from applying the strategies that effective learners use; in addition, effective language learners can become better by using the whole range of available strategies (Rubin, 1975; Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, & Todesco, 1978).

The most practical implication of learning strategy research is strategy training. Research shows that learners who receive strategy training perform better than those who do not. Oxford (1990, p. 201) thinks that the best strategy training should help learners adjust their old beliefs about learning, so they could take full advantage of the strategies that they acquired in strategy training. Dadour and Robbins (1996) concluded that strategies training significantly help students improve speaking skill compared to the other three skills (listening, reading, and writing). The above research findings strongly support our target intervention: language-learning strategies training.

Hall (1993) related a social cultural idea to language learning: “The ability to participate as a competent member in the practices of a group is learned through repeated engagement in and experience with these activities with more competent members of a group ” (p. 148). In the context of the current project, checking “the causes for the performance gap”, we can see that the last three causes are directly related to “access to linguistic resources”. Therefore, one important aspect of strategies training should focus on helping students improve their abilities of obtaining access to linguistic resources.

The general objective of the target interventions is to help Chinese ESL students improve their oral English proficiency by improving their use of effective learning strategies and resources.

Part Two: The Pedagogical Philosophy of Instructional Design

We have tried to apply learning theories in the design analysis; we hope that our design has a scientific pedagogical philosophy basis.

Four Components Analysis

Schott and Driscoll (1997) proposed a universal instructional theory, arguing that teachers and designers must consider these four components when they develop instruction.

1. The learner
2. The learning task (including the desired learning outcomes)
3. The learning environment (learning conditions and instructional methods)
4. The context in which learning is to occur

Table 2.0 shows how we analyze and design our instruction based on these four components.

Table 2.0 Four Components Analysis

Four Components	Applied to Our HPT Project
The Learner	Concordia's Chinese ESL students, who at least have passed CELDT or TOFEL, but vary greatly in terms of age and English oral proficiency.
The Learning Task (including the desired learning outcomes)	To understand and use language learning strategies and resources more effectively, such as making good use of practice opportunities, using guessing strategies effectively, adjusting affective factors in language learning, and monitoring one's own speech development
The Context in which learning is to occur	We define the context as learning spoken English both inside and outside the classroom, and we put more emphasis on learning outside the classroom in an English-speaking environment (Concordia and Montreal).
Learning Environment (Include learning conditions and instructional methods)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● From motivation theory, the conditions of learning are: students need to understand the value of learning so that they can learn more effectively, and they must have the confidence that they can become better language learners. ● See Table 2.1 for relevant instructional methods ● From constructivism theory, the conditions of learning include: (1) Social negotiation (2) Multiple perspectives and multiple modes of learning (3) Ownership in learning. ● See Table 2.2 for relevant instructional methods

Instructional Methods Based on ARCS Model (developed by John M. Keller)

1. Gain and sustain attention
2. Enhance relevance
3. Build confidence
4. Generate satisfaction

Table 2.1 describes the instructional methods that we have adopted based on this model.

Table 2.1 Instructional Methods Based on Motivation Theories (ARCS)

ARCS Strategies	Instructional Methods Implemented in current Project
Gain and Sustain Attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use games, simulations and plays to capture and maintain learners' attentions. ✓ Use discussion to expose students' experiences. The discrepancy between one's own and others' experiences may prompt the student to work on the strategies discussed in the class.
Enhance Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use the findings from our needs analysis to help students see the relevance to their own experience (the findings point out the problems that Chinese ESL learners are facing). ✓ Use simulations that are closely related to students' daily life and studies to help them to see the value of learning to use the effective strategies.
Build Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Create a positive expectation for success by setting clear instructional goals and objectives. ✓ Provide opportunities for students to successfully attain challenge goals, such as effectively increasing active vocabulary by using of a strategy.
Generate Satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Create "natural consequence" by providing opportunities of using newly acquired skills to learners.

Instructional Methods Based on Constructivism Theory

Teaching language-learning strategies is tricky in most situations. Only when students can apply the taught knowledge in new learning situations can we say that the instruction is effective. Since the desired learning outcome is transfer of knowledge, constructivist theory is useful to help us choose effective instructional methods. Table 2.2 describes the instructional methods that we have adopted based on constructivist theory.

Table 2.2 Instructional Methods Based on Constructivist Theory

Learning Conditions	Instructional Methods Used in Our HPT Project
Social Negotiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Collaborative learning by group learning ✓ Moodle (the online website based on the course management system) as the collaborative technology to support collaborative learning ✓ Games, simulation, and role-playing
Multiple Perspectives and Multiple Modes of Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Both the workshops and the Moodle expose students to multiple perspectives. ✓ For the memory strategies, there is a big potential for students to use multiple modes to improve their memory.
Ownership in Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The instructional activities facilitate students' ownership in their daily language learning since these activities are very similar to real life situations. ✓ Moodle makes students have more than one choice, which helps them have the feeling of ownership in learning.

Long-term Strategy Training

According to Oxford (1995), language-learning strategies can be taught in at least three different ways: awareness training, one-time strategy training, and long-term strategy training.

The purpose of **awareness training** is to help participants become aware of and familiar with the general idea of language learning strategies and the way such strategies can help them accomplish various language tasks. **One-time strategy training** involves learning and practicing one or more strategies with actual language tasks, usually those found in the regular language-learning program. **Long-term strategy training** involves learning and practicing strategies with actual language tasks. In both one-time and long-term strategy training, students learn the significance of particular strategies, when and how to use them, and how to monitor and evaluate their own performance. However, long-term training covers a greater number of strategies and lasts over a longer period.

In the current project, we mainly use long-term strategy training. The actual language learning tasks are closely relevant to students' daily life, so it is likely that students will be motivated to learn.

Part Three: Instructional Design Plan

Context of the Course

The course is designed for a group of ESL learners who cooperate with each other to improve oral English in more efficient and effective ways. The course content and format are fully designed, so this instructional design package is like a prescription that can be used by any group of learners (or like a guideline and a user manual for an ESL group/club).

At least one facilitator is needed for each group to ensure that the course goes well. The ideal number of students for one group is about eight. Too many students for one group may obstruct good communication among students; some introverted students may have fewer opportunities to express themselves. On the other hand, if there are too few students in one group, it may not be good for the exposure of perspectives and also may prevent the activities from proceeding in an effective way. The ideal situation is that the participants have similar level of English oral proficiency.

Every participant plays the role of both teacher and learner. The ultimate goal of this learning is that learners can become more autonomous: they can truly transfer what they have learned in this course into their further language learning. The best way of learning is teaching: whenever students try to teach, they must fully understand the content first, and it is more likely that they will reflect on their own learning in a broader and deeper way. [A technique called ‘reciprocal teaching’]

If participants chose to take part in this learning, they would have been already highly motivated and also have made some efforts in improving oral English. However, they might not be effective or self-regulated learners, so the purpose of this instructional package is to help them become better at these aspects. Furthermore, they can enjoy more fun in learning.

Course Goals

After finishing the course, students are expected to achieve the following goals:

1. Understand the whole range of language learning strategies (memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies) defined by Rebecca Oxford.
2. Be able to transfer some learning strategies into their own learning.
3. Be able to identify the typical problems (such as pronunciation) existing in Chinese ESL learners, and know how to overcome these problems.
4. Know the available linguistic resources at Concordia University and in Montreal.
5. Become more self-directed in improving oral English.
6. Know the basic norms used in western cultures.

Recommended Readings and Multimedia Materials

1. Oxford, R. L. (1990) Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know
2. Rubin, J. & Thompson, I. (1994) How to be a more successful language learner: Toward learner autonomy
3. The comedy series “Friends”

Topic List of the Courses

1. Awareness training (I)
2. Awareness training (II)
3. Social strategies
4. Affective strategies
5. Metacognitive strategies
6. Memory strategies
7. Compensation strategies
8. Cognitive strategies
9. Multi-culture customs and manners

Teaching Methods:

1. For the first two sessions, facilitators need to take charge of the whole learning process. They need to make other participants understand the whole operational rule for the group learning. These sessions will focus on awareness training.
2. From the third session, the following templates of teaching and learning can be used. For every topic, each student acting as the teacher presides over the corresponding session.
 - Reviewing the strategies learned in previous sessions help students reinforce their knowledge.
 - We believe that the best way of training learning strategies is through the activities that closely relate to students’ daily life situation. From doing the concrete activities, students can have a deeper understanding of the strategies.
 - The debriefing and reinforcement help students have a theoretical knowledge about language learning strategies and provide them more opportunities to practice the new strategies.
 - Reflection aims to promote students’ self-regulation in learning.
 - Based on the result of our needs analysis, the exercises of pronunciation and vocabulary are set up. From these two activities, students not only can consciously improve their pronunciation and vocabulary, but also can apply the taught strategies.

