

## **A Multi-Media Approach to the Teaching of Oral Skills**

Julia Lee Kim Soh  
Pusat Bahasa  
Universiti Malaya

### **Introduction**

UMSEP is a media-based project; from the inception of UMSEP, it was intended that the courses to be produced should be media-intensive in their concept and design. As such, the final package of materials produced for each of the 3 courses includes at least two of the following components.

- printed student's materials,
- audio tapes for presentation purposes in class,
- video tapes for presentation purposes in class,
- audio tapes for practice purposes in the language laboratory

### **Rationale of approach**

Since the UMSEP courses are to enable students to perform effectively English in professionally relevant situations, progress in performance is our ultimate concern. However, it is not held that opportunities for performance is the sole and sufficient means towards this end. It is held that progress in oral performance could be effectively brought about through.

- (i) the expansion of resources for performance;
- (ii) improvement of the ability to draw on resources for performance;
- (iii) actual performance

It is particularly to enhance the first two teaching/learning activities that UMSEP adopted the multi-media approach and carefully integrated the use of media with its printed material. We believe that video and audio recordings play an essential role in communicative language learning by providing fully contextualised instances of language use. It is important that students be exposed to 'live' instances of communication that include the situational and the non-verbal (in the case of video) features that most human interaction requires. Exposure to features of language in use also serves as opportunities for students to learn from the performance of others, from the way that proficient speakers use language, and from which they should, by a process of peripheral learning, be able to incorporate some of this language into their own repertoire.

### **Presentation of recorded speech**

Video and audio recordings are not intended to be presented to students as models to be imitated. The aim of the recorded interactions is to present examples of realistic speech used in relevant interactions with professional settings. This end has been achieved in the following ways.

- (i) By recording the spontaneous speech of professional people taking part

in a simulated interaction. These simulations were carefully prepared using briefs for participants, and were edited to remove some extraneous materials.

- (ii) By recording actors using a prepared script. In this case, the scripts have been checked out with professionals, or have been based on previously recorded simulations involving professionals or on actual data collected from language used for real professional purposes.

The stance which UMSEP has adopted on the type of speech presented in the recordings is that it is not desirable to use for teaching purposes authentic speech actually recorded in, say, business meetings as this type of recording presents many unnecessary and distracting difficulties for students. However, we have taken care to avoid unnatural speech scripted entirely from an 'arm-chair' knowledge of how these interactions take place. We have, therefore, retained in the recording some of the features of natural, spontaneous speech such as false starts, hesitations etc., which are to be found even in the speech of fluent and successful speakers. The speakers used are primarily either British or Malaysian speakers who use British English at an internationally acceptable level.

#### **Use of audio tapes**

All the three UMSEP courses have audio-related materials which are intended for use in class. These audio materials have been exploited in a variety of ways in the different courses.

#### ***Listening exposure (extensive listening)***

Listening exposure activities not only provide a recording of an example of speech used in the kind of interaction dealt with in the unit, but also provide practice in listening comprehension skills. In the latter, students are trained not to listen 'word by word' but to focus on crucial parts of the talk and use a range of clues to interpret the speaker's meaning. These activities are preceded by a pre-listening phase which involves students making predictions of what they will hear. The post-listening phase is designed to encourage students to take some features of the language used and apply them to other situations. (See Appendix 1).

#### ***Intensive listening***

Listening materials consist of either short examples of key features of language use which are provided as models of the use of particular formal features, or short texts to provide practice in recognising a variety of forms for expressing a function. In the latter, this involves listening for specific words and/or phrases. (See Appendix 2).

#### ***Intonation exercises***

In the intonation exercises the emphasis is on recognition. Students are exposed to basic intonation exercises so that they are sensitized to some of the functions played by intonation choices and trained to listen for intonation signals that impart meaning within the contexts provided. (See Appendix 3).

*Note-taking*

In order to give practice in taking notes of spoken discourse, some note-taking activities based on audio recordings have been designed. (See Appendix 4). The role of the audio recording here is not to teach note-taking skills as such but to present a realistic verbal context in which the activity of note-taking may take place.

**Use of Video**

Video features as an integral part of two of the UMSEP courses, its main use being to provide exposure to realistic samples of language in use in the relevant type of interaction in professionally relevant situations or settings. In addition to using video to provide students with the opportunity to hear language used in context, the courses further exploit the video recordings to develop skills such as listening and note-taking, and materials have been designed to fully exploit its visual aspect. Below is a summary of the main activities built around the use of video recordings in UMSEP materials.

