

# The Oral/Aural Approach to Language Teaching (Part 2)

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I would like to end this article by describing the second main feature of the Oral/Aural Approach to Language Teaching i.e. maximum pupil participation.

C.C. Fries says that the word "Oral" in the name Oral Approach is used to describe what the pupil must be able to do with each lesson that he learns. He must be able to use orally all the English structures he studies each day. To use them orally means that he can select at once and produce orally the correct structure that is required for any of the meaningful situations covered by what he has studied.

It is a bad lesson where the teacher does all the talking and the pupils do all the listening. In the Oral/Aural Approach the work of the teacher is not to teach but to enable the pupils to learn and to make sure that they learn correctly. He is there to guide and educate the pupils. The teacher should never dominate the class.

Establishment of meaning is more important than just speaking; and meaning can only be established if the pupils are allowed to live with the language. By this I mean that opportunities must be given to the pupils to actively use the language. It is important therefore that each lesson provides a variety of drills, activities and practice.

Having presented a new structure the next step would be to provide ample opportunity for the learner to memorise and repeat this new structure. This can be done through formal drills which can be in the form of (a) Drills by Imitation/Repetition (b) Drills by Using Call-words (c) Sequence Drills (d) Contradiction Drills (e) Action Chain.

In the case of Item 7 of the New English Syllabus "This is ....." (the presentation was described in the last issue) the following drills can be provided.

## Practice 1 Drill by Imitation

The basis of the Oral Approach is imitation of correct model speech. Imitation is particularly useful in the early stages of language learning.

It helps to instil good speech and correct language

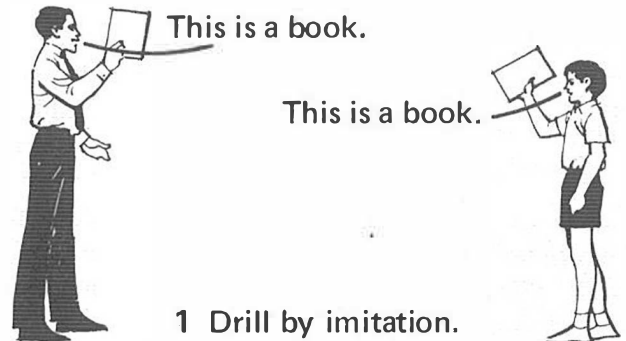
patterns into the minds of the beginners. So a good deal of time must be devoted to drills like this:

Teacher: (holding a book in his hand)  
"This is a book."

Class: (each pupil holding a book)  
"This is a book."

Teacher: (touching his chair)  
"This is a chair."

Class: (each pupil touching his chair)  
"This is a chair."

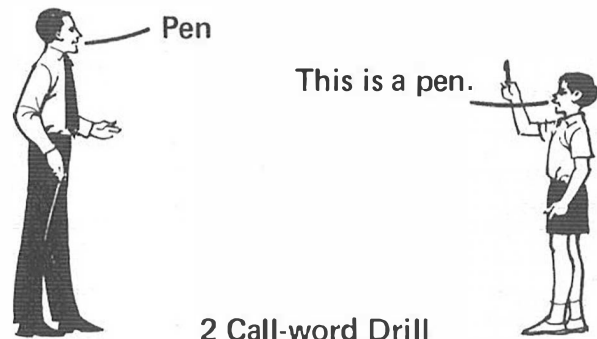


## Practice 2 Call-word Drill

When a pattern has been established by the above drill, the teacher can now speak less and aim at maximum oral participation on the part of the learners. He can do this by drills using call-words. The teacher should first give the example.

Teacher says, "pen"  
Class: (each pupil holding a pen)  
"This is a pen."

Teacher says, "pencil"  
Class: (each pupil holding a pencil)  
"This is a pencil."



**Practice 3** In this practice, a pupil instead of the teacher gives the call-word.

Pupil 1 to class: "chair"  
 Class: (each pupil touching his chair)  
 "This is a chair."  
 Pupil 2 to class: "ruler"  
 Class: (each pupil holding a ruler)  
 "This is a ruler"

The above two drills are indispensable in the Oral/Aural Approach and should be used extensively and intensively in practising all new language items taught. In the teaching of Item 37 of the New Syllabus i.e. the Present Continuous using transitive verbs and objects. "I'm opening/closing the door/the window/the box/the cupboard/the bag," the drills may take the following forms:

**Practice 1 Drill by imitation**

(a) Teacher: (opening a bag) "I'm opening the bag."  
 Class: (each pupil opening a bag)  
 "I'm opening the bag."  
 Teacher: (opening a book) "I'm opening the book."  
 Class: (each pupil opening a book)  
 "I'm opening the book."

Similarly drill "I'm closing the bag/book/box." etc.

(b) Teacher: (opening the window) "I'm opening the window."  
 Class: (pointing to teacher) "You're opening the window."  
 Teacher: (closing the cupboard) "I'm closing the cupboard."  
 Class: (pointing to teacher) "You're closing the cupboard."

