

Activity 1 – Back to the Board

1.1 – Write the words you see on the board plus other speaking related words.



Work with your group and make sure you understand the meaning of each vocabulary item and how it is connected to teaching speaking.

1.2 – Reflection Task

Would you do this with your learners? What are the benefits of this kind of activity? Discuss with your group.

Activity 2 – Real Speaking

2.1 – Speaking

Think about the times you spoke over the last couple of days. Choose 2 occasions where you spoke outside the classroom/school environment and make notes in the first two rows below. Share your information with a partner.

2.2 – Speaking in Class

Now think about **your pupil's** use of speaking **in class**. Choose two times in the last few days where they have spoken in classroom speaking activity. (If you are a student yourself, think of two times where you have spoken in class). Make some notes below then share your information with a partner.

Genre What general kind of speaking was it? (E.g. giving a speech, chatting)	Purpose Why was this speaking done?	Setting Where was it done?	Audience Who was listening?	Response Did you get a response from the listener: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ one-way – no response ▪ two-way ▪ multi-way – more than 2 communicate spoken response
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				

2.3 – Differences in Speaking

Do you notice any differences?
Make a note of them below:

Activity 3 – Pair and Group Work

Pair and group work.

Compare your answers with the information below.

Benefits

- Enables much more language practice for learners. Especially in large classes it is essential in order to help learners develop into confident users of the language.
- Some learners are naturally shy and tend to say little or nothing in whole class work. Pair work and group work can help learners feel more secure.
- Involves learners more. Learners tend to lose interest and not concentrate in whole class work.
- Pair work and group work encourage learners to help each other. They can share knowledge and ideas and begin to take responsibility for their own learning.

Problems

- Pair and group work can be very noisy and this can disturb colleagues – this is generally regarded as a good thing. It can help to explain to colleagues and principals why pair work is beneficial.
- Learners make mistakes during pair and group work. This may be true but might be a sign that learners are experimenting with language and developing their competency in the language. It is a good idea to prepare learners before pair or group work and to monitor carefully during the activity so that you can correct important mistakes when the activity is finished.
- Learners can be difficult to control when they are doing pair or group work. It is very important to give very clear instructions for pair and group work. Learners must have a clear task to complete. It is also a good idea to introduce pair and group work slowly over a period of weeks if your learners are not used to it.

Activity 4 – Jigsaw Reading

4.1 – Preparing for Communication

You are going to read part of a text about speaking and how to promote real speaking in the classroom. There are 12 questions below. In your group you can answer only 4 of the questions. Read the questions, read your text quickly, find the questions you can answer, tell the rest of the group and see if they agree, then answer the questions in the space below.

Write your answers here	
1.	What is our main aim in practicing oral English according to the introductory paragraph?
2.	Conversation B is probably 2 people talking in private, face-to-face and reacting to each other. How is conversation A described?
3.	Does the writer think that traditional structure practice is a complete waste of time? Why/why not?
4.	According to conversation B what will the British Council give you?
5.	In conversation A the attention of the learner is focused on the language they are using and on getting the structure right. What is the focus on in conversation B?
6.	What benefit does working in pairs and small groups have for learners' speaking ability?
7.	How many different pieces of advice are there in conversation A?
8.	Conversation A is a controlled exercise where the language is completely predictable. How is conversation B different?
9.	How many ways does the writer give practice that is controlled but which includes some of the features of real communication?

10.	Give two examples (not 'should') of structures to give advice in conversation B?
11.	What two other responses do the writer say the speaker in conversation B could have used to reply to the speakers' question?
12.	Name two task types that the writer says give learners a purpose for using the language.

4.2 – Who's got...?

In your new group, work together to answer all the questions. To start, one person asks 'Who's got the answer to question number one?' Continue until you have answered all the questions.

Activity 5 – Find someone who...

What do you think about speaking? What do your colleagues think?

Walk round the room. Speak to as many other participants as you can. **Write a different name in each space.**

Ask some follow up questions – turn it into real speaking...

E.g. If someone says 'yes' to number one, ask them 'Who have you spoken to?' or 'What did you talk about with Sabra?' or 'What did Keiden tell you?'

Find someone who...

1. ...has already spoken to more than five people in the classroom today
2. ...uses pair work and group work in the class
3. ...has never conducted a debate in their classroom
4. ...knows what an information gap is
5. ...has noisy classes
6. ...wishes they were still in their bed
7. ...believes strongly that speaking is the most important of the 4 language skills
8. ...thinks fluency is more important than accuracy in speaking
9. ...loves using role-plays in class
10. ...thinks the ratio of pupil talking time to teacher talking time should be 75:25

Activity 6 – Running Dictation

6.1 – Running Dictation: Increasing Speaking in the Classroom

There are lots of ways to inject more speaking into your classroom.

For example, at the beginning and end of classes, pair the learners and get them to tell their partner what they learnt in the previous or current lesson. They can also tell their partner something connected with the topic of the lesson; for example, where they were last night or what their likes and dislikes are.

