

Reformulation in Action

Example of a one-week intensive course (3 hrs/day) using reformulation techniques as the basic method. (Pre-course preparation: none)

- Day 1** Student asked to give a presentation of his company. After each 'chunk' of input from student, teacher reformulated and student wrote down the sentences dictated by teacher. The procedure was broken up by intermittent questioning from teacher and vocabulary work on board. Took the full 3 hrs. (The presentation is given in its final form on page 39).
- Day 2** Student dictated reformulated presentation for teacher to type. Student then asked to go through presentation thinking of possible questions from his audience and answering these. Teacher reformulated each question and answer for student to repeat and then immediately record. Student then transcribed the complete dialogue from his walkman and without help from teacher. After this he dictated the transcription to teacher for typing. As I typed I substituted alternative 'functional' expressions and corrected a couple of small errors (articles). Student then compared my transcript with his, and marked the typed transcript for word stress, sentence stress and liaison.
- Day 3**
- a. Review of presentation from Day 1 with student marking text with highlighters. Focus on identifying verb forms used, the use of articles in contrast with French, prepositions and present participles. Student made language notes.
 - b. Teacher provided typed format for a formal speech of welcome (see page 40) relevant to student needs, and composed of sentence heads.
Student asked to complete sentences to create a speech for use with his own clients. Teacher reformulated his suggestions and

provided alternative language options for student to choose from. Final speech dictated by student to teacher for typing. Student asked to mark *keywords* in speech and reproduce it from these. Student's first attempt at reproduction recorded. This made him aware that the *important* keywords are not the *content* words but the 'function' words and unfamiliar formal structures. Student then marked a new set of keywords, ie those he had failed to remember in attempting to reproduce the speech. Speech then practised 3 times by 'auto-prompting':

1. student scans a line of the text until he feels familiar with it
2. student looks up and silently recalls the line
3. student speaks the line as if to a real audience

At every 'go' the number of errors made by the student dropped. At the third go only one minor omission. The *second* stage in this procedure is the most important and effective. This needs emphasising.

Student then presented the speech from the 'functional' keywords alone, including those omitted in the auto-prompt rehearsals. This was successful. Finally teacher pointed out contrast of 'high-rise' and 'low-termination' stresses, and encouraged student to speak each line in one breath with liaison and low-termination on the last content word.

Day 4 a. Gap-filling exercise using text of student's company presentation.

Blacked-out words or phrases selected according to language novel to this particular student.

b. Further practice of speech of welcome from Day 3.

c. Reading of authentic article from a relevant specialised journal chosen to stimulate student input.

Article worked on paragraph by paragraph with the following procedure:

- Auditing for collocations and useful phrases
- Student summarised each paragraph in one sentence using new language *from* the text.
- Student expressed his opinion on the points stated in the paragraph with teacher reformulating and providing functional language for expressing views and reactions.

Student then dictated the complete list of collocations and functional expressions to teacher for typing. Student asked to dictate some of the functions syllable-by-syllable, for language awareness and pronunciation practice, particularly of liaison.

Day 5 Re-recording of all reformulated material on cassette for student to take away. Collation of transcripts in hard-bound book of document wallets.

1. Student presentation. Recorded by teacher.
2. Question and answer dialogue on presentation. Recorded as an 'open dialogue' with gaps between question and answer for the student to anticipate the latter.
3. Speech of welcome, recorded by student.
4. Functional expressions. Each recorded twice with intervals for the student to silently repeat.

5. Collocations of verb and object. Recorded by teacher as a series of prompts (eg object-nouns) with interval for student to recall appropriate possible verbs going with the noun, or vice versa. For example:

to sit in on . . .
(interval)
to sit in on a discussion
requirements
(interval)
to meet requirements

(Since most cassette players have pause buttons the intervals are optional except for use while driving.)

Example of a student presentation in final form

We are a Belgian company specialising in the provision of technical training, support and assistance for foreign air forces. The company was founded in 1984 following a decision by the MOD that such services could best be provided by an independent company employing its own specialised staff.

Since 1984 Webbair has successfully fulfilled contracts with more than ten countries around the world either directly or in partnership with French manufacturers.

Our training services cover the full range of systems usually employed by air forces, except helicopters. This includes: planes, engines, tactical missiles, on-board radar, ground radar, electronic equipment, communications and so on.

All Webbair's work is undertaken only with the full authority of the Belgian government and under the direct supervision of the Belgian air force.

We work in close cooperation with all major Belgian manufacturers. We can provide both theoretical and on-job training for small groups, large groups, and if necessary, individuals.

Before any contract is agreed we undertake a thorough analysis of our client's training requirements. This includes defining the syllabus, planning the programme, preparing materials, and establishing trainee prerequisites. All this is done in close consultation with clients and manufacturers.

Courses may be conducted in Belgium and/or the client's home country. Training is given by highly qualified and experienced personnel . . . ex-military or professional, and geared to the client's equipment.

Our training package can include all necessary language

A basic working paradigm

instruction for trainers and trainees or the use of technical interpreters and translators.

Although Webbair is a young company, our personnel can provide you with the benefit of years of experience.

(The only change from the original piece of student work is that I have altered one or two names and factual details for obvious reasons.)

Example of 'question & answer' session based on presentation

Why were there no companies like Webbair before 1984?

Before 1984 Belgian manufacturers provided their own assistance and if necessary the Belgian air force provided additional training.

Do you have any competitors in Belgium or abroad?

Many companies like Webbair have been created in countries selling armaments. In Belgium we don't have any competitors but we do have partners.

How competitive are your prices?

If the Belgian government offered you free training Webbair couldn't compete, but Webbair prices compare well with those of foreign companies.

Example of 'welcome speech' discussed above

Gentlemen, I am very glad to welcome you to Paris.

First of all, because we are looking forward to working together closely.

And secondly, because I've had the pleasure of getting to know some of you personally and it's always nice to meet old friends. I should like to wish you a pleasant stay in Paris and say that we at Webbair, in particular Mr X, will do our best to help you find your feet. I hope that your stay and our discussions will bring positive benefits for both parties, and trust that your visit to the electronics school will prove satisfactory.

Now, I'm no longer going to stand between you and these refreshments . . . and I should like to propose a toast to both our countries.

Sample of phrases and collocations collected by student after reformulation

I think it's an excellent idea.
That sounds like a good idea.
What a good idea.

That's journalistic exaggeration.
It's a bit exaggerated, don't you think?

If that's the case, why . . . ?

He's got a point.
I think they've got a point, don't you?

Its rather misleading.

The aerospace industry should not decide either.

to pursue an aim

to take part in discussions
to remain in discussion
to sit in on discussions
to prejudice discussions

to cut costs
to yield savings/interest/profits
to economise on maintenance/staff/materials
to save time/money
to spend time/money
to state categorically
to meet requirements
to show interest in something
to enjoy a view
to repudiate a view
to draw conclusions
to exert an influence/effect
to make a decision on the basis of . . .
to expand/diminish prospects
("evaporating prospects")