The Use of Foreign Language Teaching Techniques in the Computer Science Laboratory to Support Oral Presentation and Group Work.

This paper examines how a first year Linux course can be utilized to address the two main issues facing Chinese students taught in English; oral presentation and group work, both requiring verbal communication in technical English. The development of these skills is typically delayed until the final year, however we believe this can be integrated into a course from the start.
While many computer courses do not focus on oral communication as they are considered ``technical'', our course is intended to provide a context which promotes oral communication (i.e. presentation and group work) and positive classroom dynamics.

There are parallels between natural languages (e.g. English) and artificial languages (e.g. Java), and therefore parallels between their teaching methodologies. The aim of this paper is to explore how Computer Science teaching can import pedagogic techniques from English Language teaching.

Computer Science is a high context situation and feedback is often immediate providing Total Physical Response. It is this high context that allows very short but effective presentations. A popular exercise in English Language Teaching is an information gap exercise which can be borrowed for example in a ``computer help desk'' scenario where one student assists another to achieve a given task.

The use of ``storyboarding'' (i.e. drawing pictures like a cartoon book) can be used to describe the development of a software interface, without any technical background. Later in the course, the implementation of the interface can be tackled as a group work project using software engineering processes. Over a single semester enough Linux can be introduced that students can produce programs using Linux text processing utilities which implement a text based interface.