Every time you feedback on a task, tell them to peer check their answers with a partner. This will help to build confidence before speaking in front of the whole class. If groups are working together on a task, when they finish, move one learner from each group to check their answers again or to share/check more information before eliciting feedback.

6.2 – Activities and Techniques

Talk to your group members about the activities and techniques in the above text.

- Have you tried them in your classroom?
- If you have, were they successful?
- If you haven't, would you like to try them?

Will you try running dictation in your classes? Why? Why not?

6.3 - More Running Dictation – Speaking Activity Problems

Your trainer will put a set of sentences up on the wall. One-by one you will go up and read **one complete** sentence and come back to your group where your chosen scribe will write down what you say. Then the next person will go up and do the same until you have all sentences. Remember this is a race but you need to be accurate and write down the sentences in the correct order.

Once your dictation sheets have been corrected, read them then work with your group/team and try to come up with solutions to the problems stated. Completing Activity 6.4 below will help.

6.4 - Gap Fill - Solutions to Problems and Speaking Activity Tips

Complete the following statements about speaking activities with the words in the box (there is one extra):

e.g. Make it authentic .

demonstrate	speak	fun	fluency	supportive
accuracy	kill	information	silence	authentic
set	explanations	ready	meaningful	

1. Make it authentic .
2. Make it _____.
3. Create an _____ gap activity.
4. Balance _____ and _____.
5. Include _____ activities based on learner experiences and interests.
6. Ensure you _____ up the activity clearly.
7. _____ with students; don't give long _____.
8. Wait for young learners to talk – don't be afraid of _____.
9. Give students lots of opportunities to _____ but don't put pressure on them to talk if they are not _____.
10. Create a _____ environment – over-correction can _____ enthusiasm.

Activity 7 – Peer Teaching

7.1 – Speaking Activities - Preparation

Speaking activities must be carefully prepared for so that pupils get the maximum language practice from them. Work in groups. Your trainer will give you an activity to teach. Use the questions below to help you prepare the activity.

Pre-speaking Activity

1. How are you going to create a context and introduce the task?
2. What language (i.e. vocabulary/grammar/functional language) do your pupils need to know before they can do the task?
3. What interaction pattern(s) does the task require? (i.e teacher –learner; learner to learner etc.). How are you going to create this?
4. What instructions are you going to give? Write them down. Are there different parts to the task? If so, what are the instructions for each part?
5. How are you going to ensure the pupils understand what you want them to do? Are you going to use instruction checking questions (concept questions)? Do you think a demonstration or example is necessary? If so how are you going to provide it? How are you going to start the activity?

Speaking Activity

6. How are you going to monitor the activity? (E.g. remotely, by making notes on errors, by helping students, by correcting them)

7. How are you going to stop the activity? Do you have an early finisher's task? How can you extend the task if necessary?

Post-speaking Activity

8. How are you going to provide feedback on the task and on the language?

7.2 – Speaking Activities – Teaching the Task

Practice setting up, then teaching the task with your group. When you are ready, set up then teach the task to the class. After the demonstrations, think back over the tasks and make notes on the following:

Make some notes on the speaking task demonstrations:

- how the teacher gave instructions
- how much the teacher and the pupils spoke during the task (e.g. teacher 25%; pupils 75%)
- what the teacher did during the task
- how the teacher started and stopped the task
- what the teacher did after the activity

Demo One:

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Demo Two:

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Demo Three

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Demo Four

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Demo Five

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7.3 – Revision

Here is your record of the communicative activities that you observed in class and some others. Read through the communicative activities below and tick the ones that you would like to try out in class.

Ball Throwing Game

- Throw the ball to a learner who has to say something e.g. how they are feeling, an introduction to themselves, what their future plans are etc.
- The learner then throws the ball to someone else who has to speak
- This continues until everyone has had a chance to say something
- You can also do this by asking learners to make a question and then throw the ball for someone else to answer it.

Alphabetical Line-ups

- Teacher asks students to line up in alphabetical order according to:
 - their first name;
 - their surname.

Students then arrange themselves according to their:

- age;
- height;
- month of birth;
- size of feet;
- years of experience teaching;
- age groups they teach

Significant Numbers in My Life

Teacher writes the following numbers on the board and students have to ask the correct question that matches the number, e.g.:

179	(cm tall)
4	(children)
1960	(year of birth)
1	(sister)
3	(cats)
42	(shoe size)
16	(birthday)
5	(countries worked in)

Numbers with Heads

1. Teacher asks participants to relax and sit upright.
2. Teacher asks participants to draw number 1 with their heads.
3. Teacher repeats with numbers from 2 to 9 and then 0.
4. Teacher then splits participants into pairs, A and B.

A thinks of a three digit numbers and B guesses and then vice versa

Name Crossword

Resources: Big flip chart paper, marker pens

- teacher splits learners into groups and gives each group a piece of paper.
- one person in each group writes their name in BIG BLOCK letters horizontally across the paper (preferably the person with the longest name).
- The other members of the group then add their names in the format of a crossword puzzle using letters from the original name.

NB Participants must be careful not to form any nonsense words.