*Listening comprehension*

Video is used to provide practice in listening and understanding. Here, activities involved fall into two types. 1. 'looking for main points' and 2. 'looking for language points'. In the former, activities are designed to encourage students to listen for the general gist of a programme and include tasks such as searching for information given, decisions or conclusions reached. An extension of such activities is note-taking. The second type of activity falls into the intensive listening phase, and tasks for students are aimed at making them isolate, identify and produce certain items of language. (See Appendix 5).

In the course of these activities the video is used not only to consolidate materials already known or taught but also to present new materials in context. In *Oral Skills for Law*, for example, a video film is used to introduce the functional component of the unit. This serves the purpose of exposing students to realistic samples of language used by lawyers in 'professional encounters' and draws their attention not only to forms and functions but also to 'tactics' employed by the professionals.

*Presenting examples of successful and unsuccessful interaction*

A video recording used for this purpose has two or three different versions of the same 'encounter', only one version of which represents a good example. Exercises accompanying the video are then designed to provide practice in recognising effective tactics or strategies as well as lead students to become aware of ineffective strategies to be avoided. The example of a successful interaction could then provide a model for students to follow and to use when evaluating their own performance. (See Appendix 6).

*Stimulating oral interaction*

In cases which call for lengthy input to be provided in order to set up oral interactions, the video has been exploited in the UMSEP teaching package to present the stimulus in setting either the situation, background or problem. Here, activities which follow video recordings produced for stimulating oral

interaction provide opportunities for analysis and discussion of a controversial character or relationship (see Appendix 7), and also for role-playing.

### **Language Laboratory**

As part of its package of teaching materials, the *Oral Skills for Management* course has a set of audio tapes for practice purposes in the language laboratory. Language laboratory exercises fall into three main types.

#### *Oral communication drills*

These are drills on the use of the grammatical forms to express particular functions, and they take the form of 1. students answering a question or responding to a statement on tape and/or 2. students responding to an utterance on tape by rephrasing the statements given. Answers are usually given on tape. In some activities, there may be a number of responses which are acceptable so the answer given by a student may not correspond exactly to the one given on tape. (See Appendix 8).

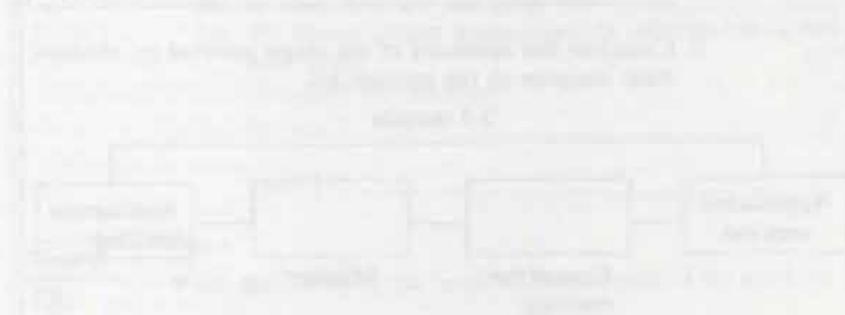
#### *Intonation drills*

Usually the information the student will use is given in the student materials and he then responds to the utterances on tape selecting the appropriate intonation pattern. In these drills, the correct answer is always given on tape thus providing students with the opportunity to hear and imitate the intonation as closely as possible. (See Appendix 9).

#### *'Trigger tape' drills*

These activities involve student participation in a conversation which requires them to respond to speakers on the tape. The student first prepares notes on what to say, then uses what he has prepared to respond to the previous speaker on tape when he hears a signal. This is the free phase in production. Because the responses are free, there is no answer given on tape. (See Appendix 10).

The audio and video recordings which are part and parcel of the UMSEP teaching materials are to be regarded as an enhancement and as aids to the teaching programme and not as independent programmes in themselves. Their use has been carefully integrated with the printed materials to make the learning/teaching process more effective and certainly more motivating for students.



## Appendix 1

An example of a listening exposure activity from *Preparatory Oral Skills for Management*

### UNIT 7

#### Activity 6 Listen for the procedures

In this programme you will hear two recordings. In the first an official explains to a foreign businessman the procedures involved in applying for a licence to set up a business in Malaysia. In the second recording the official briefs a new member of his department on his duties in processing licence applications.