Table 3.1 Template of Teaching and Learning

Activities	Time
Review of old strategies: Every student gives a one-minute report on his/her use of these strategies during the past week.	8 minutes
Simulation/Game/Role-Playing (Integrate the objective strategies into the activities) Teachers or instructors increase the learners' learning interests for new strategies by these activities. Then they summarize and analyze the strategies used in these activities, and let learners do reinforcement exercise for these strategies.	40 minutes
Individual reflection on use of strategies. The person who taught the old strategies will give two minutes review for all the other group members.	2 minutes
Pronunciation Time 1. Students correct each other's pronunciation in pairs. (The problematic pronunciation is either from the game/simulation/role-playing or from the word list that students have created before the class.) 2. Students check each other's pronunciation that they have worked on the previous classes.	10 minutes
Vocabulary Time Students discuss and practice the new vocabulary learned from the activity on this class.	10 minutes

Instructional Media

Workshops/Group Meetings + Supportive Website (Moodle)

The workshops are the main media to achieve the learning goals. Moodle is the supportive tool that provides learning materials for students, and gives students a sharing and communicating platform without the limit of time and space.

Examples of the Class Contents

The following table shows the class contents of two sessions of our HPT project. We tried to apply all the essential and related knowledge when we arranged the time and contexts. We also hope that these concrete examples can be helpful for the potential users who are interested in the similar field in the future.

Table 3.2 Examples of the Class Contents: Objectives, Readings and Assignments

Topics	Objectives	Class Activities	Assignment
<p>Topic One Awareness Training (I)</p>	<p>The learners should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand the main obstacles that are faced by Chinese students in learning spoken English, and associate their own learning experience with the information 2. Know the typical pronunciation problems existing among Chinese students 3. Understand and apply some effective strategies: make use of peer cooperation, ask for help from native speakers, and learn from errors 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction (teachers): ✓ SILL (10 minutes) ✓ Needs Analysis Report (10 minutes) ✓ Chinese ESL students' pronunciation problems (15 minutes) 2. Pronunciation activity (5 minutes) 3. "What if ..." game (20 minutes) 4. Discussion of the teaching and learning methods used in this group learning (10 minute) 	<p>Depending on individual situation, learners need to correct typically wrong pronunciations by using various strategies</p>
<p>Topic Two Awareness Training (II)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be aware of the existence of the whole range of learning strategies, and have a systematic understanding of Oxford's language learning strategies. 2. Have a deeper understanding of some specific strategies by doing and discussing the "St. Patrick Day's Game" 3. Know how to self-monitor their own use of certain strategies by doing the "Knock the opportunities" exercises. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. St. Patrick Day's Game (30 minutes) 2. Teaching & Illustration (teachers) The system of language-learning strategies by using the St. Patrick Day's Game (20 minutes) 3. Feedback of the results of SILL (5 minutes) 4. Feedback of the result of pronunciation activity (5 minutes) 5. "Knock the opportunities" exercise (10 minutes) 	<p>The students need to do "Knock the opportunities" after the class</p>

Part Four: Instructional Design Samples

Due to the large scope of the current project, it is impossible for us to discuss everything in the “instructional design final report”; we can only discuss a few samples to give our audiences a sense of what our instructional design is like. In this part, we will demonstrate the following instructional design samples:

1. Complete design of a topic
2. Games & Role-playings
3. Assignments
4. Discussions in Moodle

1. A Sample of a Complete Design of a Topic: Awareness Training (I)

Objectives:

1. Be aware of the existence of the whole range of learning strategies
2. Understand the main obstacles that are faced by Chinese students in learning spoken English, and associate the own learning experience with the information
3. Understand the typical pronunciation problems existing among Chinese students
4. Understand and apply some effective strategies: make use of peer cooperation, ask for help from native speakers, and learn from errors

Activities:

1. SILL and Background Survey (10 minutes) [see appendix 1.1 for SILL]
Working on SILL itself can make students realize the whole range of language learning strategies. Moreover, SILL can be regarded as the pretest and posttest for the whole instruction. The score difference between pretest and posttest can be used to evaluate students’ progress in the use of language learning strategies. Studies have indicated that students often find working on SILL fun and enlightening.

We have translated SILL into Chinese, so students can finish it in about five minutes. And they can spend the other five minutes on the background survey.

2. Needs Analysis Report (10 minutes) [see appendix 1.2 for the report]
The purpose of showing students part of our Needs Analysis Report is to help them see the relevance of this instruction to their own problem of learning. Once they see the relevance, they will tend to be more reflective about their learning and be more motivated to learn.

3. Chinese ESL students' pronunciation problems (15 minutes) [see appendix 1.3 for the article]

Often most Chinese ESL students do not realize their typical pronunciation problems. Even though they realize the problems to certain degree, they still do not know how to overcome these problems. This excellent article will be very helpful to them.

Facilitators will only give a simple introduction about the key points mentioned in this article. And students will be told that they will have more opportunities to practice their pronunciation based on this article in later classes.

4. Pronunciation Activities (5 minutes) [see appendix 1.4 for this activity]
A concrete example shows students one effective way of correcting pronunciation, through which they can realize some useful learning strategies.

5. "What if" game (20 minutes) [see appendix 1.5 for this activity]
Basically, this instruction will adopt Oxford's language learning strategies system. However, Rubin and Thompson's book of "How to be a more successful language learner" is another excellent source in language learning strategies. We have extracted the part concerning the strategies used in spoken English, and have converted the content into a game.

Later, whenever necessary, students can refer back to these strategies.

6. Discussion of the teaching and learning methods used in this group learning

Assessment:

Since this session aims to trigger the awareness of students, there is no assessment for the knowledge learned in this section.

However, SILL can be taken as a pretest to evaluate students' entry skill in use of strategies.

Assignment:

Correct the wrong pronunciation by using various strategies.

2. **A Sample of Games and Role-playings:** St. Patrick's Day Game [See Appendix 2.1]
In the first session, students have been required to work on SILL. In the second

session, we will introduce Oxford's language learning strategies system through doing and debriefing the St. Patrick's Day Game.

By doing this game, students can have the first-hand experience of reflecting on their use of several language learning strategies in real life situations. Since it is a game, the elements of games (game rules, learners' choices, chances, competition and peer cooperation.) help them to engage in the learning activities.

3. A Sample of Assignment: Knock the opportunities [See Appendix 3.1]

Through doing this assignment, students learn to reflect and self-monitor their behaviors in making use of various opportunities to practice spoken English. Students will share their assignments in Moodle to see how other students learn spoken English by making use of resources in the context of Montreal and Concordia University.

4. A Sample of Discussion in Moodle: Why do Chinese students not have the habit of practicing oral English with each other? [See Appendix 4.1, this appendix also include a few webpages in Moodle]

In a session of Conversation Group at Concordia University, an Iranian student said that Iranian students have the habit of practicing spoken English with each other, and she also wondered why Chinese students do not have the same habit. An ESL teacher commented that Chinese students are very resourceful, but they lack self-regulation: during the break of an ESL class, Chinese students only communicate with each other in their mother tongue. We will post the above topic in the discussion forum of Moodle and let students discuss this topic.

Conclusion

Oxford(1990, p. 8) defined language learning strategies as specific actions taken by the learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations. The current project has tried to apply the most appropriate instructional methods to improve students' understanding and application of the most effective learning strategies. We ourselves have benefited greatly from this project in our own oral English learning, and we have organized a fixed ESL learning group to experiment with this instructional package at Concordia University. Later, we would like to propose this instructional package to the relevant departments at Concordia University; we hope that our efforts can truly help Chinese ESL learners and other ESL learners in the university. During the whole process of doing this project, we have got lots of valuable support and help from many people (our instructor, learning specialists, writing assistants, ESL teachers, and Chinese students); we sincerely express our appreciation for all their contribution.

Appendix 1.1

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

Version 7.0 (ESL/EFL)

(c) R. Oxford, 1989

Directions

This form of the STRATEGY INVENTORY FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING (SILL) is for students of English as a second or foreign language. You will find statements about learning English. Please read each statement. On the separate Worksheet (page 4), write the response (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) that tells How True of you the statement is.

1 = Never or almost never true of me

2 = Usually not true of me

3 = Somewhat true of me

4 = Usually true of me

5 = Always or almost always true of me

NEVER OR ALMOST NEVER TRUE OF ME means that the statement is very rarely true of you.

