Over the last year and this members of the club have been working alongside English Speaking Union members in support of a number of linked projects aimed at improving young people’s spoken English. Working in Schools there is focus on public speaking, although some of the effort also goes to polishing conversational English with students of the Bishop’s Conservatory School.

There will be a public speaking competition for school students later in the year and a summer school repeating the most successful one held in 2017. Now the focus is on working with young children in the secondary school in Victoria and 5 classes have been planned for this. One took place earlier in January and the next planned for the 28th. The aim of these 5 sessions is to have the students speaking as naturally as possible in front of others and doing this without much formality. By introducing various games the children will practice speaking with little prior preparation and without notes. Suggested games will be given here for these 5 sessions as the children are too young for lectures on speaking but will be encouraged to learn naturally by doing and by receiving sensitive feedback.

All the work will be done in groups and the trainers will need to make sure all the children are participating and each has opportunity to speak. Group work is used a lot in the Gozo schools so it will be acceptable to students but it works best with volunteers supporting smaller groups in the classroom so additional volunteers are always welcome.

In each lesson there will be a main activity or activities and a ‘filler’ will be suggested to be used if there is extra time. Often the filler may not be needed. Depending on class sizes these lessons may be very full. An example lesson follows.

LESSON 3:

AIM: To introduce the concept of vocal variety. Again have groups of 2 or 3.

Explain pitch – high / low

Have a book and ask one partner to read a sentence without changing pitch. (make sure book is age appropriate – may need to ask teacher prior to lesson if necessary). The other partner changes pitch. Other groups asked what sounds better and why.

Tone – emotional sound

Each group is to say the words ham sandwich sadly, happily, shyly, angrily, lovingly; one speaks and the other identifies the emotion then reverse the roles. There will need to be considerable input from the trainers.

Rate Read a sentence very fast and then at a normal pace; ask what sounds better. Get each group to practice different rates of speaking.

Volume

Everyone to read a sentence in front of the class to check on volume. Don’t shout – emphasise breathing.

Each group is then given an emotion (sad, happy, angry, depressed, shy etc) and asked to plan a very short story about a day at school bringing in the chosen emotion. Partners get up to speak.

Each group is asked to make up a short story about a day at the beach. They are told to tell it sadly, happily, excitedly, angrily etc. Give and ask for feedback.