

SPEAKING in CIRCLES

Aim: To practise part one of the First Certificate Speaking Exam (or English placement exams in general), Fluency work

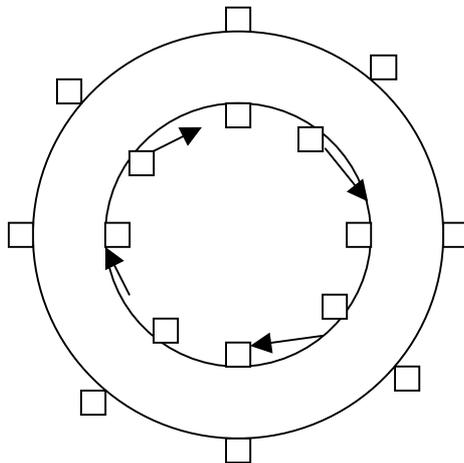
Age & Level: Teens, adults intermediate to upper-intermediate

Sub-aim: To highlight and work on persistent errors in students' oral work

Materials: One copy of cards for every eight students

Note: The procedure set out below works well for practising Part One of Paper Five of the FCE Speaking Exam but can be adapted for other Cambridge exams (the question cards would have to be changed). The questions and procedure can be used by any intermediate or upper-intermediate class at the beginning of a course. It is worth pointing out to your students that the questions not only all come from past FCE exams but are very common in English placement tests in general).

Procedure:



Organise your classroom into two circles of chairs, an inner circle and an outer circle. Each chair from the inner circle should be facing a chair from the outer circle, but there ought to be enough space for the teacher to circulate freely among the chairs. The diagram above shows the layout of a classroom for sixteen students.

STEP ONE. Who's who. The students in the outer circle are the interviewers. Give each of them a card with questions on it. The students sitting in the inner circle are the interviewees.

STEP TWO. What to do. The interviewers ask their questions to the interviewees. The interviewees must answer the questions, and speak as much as possible.

STEP THREE. Move over. Give a time limit of three minutes. Circulate and take notes on language use that you want to cover in step five. Do not correct or help students at this point (there will be time for this later in the correction slot) At the end of the time limit call out "THANK YOU! CHANGE PLACES PLEASE." At this point the interviewees move one chair clockwise.

STEP FOUR. Change roles. Repeat step three as many times as you like (depending on the size of the class and the time) then instruct the interviewers and the interviewees to change places. Repeat steps two and three.

STEP FIVE. Correction slot. Collect the cards and put the chairs back to their normal places. Highlight some of the language you heard using one of the methods shown below.

CORRECTION SLOT

There are different ways of conducting this section of feedback with the students. Use one or two based on the notes you took during step three above.

Vocabulary Quickie

Write headings on the board that cover the lexical areas in the exercise. For the above exercise the headings could be HOUSE, FAMILY, STUDIES, WORK, FREE TIME. Tell students to make a list of words they heard during the exercise under each section. After they have done this, ask them to extend their vocabulary by adding three more words in each section.

Grammar Quickie

Write up some interesting sentences that you heard and delete a word from each one. Students must complete the impromptu gapfill (note: this works well with prepositions).

Correction Quickie

Write up four or five mistakes and tell the students to try and correct them in pairs. Check back answers.

L1-L2 Quickie

Write up on the board all the examples of student's mother tongue that you heard (often in fluency speaking exercises the occasional word will slip out). Tell students to translate them in pairs. Check back with the class.

Praise Quickie

Too often in correction slots the emphasis is centred on what went wrong. Try recording good examples of students language and put it on the board under a big happy face.

Once your students are familiar with the correction slot there is no reason why they cannot take a more active part in the process. If you repeat an exercise like Speaking Circles you could give the interviewer the extra job of listening for language that can later be taken up with the group.