USUALLY NOT TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true less than half the time.

SOMEWHAT TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true of you about half the time.

USUALLY TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true more than half the time.

ALWAYS OR ALMOST ALWAYS TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true of you almost always.

Answer in terms of how well the statement **describes you**. Do not answer how you think you should be, or what other people do. There are no right or wrong answers to these statements. Put your answers on the separate Worksheet. Work as quickly as you can without being careless. This usually takes about 20-30 minutes to complete.

Remember answer 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 (as described above).

Part A

1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.
2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.

3. I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.
4. I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.
5. I use rhymes to remember new English words.
6. I use flashcards to remember new English words.
7. I physically act out new English words.
8. I review English lessons often.
9. I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.

Part B

10. I say or write new English words several times.
11. I try to talk like native English speakers.
12. I practice the sounds of English.
13. I use the English words I know in different ways.
14. I start conversations in English.
15. I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.
16. I read for pleasure in English.
17. I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.
18. I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.
19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.
20. I try to find patterns in English.
21. I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.
22. I try not to translate word-for-word.
23. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.

Part C

24. To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.
25. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.
26. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.
27. I read English without looking up every new word.
28. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.
29. If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.

Part D

30. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.
31. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.
32. I pay attention when someone is speaking English.
33. I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.
34. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.
35. I look for people I can talk to in English.
36. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.
37. I have clear goals for improving my English skills.
38. I think about my progress in learning English.

Part E

39. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.
40. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.
41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.
42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.
43. I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.
44. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.

Part F

45. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.
46. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.
47. I practice English with other students.
48. I ask for help from English speakers.
49. I ask questions in English.
50. I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.

WORKSHEET FOR ANSWERS

Write your response (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) in the spaces below.

Part A	Part B	Part C	Part D	Part E	Part F	SILL Totals
1.) _____	10.) _____	24.) _____	30.) _____	39.) _____	45.) _____	SUM Part A _____
2.) _____	11.) _____	25.) _____	31.) _____	40.) _____	46.) _____	SUM Part B _____
3.) _____	12.) _____	26.) _____	32.) _____	41.) _____	47.) _____	SUM Part C _____

4.)_____ 13.)_____ 27.)_____ 33.)_____ 42.)_____ 48.)_____ SUM Part D_____

5.)_____ 14.)_____ 28.)_____ 34.)_____ 43.)_____ 49.)_____ SUM Part E_____

6.)_____ 15.)_____ 29.)_____ 35.)_____ 44.)_____ 50.)_____ SUM Part F_____

7.)_____ 16.)_____ 36.)_____

8.)_____ 17.)_____ 37.)_____

9.)_____ 18.)_____ 38.)_____

19.)_____

20.)_____

21.)_____

22.)_____

23.)_____

SUM_____ SUM_____ SUM_____ SUM_____ SUM_____ SUM_____ SUM_____

÷9=_____ ÷14=_____ ÷6=_____ ÷9=_____ ÷6=_____ ÷6=_____ ÷50=_____

(Overall

Average)

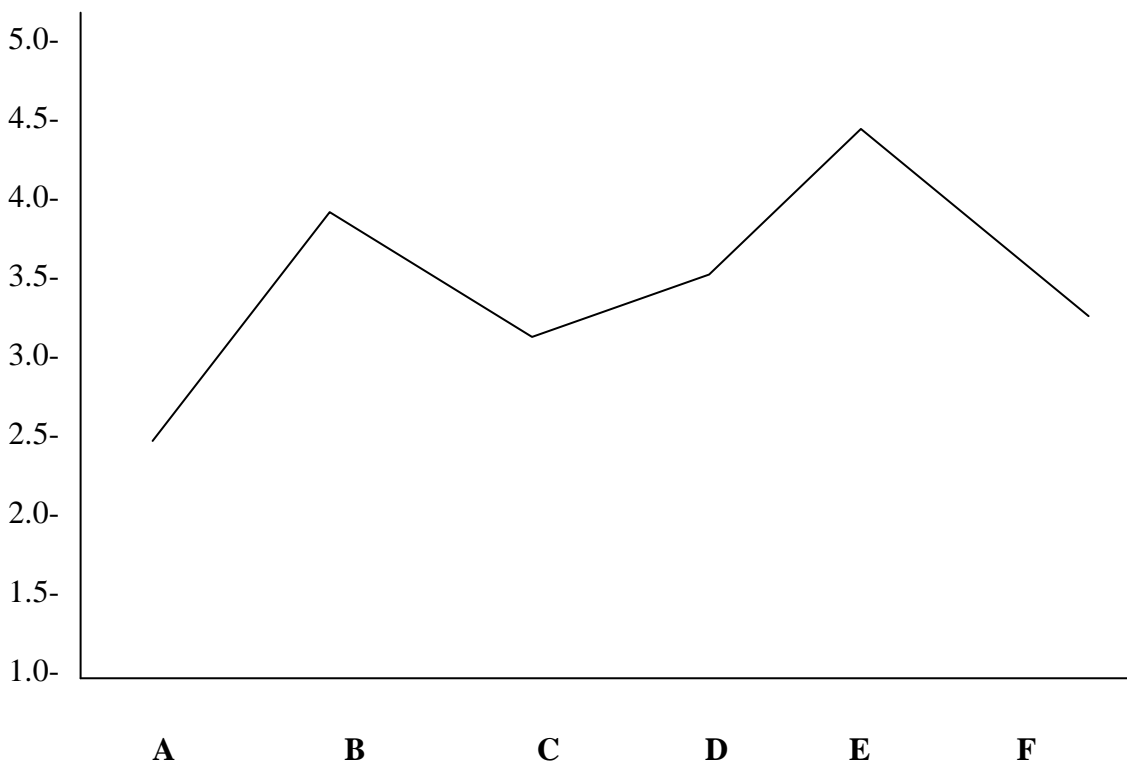
In the above spaces, add the total of your responses in each column and divide by the number of your answers. This process will tell you your average for each part of the SILL and your Overall Average. Write your averages below:

Part	Strategies Covered	Your Average on this part
A.	Remembering more effectively	_____
B.	Using all your mental processes	_____
C.	Compensating for missing knowledge	_____
D.	Organizing and evaluating your learning	_____

E.	Managing your emotions	_____
F.	Learning with others	_____
	YOUR OVERALL AVERAGE	_____

If you Graph your Score, you will see visually how much potential you have remaining for learning English, and you also can see what strategies might be more fruitful for your learning endeavors. An area where you have a high average, for instance, you do not need new study methods; but an area where you have low averages, new study methods may benefit you a lot.

Graph Your Averages Here (example)



The overall average tells how often you use strategies for learning English. Each part of the SILL represents a group of learning strategies. The averages for each part of the SILL show which groups of strategies you use the most for learning English.

The best use of strategies depends on your age, personality, and purpose for learning. If you have a very low average on one or more parts of the SILL, there may be some new strategies in these groups that you might want to use.

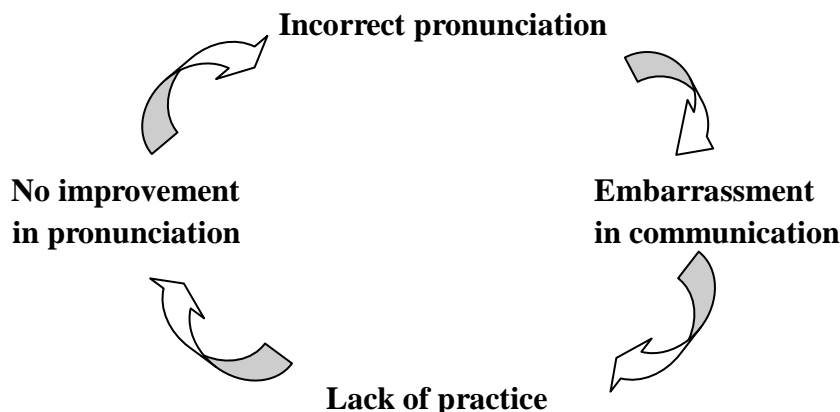
Source: Rebecca L. Oxford. 1990. *Language Learning Strategies, What Every Teacher Should Know*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Appendix 1.2

Needs Analysis Report (Parts)

The obstacles that Concordia's Chinese students may meet in learning spoken English

