

TEACHER ALERT

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I trust your teaching term is going well.

Speech New Zealand is really appreciative of all the queries that come in to the office. They really help us to ensure that our syllabuses and information we give out is well focussed on your needs in teaching.

The following have arisen from those questions and discussions:

Oral Communication: Audiences

In some schools it is becoming difficult for teachers to organise the 'release' of a larger group in order to create an audience. In such cases assessors will accept the 'group' as the audience. Speech New Zealand wants to make it as easy as possible for schools to use our services.

Oral Communication: Storytelling

Oral storytelling in the Oral Communication syllabus - Tell a story, myth or legend. The story should be in the candidate's own words: as there is a definite structure it is an ideal way of approaching the story-telling. Candidates can create their own story or re-tell a fable, myth or legend – or any other well-known story. Visuals are often extremely helpful - pictures, finger or stick puppets, felt boards, props or symbols are just some of the materials that have been used.

One exploratory approach to this in class might be to tell a well-known story from the point of view of different characters.

Theatre in Action as a ‘bridging’ year:

Often your students will love the Speech and Drama grade exam experience, however if they start at a young age you may find they are not quite ready to move up to the next grade exam. Or, sometimes, the jump from Grade 3 to Grade 4 seems too much and perhaps the maturity level of students means they are not quite ready for that next level.

A teacher wrote in recently that she was looking to keep the momentum going and that Theatre in Action, with its mix of devised and scripted work was ideal. Speech New Zealand fully supports this as candidates get the most enjoyment from exams when they are truly ready, and sufficiently mature, for each level. Sometimes, too, the lower fee structure can be a good selling point for this extended group work.

Choice of texts for Theatre in Action and Speech and Drama work:

You will no doubt be aware that Speech New Zealand syllabuses do not have suggested or set texts. This is because students are individuals and all have totally different needs. Some use our syllabus to gain confidence; others are using it to extend their developing talent and skill base. This is why we do not want to ‘lock’ teachers and students in to any specific writers or texts.

Another problem with suggesting texts is that within your teaching groups there will often be a wide variance in the abilities and interests of your students and this will then be reflected in the degree of difficulty of texts and material chosen.

When you are seeking ideas for texts, do network with other teachers wherever possible.

One way to get student ‘buy in’ to material is to get them to bring along a range of their own selections. You can work with them to discover what works well, and why, and then, if necessary, to broaden their range of choices.

You may wish to build ideas around a chosen theme. Sometimes, too, allow time in class to simply explore poems or books or plays together – then perhaps students can choose 2 or 3 for further work before deciding the one that suits best for the exam. Personally, I am often surprised by ‘new’ poems the students find in my books which I have previously glossed over! Your local library may also be able to suggest material that could be explored.

Speech and Drama Grade 8: Module 3 (Literature):

With an enthusiastic student the 5 minute time limit for a talk on the ‘works of a dramatist’, can seem impossible to meet. The key in this is to understand the audience chosen and the purpose of the talk for this audience, and then to narrow the topic down to an aspect that can be covered within that time limit.

The talk needs to cover briefly the range of works of the dramatist particularly within the context of their social and historical time, then expand, succinctly, on the chosen aspect with references to two or three of the plays. Or it may be that your student chooses, say, two or three plays with a slightly different key aspect for each.

Check that the key aspect (s) is clearly defined and illustrated. Also that one of these key aspects can be demonstrated in Section 2 with the performance of either a devised piece or an extract from the

text. Ensure in Section 2 that your student's introduction clearly states how this performance relates to the talk.

Supplying texts and material before examinations:

Do ensure that when these are emailed through that they are sent in as attachments. By all means include a reference source when this is appropriate, however just emailing a website reference is insufficient.

Your student needs to be certain Speech New Zealand has the correct material and that there is no discrepancy in the reference given. Remember too, that once an examiner is on tour you cannot assume that he or she has the ability to either read or print off material.