#### Task 1



You will first hear a short example of how a speaker explains procedures to a new clerk.

##### 1 Prediction

The clerk's duties involve processing applications for staff leave.

Do you think the clerk will be required to:

- fill out leave application forms for staff?
- approve leave?
- keep a record of leave taken?
- notify people of leave taken?

##### 2. Check

What does the clerk need to have in order to calculate the balance of leave?

\_\_\_\_\_

#### Task 2



##### Listening aid

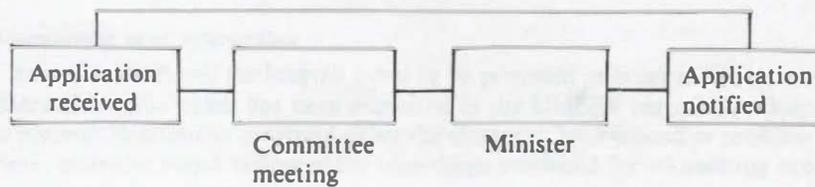
- The speaker refers to the Industrial Co-ordination Act and mentions projects with a capital of more than ¼ million dollars

What are these project required to do under the Act?

\_\_\_\_\_

- Complete this summary of the stages referred to, to show what happens to the application.

2-3 months



3 In order to explain the procedure the official uses the following expressions:

The information asked for covers the major aspects of the project.

If you have one it would be of help.

There will be a condition in the licence

It's up to you.

Which of the following is necessary for an applicant to do?

- (a) provide a feasibility study before applying;
- (b) ask for a feasibility study after obtaining the licence;
- (c) ensure that the environment is cared for,
- (d) have discussions with the Ministry of Environment

### Task 3



#### Prediction

You will hear the briefing for a new member of the department which processes licence applications

Which of the following duties will he have:

- (1) Explain the licensing procedures.
- (2) Recommend whether to accept or reject the application.
- (3) Decide on the people who should receive the application.
- (4) Notify the applicant of the decision.
- (5) Complete the application form.

### Task 4



#### Listening aid

The Head of Department uses the following phrases to tell the employee what his job entails.

Write down the duty that each phrase introduces.

- (a) It's your job to \_\_\_\_\_
- (b) In case they are not sure, you \_\_\_\_\_
- (c) The junior officer summarises the information he has been given.

Complete the summary:

So first I \_\_\_\_\_

Then I \_\_\_\_\_

### Task 5



#### Check

What, according to the Head of Department, is the most im-

portant duty of the new officer?

(Note: It includes several steps).

---



---

### Task 6



**Application**

*Student A* Explain to your partner how to complete a job application form.

*Student B* Explain to your partner how to process a job application form before it is submitted to a Personnel Board.

Use language from the recording to help you.

## Appendix 2

An example of an intensive listening activity from *Oral Skills for Management*  
UNIT 18 SECTION 11 FOCUS ON LANGUAGE

### Activity 1 Influencing attitude and behaviour

The act of persuasion involves two or more people having different viewpoints. The persuader may want to influence the attitude and/or behaviour of his listener for (1) his own benefit or (2) the benefit of the listener.

### Task 1



Listen to the exchanges on tape. In each case, decide whether Speaker B is persuading Speaker A to do something for his own benefit or for Speaker A's benefit.

1. Own benefit/Speaker A's benefit.
2. Own benefit/Speaker A's benefit.
3. Own benefit/Speaker A's benefit.
4. Own benefit/Speaker A's benefit.
5. Own benefit/Speaker A's benefit.
6. Own benefit/Speaker A's benefit.
7. Own benefit/Speaker A's benefit.
8. Own benefit/Speaker A's benefit.

### Task 2



Listen again to the extracts.

Complete what Speaker B says in each case.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ to it immediately
2. \_\_\_\_\_ instead of nine?
3. \_\_\_\_\_ He might make an exception.
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Surely that's possible.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ by the middle of the week, \_\_\_\_\_ another firm.

7. \_\_\_\_\_ He's more capable  
I feel.

8. \_\_\_\_\_ union e.g. officials, \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix 3

An example of an intonation activity from *Oral Skills for Law*  
UNIT 10

#### Activity Two Recognizing intonation signals

This activity shows how the speaker uses intonation to signal new and old information, within the contexts of questions asked to correct unsatisfactory replies.

- 1 Listen to this extract from the first dialogue in Activity 1

**Witness** Total expenses were \$300 a month.

**Counsel** I am not asking about your expenditure per month. Please answer the question.

What is counsel asking about?