- **Past learning experiences in China determine their prior knowledge in spoken English and affect their current study habits.** The grammar-centered English teaching style in China determines that most Chinese students are not strong in English speaking and listening skills and that they lack active vocabulary. The incorrect English pronunciation of teachers has negatively affected students' pronunciation. Students have been used to spending too much time on reading and reciting and practicing little in English oral communication.
- **Concordia University's ESL courses focus on writing.** Most Chinese students attending Concordia are required to take ESL courses (about 3 courses: ESL 207, ESL 208 and ESL 209) or English Compositions Writing courses (ENGL 206, ENGL 207, ENGL 212). These courses mainly focus on writing, so it is unlikely that students can improve English oral abilities greatly through these courses. There is only one ESL course with one section focusing on basic oral communication, but most Chinese students do not know it since it is an elective course.
- **Cultural factors.** Firstly, Chinese students (or most Asian students) tend to be introverted compared to other students. Secondly, affected by the culture, some Chinese students always want to perform perfectly because they worry about making mistakes, which is an obstacle for their improvement in spoken English. Thirdly, when Chinese students communicate with native speakers, they may be unintentionally rude or socially inappropriate, which obstructs the communication. Chinese students work very hard in their academic fields, but they need to spend more time in integrating to the multicultural life in Canada.
- **The vicious circle keeps repeating in learning ESL:**



- This circle is very similar to the psychological concept “learned helplessness”. When a Chinese student speaks English with incorrect pronunciation, other people may have difficulty in understanding him/her, the student may feel he/she is in a “stupid situation”, and then he/she may try to keep silent in order to avoid embarrassment in front of other people. Thus, he/she seldom practices speaking English, and of course it is impossible for him/her to correct the pronunciation. Then, the student is in a situation of “learned helplessness”.
- **Chinese as a big minority in Montreal and at Concordia.** There are about 40,000 Chinese in Montreal and 3,000 Chinese students at Concordia. Chinese people often live in the same areas in Montreal. There are Chinese newspapers, Chinese community website, Chinese stores, Chinese restaurants, Chinese churches, Chinese neighborhoods, and Chinese classmates, so it is convenient to speak Chinese most of the time. On one hand, it is a good thing that you have a feeling of belonging to a community, and it is easy to ask for help from people from the same culture; on the other hand, it is a disadvantage for integrating into Canada life because most Chinese people need to work in the environment outside the Chinese community and we need to improve our language ability and understand other cultures.
- **Bi-lingual environment in Montreal.** The bi-lingual environment in Montreal is a problem for Anglophones and Francophone, not mentioning for those whose first language is neither English nor French. The bi-lingual environment increases the difficulty for Chinese students to look for available resources to practice English.
- **Self-regulation and motivation.** In Chinese culture, people always want to demonstrate their best part in public, so even among ESL learners, they do not like to use English in casual conversations to improve its proficiency. In addition, some students focus too much attention on their academic areas and do not think English oral ability will play an important role in their real life, so they actually lack the motivation and self-regulation to learn spoken English.

Appendix 1.3

Common Problems for Chinese Students' English Pronunciation

—from the handouts in ESL 298 course, provided by Marina Promies

Intonation

There are several immediately evident characteristics of a Chinese accent. The most notable is the lack of speech music, or the musical intonation of English. This is a problem because in the English language, *Intonation* indicates meaning, new information, contrast, or emotion. Another aspect of speech music is *phrasing*, which tells if it is a statement, a question, a yes/no option, a list of items, or where the speaker is in the sentence (introductory phrase, end of the sentence, etc.). In Chinese, however, a change in tone indicates a different vocabulary word.

In English, Chinese speakers have a tendency to increase the *volume* on stressed words, but otherwise give equal value to each word. This atonal volume-increase will sound aggressive, angry, or abrupt to a native speaker. When this is added to the tendency to lop off the end of each word, and almost no word connections at all, the result ranges from choppy to unintelligible.

Comments: In English, a pitch change indicates the speaker's intention. In Chinese, a pitch change indicates a different word.

In spite of this unpromising beginning, Chinese students have a tremendous advantage. Here is an amazingly effective technique that radically changes how you sound. Given the highly developed tonal qualities of the Chinese language, you are truly a “pitch master”. In order for you to appreciate your strength in this area, try the four ma tones of Mandarin Chinese. (Cantonese is a little more difficult since it has eight to twelve tones and people are not as familiar with the differentiation.) These four tones sound identical to Americans – mǎ, má, mǎ, mà.

Do the following exercise: take the first sentence in the exercise *It sounds like rain* and replace rain with mǎ. Say *It sounds like mǎ*. This will sound strangely flat, so then try *It sounds like má*. This is not it either, so go on to *It sounds like mǎ* and *It sounds like mà*. One of the last two will sound pretty good, usually mǎ. You may need to come up with a combination of mǎ and mà, but once you have the idea of what to listen for, it is really easy. When you have that part clear, put *rain* back in the sentence, keeping the tone:

It sounds like *mǎ*.

It sounds like *rain*³.

When this exercise is successful, go to the second sentence, *It sounds like rain*, and do the same thing:

It *mǎ* like rain.
It *sound*³ like rain.

Then, contrast the two:

It sounds like *rain*³.
It *sound*³ like rain.

From this point on, you only need to periodically listen for the appropriate *ma*, substituting it in for words or syllables. You do not even need to use the rubber band since your tonal sophistication is so high.

Comments: *Chinese Intonation Summary*

1. Say the four *ma*'s.
2. Write them out with the appropriate arrows.
3. Replace the stressed word in a sentence with each of the four *ma*'s.
4. Decide which one sounds best.
5. Put the stressed word back in the sentence, keeping the tone.

The main point of this exercise is to get you listening for the tone shifts in English, which are very similar to the tone shifts in Chinese. The main difference is that Americans use them to indicate stress, whereas in Chinese, they are fully different words when the tone changes.

A simple way to practice intonation is with the sound that American children use when they make a mistake – *uh-oh*. This quick note shift is completely typical of the pattern, and once you have mastered this double note, you can go on to more complex patterns. Because Chinese grammar is fairly similar to English grammar, you do not have to worry too much about word order.

Comments: *The goal is to get you use your excellent tone control in English.*

Liaisons

All of the advantages that you have from *intonation* are more than counterbalanced by your lack of *word connections*. The reason for this is that Chinese characters (words or parts of words) start with consonants and end with either a vowel or a nasalized consonant, *n* or *ng*. There is no such thing as a final *t*, *l*, or *b* in Chinese. To use an example we have all heard of, *Mao Tse Tung*. This leads to several difficulties:

- No word endings
- No word connections
- No distinction between final voiced or unvoiced consonants

It takes time and a great deal of concentration, but the lack of word endings and word

connections can be remedied. Rather than force the issue of adding on sounds that will be uncomfortable for you, which will result in over-pronunciation, go with your strengths – notice how in *speech*, but not *spelling*, Americans end their words with vowel sounds and start them with consonants, just as in Chinese! It is really a question of rewriting the English script in your head that you read from when you speak.

Liaisons or *word connections* will force the final syllable to be pronounced by pushing it over to the beginning of the next word, where Chinese speakers have no trouble – not even with *l*.

Written English	Chinese Accent	American (with Liaisons)
Tell him	teo him	Tellim
Pull it out	Puw ih aw	pü li dout

Because you are now using a natural and comfortable technique, you will sound smooth and fluid when you speak, instead of that forced, exaggerated speech of people who are doing what they consider unnatural. It takes a lot of correction to get this process to sink it, but it is well worth the effort. Periodically, when you speak, write down the exact sounds that you made, then write it in regular spelling, so you can see the Chinese accent and the effect it has on meaning (*puw ih aw* has no meaning in English). Then convert the written English to spoken American (*pull it out* changes to *pü li dout*) to help yourself rewrite your English script.

When you do not use liaisons, you also lose the underlying hum that connects sentences together. This *coassonance* is like the highway and the words are the cars that carry the listener along.

The last point of intonation is that Chinese speakers do not differentiate between voiced and unvoiced final consonants – *cap* and *cab* sound exactly the same. When a final consonant is voiced, the vowel is lengthened or doubled. When a final consonant is unvoiced, the vowel is short or single.

Additionally, the long *a* before an *m* is generally shortened to a short ϵ . This is why the words *same* and *name* are particularly difficult, usually being pronounced *sem* and *nem*. You have to add in the second half of the sound. You need *nay+ eem* to get *name*.

Pronunciation

The most noticeable nonstandard pronunciation is the lack of final *l*. This can be corrected by either liaisons, or by adding a tiny schwa after it (*l^{uh}* or *l^ə*) in order to position your tongue correctly. This is the same solution for *n* and *ng*.