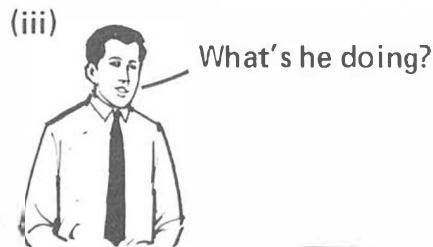
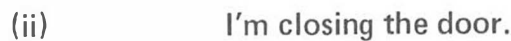
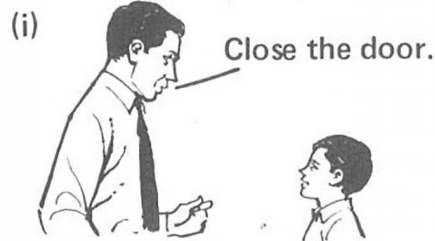
In the above drills it is important that the actions illustrating the meaning of the verbs are performed while the sentences are being uttered.

**Practice 2 Sequence Drills**

Sequence drills can be used to practise new structural items and revise structures learnt previously. The teacher must go right through the drills himself first to show the pupils the kind of answers needed. It ensures maximum pupil participation in the form of a conversation.

Teacher to P 1: "Close the door."  
 P 1 while closing the door: "I'm closing the door."  
 Teacher to class: "What's he doing?"  
 Class: "He's closing the door."  
 Teacher: "Is he closing the door?"

Class: "Yes, he is."  
 Teacher: "Is he closing the window?"  
 Class: "No he isn't."  
 Teacher: "What's he doing?"  
 Class: "He's closing the door."



**3 Sequence Drill.**

Once the above sentence patterns have been fairly drilled with the whole class the teacher can now have individual practice round the class.

Teacher to P 1: "Please open the cupboard."  
 Teacher to P 1: "What are you doing?" (as P 1 is opening the cupboard)  
 P 1: "I'm opening the cupboard."  
 Teacher to P 2: "What's he doing?"  
 P 2: "He's opening the cupboard."  
 Teacher to P 3: "Is he opening the cupboard?"  
 P 3: "Yes, he is."  
 Teacher to P 4: "Is he closing the door?"  
 P 4: "No, he isn't."  
 Teacher to P 5: "What's he doing?"  
 P 5: "He's opening the cupboard."

After this individual practice pupils can be encouraged to take the place of the teacher. This is useful because the pupils can now have the opportunity to ask questions.

**Practice 3 Contradiction Drills**

These drills can start from a question or from a statement. Long answers can be asked for.

Teacher: "Is Ali opening the box?"  
 Class: "No, he isn't (opening the box).  
 He's closing the box."

or

Teacher: "Ali is opening the box."  
 Class: "He's not opening the box.  
 He's closing the box."

**Practice 4 Action chains**

Further practice in speaking to consolidate items already learnt with the item being currently taught can be effectively done through "Action Chains".

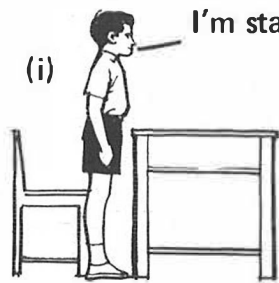
In this practice a pupil acts out a series of actions while the teacher gets the class to participate by describing the series of actions as they are being performed.

In the case of Item 37 the Action Chain Drill can take the following form:

Teacher to P 1: "Ali, please stand up."  
 Teacher: "What are you doing?"  
 P 1: "I'm standing up."  
 Teacher to class: "What's he doing?"

Class: "He's standing up."  
 Teacher to P 1: "Please walk."  
 Teacher to P 1: "What are you doing?"  
 P 1: "I'm walking."  
 Teacher to class: "What's he doing?"  
 Class: "He's walking."  
 Teacher to P 1: "Please walk to the door."  
 Teacher to P 1: "Where are you walking to?"  
 P 1: "I'm walking to the door."  
 Teacher to class: "Where's he walking to?"  
 Class: "He's walking to the door."  
 Teacher to P 1: "Please open the door."  
 Teacher to P 1: "What are you doing?"  
 P 1: "I'm opening the door."  
 Teacher to class: "What's he doing?"  
 Class: "He's opening the door."  
 Teacher to P 1: "Please close the door."  
 Teacher to P 1: "What are you doing?"  
 P 1: "I'm closing the door."  
 Teacher to class: "What's he doing?"  
 Class: "He's closing the door."  
 Teacher to P 1: "Please walk to your desk."  
 Teacher to P 1: "What are you doing?"  
 P 1: "I'm walking to my desk."  
 Teacher to class: "What's he doing?"  
 Class: "He's walking to his desk."  
 Teacher to P 1: "Thank you Ali. Please sit down."

**Teacher: What are you doing?**



I'm standing up.



I'm walking.



I'm walking to the door.

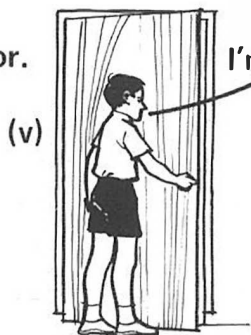
Teacher: What's he doing?  
 Class: He's standing up.

He's walking.

Where's he walking to?  
 He's walking to the door.



I'm opening the door.



I'm closing the door.



I'm walking to my desk.

Class: He's opening the door.

He's closing the door.

He's walking to his desk.