- a) Her husband's expenditure per month.
- b) Her income per month.
- c) Her expenditure per year

2. Now listen to the same correction made in a different context with a different intonation pattern.

**Counsel** How much did your husband spend per month?

**Witness** My expenditure was about \$300 a month.

**Counsel** I am not asking about your expenditure per month. Please answer the question.

What is the next context?

- a) Counsel wants to know about her husband's expenditure per month.
- b) Counsel wants to know about her income per month.
- c) Counsel wants to know about her expenditure per year

Counsel might make his meaning even clearer by adding:

'I want to know how much your husband spent every month'

And the witness might reply:

'He spends about \$200 on himself'

3. Listen to these corrections. Decide what context each fits. Decide what counsel might say to make his meaning even clearer

- (a) Context (i) Counsel is asking about the plaintiff's movements  
 Context (ii) Counsel is asking about when the defendant arrived at the supermarket.  
 Context (iii) Counsel is asking about when the defendant left his office.  
 Context (iv) Counsel is asking about when he left on Wednesday.  
 Counsel I don't want to know when the defendant left the supermarket on Tuesday

Counsel might make his meaning clearer by adding

- (i) Please tell me when the plaintiff left.  
 (ii) Please tell me when he arrived.  
 (iii) Please tell me when he left his office.  
 (iv) Please tell me when he left on Wednesday

(b) Context \_\_\_\_\_

Counsel I don't want to know when the defendant left the supermarket on Tuesday

Counsel might make his meaning clearer by adding:

(c) Context \_\_\_\_\_

Counsel I don't want to know if Mr Tang phoned your wife that day

Counsel might make his meaning clearer by adding:

(d) Context \_\_\_\_\_

Counsel Who you spoke to outside the stadium is not my question.

Counsel might make his meaning clearer by adding:

(e) Context \_\_\_\_\_

Counsel      We do not need to know where you were going before you heard the alarm

Counsel might make his meaning clearer by adding:

(f) Context

Counsel      I am not asking you about the quality of the watches that you sold the plaintiff

Counsel might make his meaning clearer by adding.

### Appendix 4

An example of a note-taking activity from *Oral Skills for Law*  
UNIT 10

#### Task 2

In Units 8 and 9 you were given extracts from an examination. The tape you will hear continues the examination.



- 1 Listen to the tape
2. Make notes of what you hear in the style of a magistrate writing a Record of Proceedings.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Appendix 5

An example of a viewing exposure activity from *Oral Skills for Management*  
 UNIT 2 SECTION III LANGUAGE IN ACTION

#### Activity 1 Looking for main points



Encik Visu has just joined a management consultancy firm and will be working in the Information Department. In the video you will see his Head of Department briefing him on the job he is to do.

Decide on which of the following points Encik Visu requires clarification.

- (a) What products are exported.
- (b) What export figures are needed.
- (c) How often figures are received.
- (d) Where figures originate.
- (e) Whether reports should include an analysis of influences on prices.
- (f) How often reports should be written.
- (g) The nature of special reports.
- (h) Why it is necessary to have geographical reports.

#### Activity 2 Looking for language points



Watch the video again and write down the questions asked to clarify the points you marked above. Note down the information given to clarify the points.

Question

Information given

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

## Appendix 6

An example of a viewing exposure activity from *Oral Skills for Law*  
UNIT 17

### Activity 1 Recognizing effective Interviewing tactics (1)

This activity practises recognizing effective interviewing tactics.

#### Task 1



Mr Balakrishnan comes to see his lawyer in order to ask for help. He has been badly injured in a car accident, and wants advice about suing the other driver

- 1 Watch the video, listen to the tape.
2. Answer the following questions
  - (a) In which interview does the lawyer listen more carefully to the client's story?
  - (b) In which does the lawyer show most consideration for the client's feelings?
  - (c) In which does the lawyer take most care to check his understanding of the story?

#### Task 2



Read this extract from the second interview and decide what goes wrong.