Like most other nationalities, Chinese students need to work on *th* and *r*, but fortunately,

there are no special problems here.

The remaining major area is [ā], [ɛ], and [æ], which sound the same. *Mate, met, mat* sound like *met, met, met*. In the word *mate*, you are hearing only the first half of the [ɛi] combination, so double the vowel with a clear *eet* sound at the end (even before an unvoiced final consonant). Otherwise, you will keep saying *meh-eh* or *may-eh*.

- a** It frequently helps to know exactly how something would look in your own language – and in Chinese, this entails characters. The characters on the following are the sounds needed for a Chinese person to say both the long *i* as in *China* and the long *a* as in *made* or *same*. Read the character, and then put letters in front and in back of it so you are reading half alphabet, half character. An *m* in front and a *de* in back of the first character will let you read *made*. A *ch* in front and *na* in back of the second character will produce *China*. It is odd, but it works.

m	哎	de		Ch	爱	na
	Long A				Long I	

- l** A word that ends in *-ail* is particularly difficult for Chinese speakers since it contains both the hard [ɛi] combination and a final *l*. It usually sounds something like *feh-o*. You need to say *fail* as if it had three full syllables: **fay-yə-l** ʔ.

u,v,f,w Another difficulty may be *u*, *v*, *f*, and *w*. The point to remember here is that *u* and *w* can both be considered vowels (i.e., they do not touch anywhere in the mouth), whereas *v* and *f* are consonants (your upper teeth touch your lower lip). *u*, as in *too* or *use* should be no problem. Similar to *u*, but with a little push of slightly rounded lips is *w*, as in *what* or *white*. The letters *f* and *v* have basically the same sound, but *f* is unvoiced and *v* is voiced. Your lower lip should come up a little to meet your top teeth. You are not biting down on the outside of your lip here; the sound is created using the inside of your lower lip. Leave your mouth in the same position and make the two sounds, both voiced and unvoiced. Practice words such as *fairy*, *very*, and *wary*.

There is another small point that may affect people from southern Mainland China who use *l* and *n* interchangeably. This can be corrected by working with *l* words and pinching the nose shut. If you are trying to say *late* and it comes out *nate*, hold your nose closed and the air will be forced out through your mouth.

- æ** The *æ* does not exist in Chinese, so it usually comes out as *ä* or *ɛ*, so *last* sounds like *lost* or *name* sounds like *nem*.

- o** Conversely, you may pronounce the letter *o* as **ä** or **ə** when it should be an *o*, as in *only*, *most*, *both*. Make sure that the American *o* sounds like *ou*: *ounly*, *moust*, *bouth*.
- ə** The schwa is typically over-pronounced based on spelling. If your intonation peaks are strong and clear enough, then your valleys will be sufficiently reduced as well. Concentrate on smoothing out and reducing the valleys and *ignore spelling!*
- ü** The [ü] sound is generally over-pronounced to *ooh*. Again, spelling is the culprit. Words such as *smooth*, *choose*, and *too* are spelled with 2 *o*'s and are pronounced with a long *u* sound, but other words such as *took* and *good* are spelled with 2 *o*'s but are pronounced halfway between *if* and *uh*: [tük] and [güd].
- i** In most Chinese dictionaries, the distinction between **i** and **ē** is not made. The **ē** is generally indicated by [i:], which causes problems with final consonants, and the **i** sound is over-pronounced to *eee*. Practice these four sounds, remembering that *tense vowels* indicate that you tense your lips or tongue, while *lax vowels* mean that your lips and tongue are relaxed and the sound is produced in your throat. Unvoiced final consonants (*t, s, k, p, ch, f*) mean that the vowel is short and sharp; voiced final consonants (*d, z, g, b, j, v*) mean that the vowel is doubled. Work on *Bit or Beat? Bid or Bead?*
- r** Chinese speakers usually pronounce American *r* as **ā** at the end of a word (*car* sounds like *kaaah*) or almost a *w* in the beginning or middle (*grow* sounds like *gwow*). The tongue should be curled back more, and the *r* produced deep in the throat.
- th** If you pronounce *th* as *t* or *d* (depending if it is voiced or unvoiced), then you should allow your tongue tip to move about a quarter of an inch forward, so the very tip is just barely between your teeth. Then, from this position you make a sound similar to *t* or *d*.
- n** Chinese will frequently interchange final *n* and *ng*. The solution is to add a little schwa at the end, just like you do with the *el*. This will make the tongue position more apparent.
- sh** Some people pronounce the *sh* in a particularly Chinese-sounding way. It seems that the tongue is too curled back, which changes the sound. Make sure that the tongue is flat, the tongue tip is just at the ridge behind the top teeth, and that

only a thin stream of air is allowed to escape.

- t** American English has a peculiar characteristic in that the *t* sound is, many cases, pronounced as a *d*.
- si** The *si* combination is mispronounced as *shi*, so *six* comes out as *shicks*. Again, this is a syllabary problem. You read the *s* row as *sa, shi, su, seh, soh*. You just need to realize that since you already know how to make a hissing *s* sound, you are capable of making it before the *i* sound.

Final Consonants

One of the defining characteristics of Chinese speech is that the final consonants are left off (*hold* sounds like *ho*). Whenever possible, make a liaison with the following word. For example, *hold* is difficult to say, so try *hold on = hol dän*.

Appendix 1.4 Pronunciation Activities

Identify the incorrect pronunciation: point out the incorrect sound

	Self-judgment	Partner's feedback	Native speaker's feedback
Slip	Slip	Slip	Slip
Sleep	Sleep	Sleep	Sleep
Bed	Bed	Bed	Bed
Bad	Bad	Bad	Bad
Row	Row	Row	Row
Low	Low	Low	Low
War	War	War	War
Wall	Wall	Wall	Wall
Sin	Sin	Sin	Sin
Sing	Sing	Sing	Sing
Shell	Shell	Shell	Shell
Seashore	Seashore	Seashore	Seashore
Rich	Rich	Rich	Rich
Veil	Veil	Veil	Veil
Whale	Whale	Whale	Whale
Think	Think	Think	Think
Sink	Sink	Sink	Sink
This	This	This	This
Scientist	Scientist	Scientist	Scientist
Visual	Visual	Visual	Visual
Communist	Communist	Communist	Communist

Your Name:

Partner's Name:

Appendix 1.5

Game: What if

Ask yourself the following “what if ...” questions based on your own language learning experience. And then discuss the possible solutions with your partners.

1. What if I have very poor pronunciation, and native speakers often do not understand me?
2. What if I keep making the same mistakes over and over again?
3. What if it disturbs me when I am corrected in the middle of a sentence, and it makes me lose my rhythm and forget what I was trying to say?
4. What if I have very few opportunities to speak in the foreign language?
5. What if I do not say much because I am not sure that I know how to say something correctly?
6. What if sometimes I get stuck in the middle of a conversation and cannot get myself out of trouble?
7. What if I am so slow in conversation that my conversational partner(s) usually take(s) over?
8. What if I find that native speakers do not understand me at all?
9. What if I do not think native speakers enjoy talking to me in the foreign language?

Then check the following article to see Rubin and Thompson’s suggestions on the strategy-based solutions for some common problems in learning to speak in a foreign language.

Strategies for Developing Speaking Skills

In this section, we list some common problems in learning to speak in a foreign language and provide some strategy-based solutions.

Problem 1: I have very poor pronunciation. Native speakers often don’t understand me.

Most adults learning a foreign language tend to retain their native accent. However, there are a number of things you can do to improve your pronunciation. Experiment and see which of the following work best for you:

- **Imitate the rhythm and intonation of the language you are studying.** If you can reproduce the rhythm and intonation accurately, other pronunciation errors (e.g., mispronouncing certain sounds) will not be so noticeable and your speech will be easier to understand.

- **Compare your pronunciation to the model (s) on tape.** If you are using pronunciation tapes, make sure that you record yourself and keep comparing.
- **Listen carefully and repeat aloud after your teacher or a native speaker.** Ask them to comment on your pronunciation.
- **Ask your teacher how certain sounds are formed.** Watch what he or she does when pronouncing them. Practice the sounds at home in front of a mirror.
- **Practice a sound separately at first; then use it progressively in words and sentences.** Try tongue twisters involving the sound.
- **Make a list of words that give you pronunciation trouble, and practice them.**

Problem 2: I keep making the same mistakes over and over again.

Learn from your errors whenever possible. To make errors an instrument of learning, instead of a source of frustration, you must realize that the process of learning to speak a foreign language is one of successive refinement, not instant mastery. You should constantly accommodate new information to the system of rules that you have learned or have developed on your own.