Public Speaking Grade6: Module1: Section 1:

A recent query drew attention to an anomaly in our Public Speaking syllabus for this section which asks the candidate to:

'Give a report'.

Either: To help a group make a decision or to adopt a course of action

Or: To report on a topic you have researched.

However the Learning Outcomes mention an 'Informative talk' – this is an error and of course there is no informative talk in Grade 6.

The purpose of this module is to develop understanding of another type of talk – that of giving a report.

A past Board member, Cecily Archer, who frequently teaches this module, makes the following suggestions:

"As a report has a very specific format I want to be sure that my candidates meet the criteria. I find that it is sometimes a challenge to give talk on "a topic you have researched" that is an actual report and not just an informative talk. Certainly an appropriate challenge for Grade 6 though."

The following examples that her candidates have used may help you work with this too -

- Research on Renaissance Art - report to an art club to help them choose which period to study next
- Research on worm farms - report to School Council on viability of having them at school
- Research on iPads - report to school IT department to help them decide which type to choose for school use
- Research on the Easter uprising - report to History class on how it arose and the outcomes
- Research on the International Space station - report to a science club on whether it is worthwhile maintaining it
- Research on archaeological dinosaur discoveries - report to Museum club on the value of such work.

The last three could only have a conclusion but the first three had a definite recommendation.

Thank you, Cecily, for your generosity in sharing these.

Vocal Fry:

This has received quite a bit of publicity lately – and there is no simple one-size-fits-all answer or remedy. My renewed interest in this phenomenon was inspired by an interview on Kim Hill’s Saturday Morning Live on National Radio. She was talking with Penny Eckhart from Stamford University, discussing vocal fry.

You can pick it up if you missed it:

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/saturday/audio/201766628/penelope-eckert-vocal-fry>

Included within the article is an informative video clip.

Certainly vocal fry is something we hear frequently and it when it impedes on a performance or the connection in a presentation then it is something we need to note. With one of my own students I wondered if it was caused by lack of breath control; then in discussion with Nerissa Moore she also wondered if it may be due to lack of confidence/security to complete ideas. A good point!

You may already have read this article by Naomi Wolf and watched the very clever video on ‘Vocal Fry speaking with Faith Salie’ that is embedded within the article. If you haven’t, then it is well worth taking the time to read and watch:

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jul/24/vocal-fry-strong-female-voice>

I would be interested to collect your experiences or ideas on vocal fry and then develop them into a more extended article for SNZ ClipBoard. [Please send them to pamross@xtra.co.nz](mailto:pamross@xtra.co.nz)

Yet another really worthwhile voice talk from TEDx:

[This comes courtesy of Claire’s son – Mark Trezona]

I found it extremely useful to revisit this clip – especially after all the comments on Vocal Fry!

“The surprising secret to speaking with confidence” | Caroline Goyder | TEDxBrixton

<https://youtu.be/a2MR5XbJtXU>

This talk was given at a local TEDx event, produced independently of the TED Conferences. In this fun and personal talk, Caroline shares a story of moving from stage-paralysis to expressive self. Accompanied by an unusual prop, she encourages us to use our voice as an instrument and really find the confidence within.

Caroline Goyder is an author and voice coach, with a lifelong curiosity in the question of how we find the courage to think for ourselves: aloud. Caroline trained as an actor, and then as a voice coach at Central School of Speech and Drama (CSSD), where she worked for ten years. She now runs a business that helps people find confidence and calm in the theatre of life. Caroline is the author of *Gravitas: Communicate with Confidence, Influence and Authority* (Ebury) and can be found on Twitter @carolinegoyder

Please, always feel free to send in any queries you may have on the syllabus, no matter how small they may seem to you. If you are new to teaching or our syllabuses they can appear somewhat daunting. We are here to help: info@spechnz.co.nz

Remember, too, to check out our website for resources: www.spechnz.co.nz

I trust you have had a good term to date and that you will enjoy the holiday break that seems to be rushing towards us.

Warm regards

Pam

Chair Examinations Division.

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