

PRESENTATION SKILLS

Seminar [A] : 'Producing OTs'

Materials needed	Copy of Don Juan [or substitute suitable course text here]. Blank transparencies and suitable transparency pens .
Time needed	<u>30 - 35 minutes</u>

AIM To produce **one** OVERHEAD TRANSPARENCY ('OT') that you could 'talk around' for a couple of minutes, as part of a brief presentation on Don Juan. [You **won't** be asked to talk ! All we want today is the OT itself.]

TASK SUMMARY

- (a) Working in **small groups** of 2 or 3, **compare and contrast** two short excerpts from Don Juan. Discuss the **differences and similarities** in:
- **CONTENT** [What is being said]
 - **STYLE** [How it is said]
 - **TONE** [The *mood* conveyed, any implied meanings]
 - **LANGUAGE** [Byron's *choice of words* and *form*]
 - **OTHER** [Anything else you notice, or want to talk about]
- (b) **Produce an overhead transparency** ('OT') summarizing your results.
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GUIDANCE NOTES & TIMING [make sure you finish your OT within 30 mins]

- (1) As a group, familiarize yourselves with the excerpts. It's a very good idea to read them out loud first, **before** you begin to discuss them. [5 mins]
- (2) Then discuss the similarities and differences, using at least some of the categories (above) under 'TASK SUMMARY'. [10 mins]
- IMPORTANT:** It's great if you can come up with some interesting points... **BUT** please **DON'T** overdo this part. Remember, today's task is mostly about how you **present** your information, rather than the details of what you've found.
- (3) Keep an eye on the time! After 15 minutes, decide **what** (and **how much**) you want to say about the texts. Remember, your group has only **one** OT to use and (at most) a couple of minutes to talk about it. [5 mins]
- (4) Now **design** your OT. Don't actually make it, yet! Instead, draw it up first 'in rough' (as a pilot copy, on a sheet of paper). How will you set out your points on the OT? [Assume the audience has a copy of the texts.] [5 mins]
- (5) **Produce your group OT.** [5 mins]
- (6) If you have any time left, rehearse how you'd *each* use your OT in a talk. What kinds of things would worry you? What should you be careful about?
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At the end: hand your finished OTs to the tutor. She/he may use a few of them (at random) to illustrate strengths and as a spur to discussion.

PRESENTATION SKILLS

Seminar [B]: 'Holding the Thought'

Materials Excerpt of about 15 to 40 lines from any course text. **Time:** 20 minutes.

AIMS **Working in pairs**, explore and enrich your experience of reading aloud.
Engage fellow students **1-to-1** in ways that hone your oral presentation.

1. Introduction. *Ideas to take on board, in your pairs, before starting.* [**< 3 mins**]

There's a tendency, when reading aloud, to deliver the text as a series of disembodied phrases. It helps to think of a reading as a piece of multicoloured string: all the parts different, yet connected. Is the beginning somehow still reverberating in the middle; and does the end, long before you get to it, somehow feel inevitable? [I don't mean, by the way, predictable!]

What I'm really asking is: do the words and ideas flow, move easily, link up? – or does the text hit you like a shopping list, in a disconnected way? [I realise some texts *want* that; but let's put that aside.] Is the reader really 'connected' to the words? Do they convince you that *they* are speaking; that they know where they're heading? 'Holding the Thought' is subtle; but that ability to keep listeners 'tuned in' is crucial to oral delivery. All good storytellers and comedians have it!

2. The Task. *Please read all the notes below, before you begin!* [**< 12 mins**]

- Each person in the pair chooses a **different** excerpt – at random – from the course text. 15 - 40 lines is about right. Don't spend more than 30 secs choosing. Let the text surprise you!
- Face your partner. One person begins to read their text **aloud**. The listener does **not** have the text in front of them – they should be completely attentive to the **voice** of the speaker.
- This is the important bit. If the listener feels, at any point, in any way, that they're 'losing the thread' of what they're hearing, they must stop the speaker. The speaker then has to start to read again, **from the beginning**. It's a bit like Snakes & Ladders. Or 'bio-feedback'!

LISTENERS: It's important to listen **actively**. Don't just 'go with the flow' or switch off. You must feel the text really has you in its grip. It should be working between your ears like a continuous, inevitable length of dental floss! The moment that string breaks, or kinks – even if it's in the first line – stop the speaker. Is the text a mass of words? Is it tough to follow or understand? Are you slightly bored, lost, or unconvinced? If so, gently ask them to start again.

SPEAKERS: The idea is to get further and further, before you're stopped. But don't get anxious if you're constantly pulled up. That's usual. In fact, if you're allowed to just rattle on, be suspicious! The most obvious thing is **not to rush**. Visualise the situation in the text, what the words mean, as you read them. Are you understanding the text, feeling it, yourself? But remember, in this context, **don't** be tempted to 'act' the text out. That misses the point.

- Once you've made some progress, swap roles. Now the listener speaks, and vice versa.

Some ways to 'Hold the Thought' better, to improve your emotional & oral range ... [**> 5 mins**]

- Speak the text in **monotone**. Then with an **exaggerated range** – swinging the tone wildly. Then in monotone again, etc. When you've had enough, just speak it plainly.
- Read a few lines at a time with very **different emotions**. Languor, rage, boredom, anxiety....
- Mouth the text** in an exaggerated way (all jaw and lips) – but making **no sound**.
- Give **your** text to your partner, and ask **them** to read it out. Note the different qualities and emphasis produced by the other person's voice.

Of course, you don't do any of this at the gig itself! But the wider range of possibilities you experience and explore through such exercises often does 'bleed' into your delivery, enhancing its vitality and coherence.

Think, too, about how you prepare yourself to read. Do you take a good breath, collect your thoughts – or dive in, rattle through? In 2 (b) above, did you (as reader) look through the text first? Why should you?

Finally, try to enjoy or (if the piece is more formal/ serious) to 'feel' what you're doing. That helps to connect you with the text, and the text to the listener. It also makes the whole enterprise more worthwhile.