- **Distinguish, whenever possible, between a casual slip and a recurring error.** Casual slips are not serious; even native speakers have occasional slips of the tongue, and you should not worry about them. However, errors that you make consistently show that you have not mastered some aspect of the language. They require additional work.
- **Try to understand why you consistently make a certain kind of error.** Is it because you are not clear about a rule? Or is it that you have totally misunderstood a rule and are applying a nonexistent version of it? Is it because you have not learned the boundaries of the rule – that is, its exceptions? Ask your teacher for clarification or check your textbook.
- **Note the relative seriousness of your errors.** Not all errors are equally serious: some errors provoke stronger reactions from listeners than others. Often the mistakes that cause the most reaction are sociolinguistic ones, such as using the informal German *du* instead of the formal *Sie* to address your teacher. Even among grammatical errors, some are more serious than others. Errors such as a wrong ending are often overlooked in real communicative situations. For instance, using the Spanish present tense *voy* (“I’m going”) instead of the past tense *fui* (“I went”) can confuse a listener about when the action took place. On the other hand, lack of agreement between article and noun such as *un case* instead of *una casa* (“a house”) is not as serious because it does not affect meaning.

- **Accept some corrections on faith.** You may need to accept corrections from your teacher or native speakers without requiring an explanation. This may happen when you are trying to use language that is above your head. Both instances may involve grammar or words that you have not yet learned or that are difficult to explain. Adopt each correction, store it, and analyze it later.
- **Determine how much error is tolerated in a particular language.** Speakers of some languages are less tolerant of errors made by foreigners than are speakers of other languages. Commonly, compared extremes are French speakers, who are very intolerant of foreigners' mistakes, and Chinese speakers, who are very permissive. When you use the new language outside of class, try to gauge the amount of error that is tolerated by native speakers of the language you are studying because it can indicate how much attention you should give to developing accuracy in speaking. At the same time, note what kinds of errors seem to most bother native speakers of the language you are studying. Do they seem to be more concerned about grammatical errors? Are they more bothered by errors in etiquette? Or are pronunciation errors a major source of irritation?

Problem 3: It disturbs me when I am corrected in the middle of a sentence. It makes me lose my rhythm and forget what I was trying to say.

Sometimes, with all good intentions, a teacher constantly interrupts to correct students while they are trying to say something. When this happens, students may become intimidated, lose all interest in speaking, and fail to learn to communicate, although they may learn something about the grammar. At the same time, the teacher may wonder why all the corrections did not improve the students' speaking skills. The answer, of course, is that the students should not be interrupted while they are speaking. Comments should be made later, and only the most serious errors should be corrected. Serious errors are those that cause misunderstanding or that occur repeatedly.

Negotiate with your teacher when you want errors corrected. It is a good idea to let your teacher know how you feel about having your mistakes corrected while you are speaking. Ask the teacher to discuss your mistakes after you have finished speaking rather than interrupt your train of thought. If that does not work, change teachers when you can or find native speakers outside of class to practice with. Outside of language learning situations, most native speakers focus on the message rather than on the grammatical forms used to deliver it. They will let you know when they do not understand, but will usually let you speak without interruptions.

Problem 4: I have very few opportunities to speak in the foreign language.

Language learning must be an active process. Learners who make a conscious effort to practice their foreign language and who seek out opportunities to use what they have learned are more successful than learners who assume a passive attitude and rely on the teacher to do the whole job. It is necessary to overcome inhibitions and get into situations where you must speak in the foreign language. A few tips on how this can be done follow:

- **Perform every classroom activity.** Do every task, even if the teacher does not call on you. For example, if the teacher asks someone else a question, make up your own answer. Complete exercises in your head when it is someone else's turn, and check your answers against theirs. Listen to the other students and to the teacher's responses.
- **Interact with native and skilled speakers, including your teacher.** Feel free to speak to your teacher outside of class. Together, you can use your new language to discuss a wide variety of topics. Also, try to find native speakers on your campus or in your neighborhood. Many colleges have international student programs or clubs that you can join. Many cities have ethnic neighborhoods with stores and restaurants. Visits to such neighborhoods will give you an opportunity to try out dialogues you have learned in class. Unlike your fellow students and teacher, a native speaker in a store or restaurant will not know the other half of the dialogue and will give you unexpected responses – and this is exactly when learning will take place.
- **Interact with classmates or other students in your language program.** Talking with your classmates or other students taking the same language can be an easy and enjoyable way to get some practice. You may also find that you feel less inhibited about trying out new things. Many language departments have language clubs, language dorms, and language conversation tables. These usually provide an opportunity to meet other students, graduate teaching assistants, and faculty with whom you can practice your newly acquired language. They also offer cultural activities, such as informal meetings with native speakers of your new language.
- If you are living in a country where the language is spoken, put yourself into situations where you will have to communicate. Make phone calls, go shopping, run errands, ask people for directions or help, and so forth. You may have to make an effort to overcome your initial inhibitions.
- Best of all, make friends with people who speak the language you are studying. A sustained relationship provides the motivation to communicate and takes away the anxiety involved in speaking to strangers. Friends will also know your language level and will try to tailor their speech to your ability.

Problem 5: I do not say much because I am not sure that I know how to say

something correctly.

There are two things you can do. One is to prepare yourself for the various communicative situations you expect to find yourself in. The other is to accept your limitations in the foreign language and to do the best you can with what you know.

- **Be prepared.** People who practice silently often find that it becomes a habit. Interestingly, children learning their first language frequently practice with imaginary partners, have conversations with no one in particular, and talk to objects and toys. They endlessly repeat words and sentences and make up nonsense words and phrases. Apparently these activities are an integral part of language learning for children. There is no reason why they should not also help adults.
- **Rehearse silently in the foreign language.** The easiest way to practice is to rehearse silently, since it does not require any particular time, place, equipment, or partner. For instance, you can look at objects and try to silently name them in the foreign language, or look at persons and try to describe them in detail.
- You can also prepare yourself for communicative situations you will need to handle (particularly if you are or will be living in the country where the language is spoken), for instance, to make a doctor's appointment or to place a long-distance telephone call. You can prepare by looking up key vocabulary items and finding out from native speakers how certain things are said in the language.
- **You can also rehearse everyday situations.** For example, after you have conducted a transaction with a salesperson, clerk, or waiter in your own language, pretend that you have to do it in the foreign language. What would the same conversation have sounded like in France, Italy, or Japan? "Two croissants, please. And a cup of black coffee." "Spaghetti with marinara sauce and a bottle of Chianti, please." Then, when you actually need to say these things in a real-life setting, you will be ready.
- **Learn to live with uncertainty.** When speaking, you may feel uncertain about your ability to get your message across, but do not let this stop you. Some people will not say anything unless they are sure that they can say it perfectly. However, this is a mistake, for in the beginning, you cannot expect to say things perfectly. When your goal is to communicate, you should simply concentrate on producing a normal flow of speech and not be overly worried about individual items. A message spoken at the time it is needed, no matter how flawed, is worth many unspoken messages, no matter how perfect. In a communicative situation, it is better to say something promptly rather than say nothing at all or take so long to compose your message that you exhaust your listener's patience and kill interest in further communication.

- **Avoid the vicious circle.** People who do not say anything because they are worried about making mistakes can fall into a vicious circle; they make errors because they have not practiced enough, yet at the same time they deprive themselves of the opportunity to practice for fear of making mistakes. Remember that language learning is a gradual process that requires much practice, including making errors and being corrected. Do not hold back until that magic moment in the future when you think you will be able to speak without making errors. Without practice, that moment will never come.

Problem 6: Sometimes I get stuck in the middle of a conversation and cannot get myself out of trouble.