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>Lawyer</b> | Where?  |
| <b>Client</b> | At the crossing between Jalan Baharu and Jalan Mohamad Faizal.  |
| <b>Lawyer</b> | So someone ran you down while you were crossing the road.   |
| <b>Client</b> | No, I was in my car. This other fellow smashed into me while I was waiting at the traffic lights. I can't remember the details very clearly |
| <b>Lawyer</b> | You'll have to remember them if you want the court to listen to you, Mr Balachandran.   |
| <b>Client</b> | Balakrishnan.   |
| <b>Lawyer</b> | Sorry, Mr Balakrishnan.   |
| <b>Client</b> | I was in a state of shock.  |

#### Task 3



Listen to the first interview again. Write down what the lawyer says when he does the following.

- 1 He welcomes the client.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. He asks the client to tell his story the first time.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3 He expressed sympathy with the client's feelings of anger  
\_\_\_\_\_

- 4 He asks the client to repeat his story in a chronological sequence, giving all the important details

---

- 5 He ask for details of the expenses incurred by the client

---

6. He checks his understanding of why the client's wage varies from month to month

---

- 7 He explains why he wants to summarise the details of the story in his own words

---

- 8 He thanks the client for his co-operation.

---

- 9 He arranges a further meeting.

---

### Appendix 7

An example of a final interactive activity involving the use of video from *Oral Skills for Management*

#### UNIT 12

#### SECTION IV USING LANGUAGE

Summary of language points covered in this unit

1 Sequencing past events explicitly by using:

- (a) the past perfect tense structure,  
e.g. "had decided"
- (b) participle clauses,  
e.g. "Deciding that ..."
- (c) conjunctions of time,  
e.g. "After/Before he decided. ..."

2. Speculating about past events by using:

modal auxiliary verbs with perfect infinitives, e.g. could/would/should/might have decided.

3 Focusing on events by using:

the passive structure, with or without the agent

**The situation**

Sally Lee, a typist in a big company, had a 'confrontation' with her supervisor who referred the matter to the Administration Manager

**Activity 1** Analysing past events**Task 1**

- 1 Watch the video presentation of the situation.
2. Discuss.

- (a) the way the supervisor handled the situation,
- (b) the Administration Manager's conversation with Sally;
- (c) the mistakes made by the Manager;
- (d) how he should have handled the interview

**Task 2**

Compare your views or findings with the rest of the class. Appoint a spokesman to report for your group.

**Appendix 8**

An example of an oral communication drill from *Oral Skills for Management*  
UNIT 6

**Activity 4** Using Connectors**Language laboratory**

In this activity you will practise using connectors appropriately to structure information.

Listen to each of the extracts on tape, then use the information below to follow up on what has been said. Use an appropriate connective word or expression to show the relationship between what has been said and what you are going to say

1. Not all the major towns in the country enjoy these services yet.
2. Insert your card into the card slot.
3. He has years of experiences behind him.
4. Who is meeting the consultant at the airport?
5. They are also worried about the attitude of the workers.
6. We could discuss it at lunch.
7. It shouldn't have been conducted in the evenings.
8. His annual income is below \$12,000.

### Appendix 9

An example of an intonation drill from *Oral Skills for Management*  
UNIT 12

#### Activity 5 Intonation: making ideas prominent

Language  
Laboratory

In this activity you will practise making two ideas prominent.  
Study the two examples which you will hear on tape.

**Speaker A** Was it right to sack him rather than  
reprimand him?

**Speaker B** He shouldn't have been sacked.  
He should have been reprimanded.

**Speaker A** Was it really necessary to demote him  
rather than warn him?

**Speaker B** He needn't have been demoted.  
He could have been warned.

Now answer these questions in the same way

- 1 Was it necessary to dismiss him rather than suspend him?
2. Was it right to send him to prison rather than fine him?
- 3 Was it necessary to cancel the meeting rather than postpone it?
4. Was it right to scrap the project rather than modify it?
- 5 Was it right to terminate his contract and not renew it?
6. Was it necessary to warn him officially rather than warn him informally?

### Appendix 10

An example of a 'trigger tape' activity from *Oral Skills for Management*  
UNIT 12

#### Activity 6 Participating in a discussion

Language  
Laboratory

Make notes on your opinion of the following questions. Then use your notes to participate in the discussion on the tape given in Activity 6.

- 1 What do you think of a training course that was held over a period of ten weeks in the evening?

---



---

2. Attendance at the Ajax training course was voluntary. Do you think that was a good idea? If so, say why. If not, what could have been done?

---

---

3 How should a technical course have been organized?

---

---

4. Participants at the Ajax course include both production workers as well as supervisors. Do you think that was a good idea?

---

---

5 What would have been the possible outcome if the company had brought in outsiders to run the course?

---

---