- **Involve your conversational partner.** If you are stuck, do not get discouraged. You are not alone and there are some things that you can do.
- **Get help.** As soon as you start studying a foreign language, you should learn how to ask such things as “How do you say that in...?”, “Can I say...?”, “Is it correct to say ... ?” and “What is the word for ... ?”. If you do not know the word for *librarian* in the foreign language, ask *what do you call a person who works in a library?* Your partner will gladly respond, and you will be able to keep the conversation going.
- **Use your own resources.** Use whatever you know to get your message across, even though you may suspect that there are better ways of saying it. Attempting to say something is better than saying nothing at all. In the process, you may even learn the proper way to say what you had in mind.
- **Paraphrase.** If you do not know or if you forget the exact word you want, say it another way. For example, if forget how to say *warm*, say *not very hot*. If you forget the word for *hat*, say *thing on top of your head*.
- **Use synonyms.** If you have trouble remembering how to say something exactly, use a general term. For instance, if you forgot how to say *violin*, say *musical instrument*. Your listener will probably catch on.
- **Gamble on cognates.** Historically related languages, such as French, Spanish, and Portuguese, or Russian, Polish, and Serbo-Croatian, share many words with similar meanings but somewhat different shapes. For example, *activité* in French is *actividad* in Spanish and *atividade* in Portuguese. In Russian, the word for “people” is *lyudi*, in Polish it is *ludzie*, and in Serbo-Croatian it is *ljudi*. Beware, though, because similarities can be misleading. For example, the English word *embarrassed* and the Spanish word *embarazada* may look similar, but they have quite different meanings, *Embarazada* means “pregnant”!
- **Use gestures.** You can use gestures or other physical movements to express your

ideas. For example, if you do not know the word for *applaud*, show your listener what you mean. This will help keep the conversation going.

- **Avoid problems.** One way to maintain a conversation is to avoid problem areas. For example, if there are some words that you have difficulty pronouncing, avoid them by using synonyms. Or if you are unsure of how to use the subjunctive in Spanish, you may avoid trying to express possibility, doubt, and desire. This may limit what you can say, but at least you will not slow up the conversation. You have to be smart about when and how to use avoidance. When correctness is important, you may want to avoid the troublesome area and substitute something you know better. However, if communication is most important, avoidance may actually cause misunderstanding. Also, if you feel that you must always be correct, you may avoid so many situations that you will not make progress.

Problem 7: I am so slow in conversation that my conversational partner(s) usually take (s) over.

Conversation has a natural tempo, and people are not very tolerant of what they perceive to be long pauses. When you speak your own language, you usually let your conversational partner know that you have not finished and are still thinking about what to say. The same is often true in a foreign language. There are some things that native speakers use in such situations that you can and should apply to a foreign language.

- **Use hesitation fillers.** It helps to learn the sounds, gestures, words, or phrases that let your listener know that you are groping for a word or thought. For example, in English some common fillers are well, *let's see*, and *you know*. In Chinese, the phrase *nèige* (“that”) is repeated several times. Note that native speakers use these expressions all the time. This will help you in two ways. First, your listener will know what you are doing and may even try to help. Second, it makes your conversation seem more natural, since we all tend to pause and think from time to time. Think of how you handle such situations in English. Then find a hesitation filler that you like in your new language.
- **Warn your partner.** It is also helpful to let your partner know that you are groping for a word by actually saying, “Just a minute, I’m trying to think.”
- **Buy time.** You can always buy yourself some time to plan your utterance by starting out with such phrases as “This is a very interesting issue.” “It is a difficult question.” or “Let’s see now.” Such phrases will help maintain the tempo of the conversation.

Problem 8: I find that native speakers do not understand me at all.

There are a number of reasons why native speakers may not understand you. Your pronunciation may be very far off the mark. If so, take a look at the suggested strategies for improving pronunciation. The most common reason for not being intelligible to native speakers is overuse of translation from your native language. The meaning of a set expression or an idiom does not equal the sum of its parts. For instance, the English expression “**How are you doing?**” means “How are you?”. Chances are that if you translated this sentence word for word into another language, you would not be understood. In Russian and Spanish it would mean “How do you make?”. Another good example can be taken from Guarani, a language spoken in Paraguay. People often say “*eguahemike?*” (“Are you going to come in?”) when you pass their home. What they really mean is “How are you?”

When you are a beginner, a better strategy is to learn some ready-made chunks of language. Here are some of those you should look for.

- **Learn expressions from dialogues and texts.** Material you have studied in class can provide read-made bits of language for use in real-life situations. A line memorized from a dialogue or a reading passage can pop out very quickly because you do not need to construct it yourself. Most of the time you cannot rely completely on memorized material, but you need to learn how to combine memorized pieces into phrases and sentences that express your own meanings.
- **Learn idioms or expressions for future use.** The meaning of an idiom or expression is often clarified by its context. Recalling the context in which you first saw or heard an idiom will help you remember and use it correctly. For example, suppose you hear one Spanish speaker saying to another when meeting, *Que tal?* (Literally: “What such?”), with the other answering, *Bien. Y tú?* (“Well, and you?”). It should not matter too much what *tal* means in this context. The important thing is the whole utterance, the gestalt. Use the expression next time you have to greet someone. Another example is the Russian combination *Vot kak!* (Literally: “Here how!”) which means “Is that so?”. The English word for word equivalent is obviously nonsensical. Once you find out its meaning, just treat the whole expression as one item or word. Put it away for future use to express surprise. When using idioms, be sure to watch for the listener’s reactions. If the listener does not understand what you said or looks bewildered, you have probably used the phrase inappropriately. Of course, the only way you will learn to use it is by experimenting until you find its limits.

Problem 9: I do not think native speakers enjoy talking to me in the foreign language.

Since the primary purpose of learning another language is communication, it is important to identify and learn the ways in which native speakers organize

conversations and accomplish communication goals. This is what makes conversation worthwhile. Among the communication routines are ways of beginning and ending a conversation; encouraging a speaker to keep talking; apologizing; accepting and refusing an invitation; asking for directions; seeking and offering help; and expressing reactions. In any language, there are always routine ways of accomplishing these tasks. It is desirable to learn some of these routines because they show that you are involved and want to converse. Use of these formalized routines will help you maintain a conversation. However, be sure to learn the phrases that are culturally acceptable in the language you are studying. As you become more advanced, you will learn how to vary the routines to accomplish your social purposes. At the beginning, however, the basics are enough to get you through most situations. The trick is to get communication tasks accomplished with limited language skills. Some examples of formalized routines follow:

- **Learn some phrases for beginning and ending conversations.** Every language has standard greetings, introductions, courtesies, and leave-takings. In English we begin a conversation with *Hello!* or *Hi!* And may end with *Take care, See you later, I gotta go now, or I'll see you.* In telephone conversations, English speakers also have clear rules for beginning and ending conversations. When making a business call, the person calling says *Hello, I would like to speak to so and so, please.* When told to hold the line, the caller will often say *Thank you.* When the conversation is over, the conversational partners usually say *Good-bye.* However, in Russian, formalized routines are different. A typical business call may not require greetings, thank you's, or leave-takings. Instead, *Pozovite Ivanova k telefonu* ("Call Ivanov to the phone") is a typical opening for a business call, and the conversation may end with *Vsyo!* ("That's all!") which sounds very brusque to Americans.
- **Learn expressions that show you are paying attention and following the conversation.** In English, we use such comments as *Yeah, Good, My goodness, Uhuh, Wow, Really?, How strange, How interesting* to encourage a conversational partner. Inserting such phrases at the right times indicates that we understand and are interested. You should learn to do the same thing in the foreign language, using expressions appropriate for the culture. For example, in English, when someone is talking and a listener wants to show that he is paying attention, he will often say *I know...I know...I know...*, which signals interest and involvement. The counterpart in Russian is *da...da...da...*, which means "yes...yes...yes...". Saying I know in these circumstances in Russian would be annoying because it signals to the speaker to get on with the conversation, not that the listener is involved and interested.
- **Learn how to express your reactions.** You should learn how to express your impressions and comment on what is going on. In English, we praise or criticize

someone with phrases such as *You look nice*, *What a good idea!* or *How stupid of me!* Learn the appropriate ways of expressing various reactions in the language you are studying.

- Also learn how to agree and disagree. In English, we use phrases such as *I agree*, *Really*, *Certainly*, *You're right*, and *I don't agree*. However, rules for expressing one's reactions govern the use of particular phrases with particular persons in particular settings. For example, it would be inappropriate for subordinates to say *That was a dumb idea* to their superiors. Instead, they might ask *What do you think of that idea?*
- **Learn to involve your conversational partner.** It is common to involve one's conversational partner by using expressions that ask for confirmation of preceding comments. In English, we use such questions as *How did you like that?* *What do you think of that?* *What is your opinion?* *Do you agree?* and *Don't you think so?* Use of these indicates that you are interested in your conversational partner's ideas.
- **Learn ways of managing a conversation.** Conversation-management techniques include
 - Attention getters: *Hey, Mary!*
 - Politeness routine: *Thank you very much, Excuse me.*
 - Suggestions: *Let's...*
 - Requests: *Come here! Wait a minute!*
- **Learn some routines for refusing and accepting invitations.** To avoid seeming rude, you need to learn culturally acceptable ways of refusing and accepting. For example, in Arabic cultures, refusal is often done by saying *God willing*. By saying this phrase without details, such as time and place, you have refused an invitation. If you say *God willing* and give details, you have accepted. English formulas for accepting include phrases such as *I'd love to*, *How nice of you to invite me*, and *I'll be there*.

Appendix 2.1

St. Patrick's Day Game

Guidance:

1. Participants are given a question list about St. Patrick's Day (for example, about its history, the parade in Montreal, etc.).
2. They are divided into pairs to be small groups.
3. They can choose to go to anyplace inside the Library building to ask these questions.
4. After twenty minutes, they must come back to the classroom to present the results. Each group is given three minutes to do the presentation.
5. After each presentation, the facilitator will ask this group some questions concerning language learning strategies.
6. If necessary, in-depth discussion for certain strategy will be done.

The Question List:

1. Who is St. Patrick?
2. Why people celebrate this festival?
3. When did people start to celebrate St. Patrick's Day?
4. In Montreal, where is the route for the parade?
5. Can you give any tips for taking part in the parade?
6. Could you tell us some interesting things about this festival?

Appendix 3.1 Knock the Opportunities

By Oxford (1995)

Guidance:

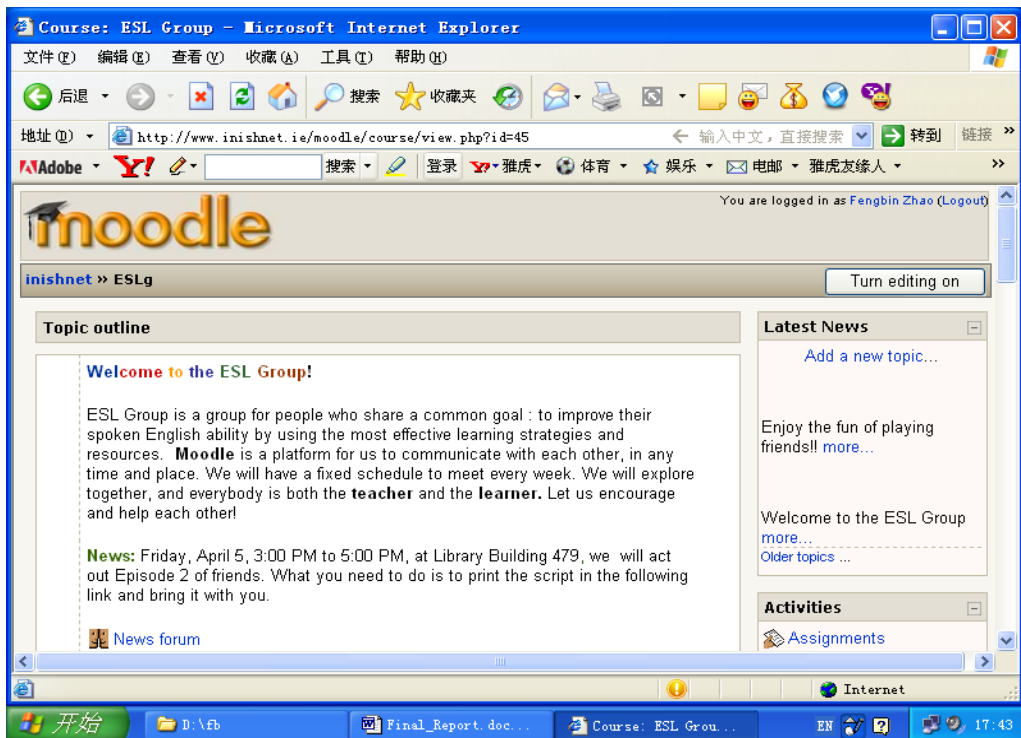
- In Column 1, list all the opportunities that you might create. (You do not have to be taking advantage of the opportunities now) **Be specific!**
Example: ask a person who speaks English about a product you do not know. Now count up the number of ideas you have listed in Column 1, and write down this number in "Total number of opportunities."
- In Column 2, next to each opportunity you have listed, indicate whether or not you are taking advantage of that opportunity. If yes, write 1; if no, write 0. Now add up the points in this column, and write down this number in "Total points"
- In Column 3, multiply the number of ideas (Column 1) by the number of points (Column 2), and write down the results in "Grand total"
- Finally, evaluate your results using the scale in the Table 1.

Appendix 4.1

Discussion Samples in Moodle

In this appendix, we use print screen to copy and paste a few web pages from Moodle.

Main Page (Top Part)



Main Page (Middle Part)

Course: ESL Group - Microsoft Internet Explorer

地址: http://www.inishnet.ie/moodle/course/view.php?id=45&edit=off

Social forum
Friends Script

1 Awareness Training (I)

Learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations.

- The obstacles that Concordia's Chinese students might meet
- SILL (for language strategies assessment)
- FLOSEM (Self-rating of oral English proficiency)
- Practice on the pronunciation
- Pronunciation Exercises

2 Awareness Training (II)

In today's meeting, we are going to do the St. Patrick Day's game. Then we will introduce Oxford's language learning strategies by reflecting on this game. Finally, we will give feedback for SILL, FLOSEM, and the pronunciation activities.

Choices
Forums
Quizzes
Resources

Search Forums

Advanced search

People
Participants

Administration
Turn editing on
Settings
Edit profile
Facilitators
Participants

地址: http://www.inishnet.ie/moodle/mod/quiz/index.php?id=45

Social Forum Topic List Page:

ESLg: Social forum - Microsoft Internet Explorer

地址: http://www.inishnet.ie/moodle/mod/forum/view.php?f=113

inishnet > ESLg > Forums > Social forum

Update this Forum

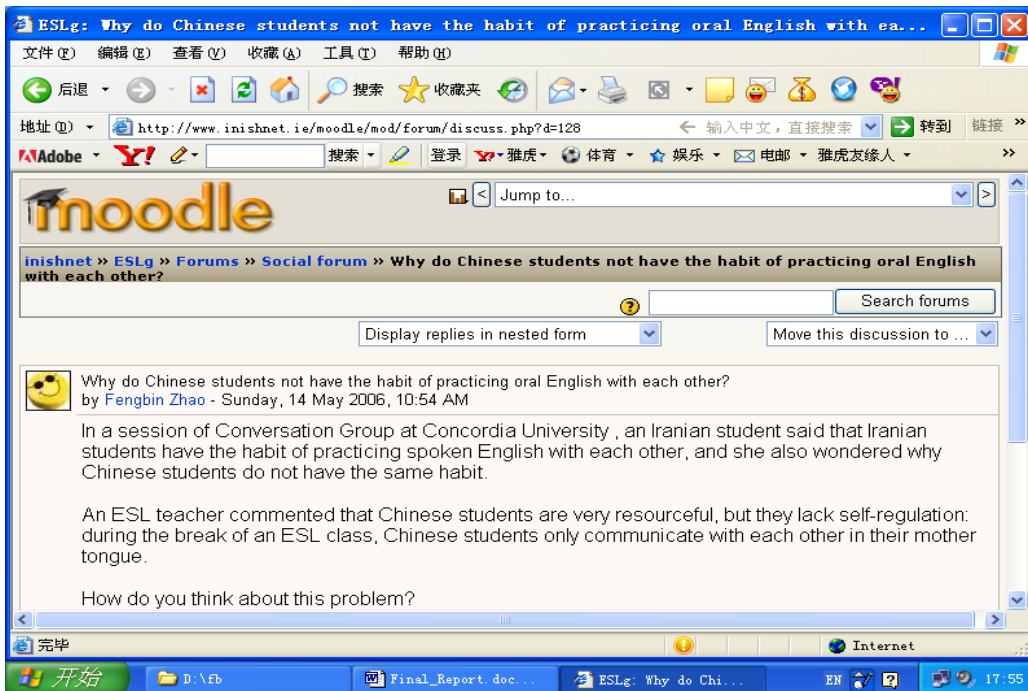
Everyone can choose to be subscribed
Show/edit current subscribers
Unsubscribe from this forum

An open forum for chatting about anything you want to

Add a new discussion topic

Discussion	Started by	Replies	Last post
Why do Chinese students not have the habit of practicing oral English with each other?	Fengbin Zhao	0	Fengbin Zhao Sun, 14 May 2006, 10:54 AM
How to learn English with Friends (a post)	Shawn Fang	0	Shawn Fang Sat, 8 Apr 2006, 04:16 AM
spelling bee campaign	yajuan mu	1	Fengbin Zhao Sat, 25 Mar 2006, 02:46 PM
Some useful note about	Qihui HU	2	Shawn Fang

A Discussion Thread Page



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