- Once participants have done this, the activity can end here OR they can write out a blank copy of the format of their crossword, i.e. without the names, but with the squares indicated and the appropriate squares numbered.
- The groups then write numbered clues for each name in their crossword to give to another group.
- The groups then swap crosswords and try to complete each others.

Pyramid Discussion

- Hand out worksheets with items for ranking (eg. things to take on a week's holiday in America)
- Get learners into pairs. Each pair has to order the items from most important to least important.
- Now two pairs join together to make groups of four. Now everyone in the groups of four needs to agree on the order of items.
- This is done again with two groups of four getting together and trying to agree and then with two groups of eight.
- Finally the whole class has to rank the items and come to an overall agreement.

Balloon Debate

- Learners are put into groups and given an item or person to talk about. They have to plan a talk on why their item or person is the best
- A spokesperson from each group stands up and gives their talk
- Learners then have to vote on which talk had the weakest arguments
- The item or person with the weakest arguments is thrown out of the balloon (the balloon will plummet to the ground if someone or something is not thrown out!)
- The arguments are put forward again and again the weakest is thrown out of the balloon
- Finally the remaining group with the strongest arguments is the winner and remains in the balloon!

Onion Rings

- Make sure you have enough space for this -- you could do it outside
- Divide the class into two
- One half stands in a circle facing outwards; the other half stands in a larger circle around them facing inwards. Each learner should be opposite another learner
- Tell them they have 2-3 minutes to ask and answer as many questions as possible
- Tell the outer circle to move onto the next learner
- Stop when they've come 'full circle'
- This can be used for any functional language and for practicing any language in a more interesting way

Role-play

- Get learners into two groups. One group is the Customer, the other is the Shop Assistant
- Learners plan what they are going to say to their groups
- Then pair one learner from each group together
- The pairs do their role plays
- Go back to the original group and discuss what happened

Class Survey

- Get learners to copy an information table from the board into their notebooks
- Learners then wander around the classroom finding out information from their friends and filling in the table
- Learners go back to their places and report interesting information they find out
- They write up the information for homework or pool all the class information into a class report

You Answer for Me

Resources: Paper, pen and pretend microphone

- Teacher tells students that they are at a chat show and asks for one volunteer to be the chat show host.
- The volunteer comes out and sits at the front.
- Trainer tells students that teacher is the guest and they have to write questions, again in pairs, to give to the host to ask.
- The pairs write their questions and the chat show host collects them.
- Teacher is just about to give the host the microphone when he/she announces that the host is to answer the questions for trainer.
- The chat show host answers the questions for teacher

Survival - A (similar to Pyramid Discussion above)

Ask students what things they would take if they travelled to a friend or relative's home in the South West Islands . Write the items on the board. The list should include some things which could be useful if lost on an uninhabited island.

The list might look something like this:

a watch; a knife; matches; a candle; a torch; paper; a toothpick; a mat; a walking stick; a pen; a mirror; a hat; a blanket.

Put the students into pairs and tell them they are going to visit a friend on one of Palau's South West Islands. They need to travel there by boat. Unfortunately, the boat sinks and they have to swim to a nearby deserted island, but they can only carry 10 of the things listed on the board. In pairs decide which things to leave behind.

After a few minutes – join another pair and tell them they are getting weak and can now only carry 8 items and have to decide which 2 to jettison.

If the students are enjoying it you can get them in groups of 8 with only 4 things.

Class feedback as to why they made their particular choices.

Or:

Survival - B (similar to Pyramid Discussion above)

- Divide the learners into groups of 5 or 6
- Describe a survival scenario to them. E.g. crashed in a jungle miles from anywhere
- Give them the task: they have to decide which 8 items out of a possible 20 they would take with them on their search for help and why. The teacher needs to decide what the 20 items are or the class can brainstorm 20 items and this can be written on the board
- Either each group presents their reasoning to the class and the class votes on the best choices or they are regrouped as in a jigsaw task and they have to agree on 8 things to take
- As a follow-up task, the group can make up the story of their trip and then be interviewed by reporters

Activity 8 – Reflection

Think about the tasks that you participated in during the entire Speaking module – both the content of them and how they were delivered:

- Back to the Board
- Jigsaw Reading
- Find someone who . . .
- Running Dictation
- Peer Teaching (all of the five activities)

Are there tasks in your textbook that you could do in this way? Do you know of other communicative speaking activities either in your textbook or elsewhere? Share them with a partner, then your group.

Could you deliver these activities in your own classes? Why? Why not?

Make some notes below:

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Assignment (optional – for existing teachers and/or student teachers on practicum)

Your assignment is to try out a new idea/activity from this module with one of your classes. You should then reflect on your lesson. Use the following guidelines for your assignment.

1. Where appropriate, make up materials for the new idea/activity you will be trying out, focusing on the particular language points and learning outcomes you are aiming for.
2. Write your whole lesson plan, including your new idea/activity on the lesson plan document, then teach the lesson. After the lesson, write a reflection including: i. What went well? Why?; ii. What didn't go well? Why?; and iii. What changes will I make next time?
3. Attach your lesson plan (including list of materials used) and your reflection.

Submit your assignment by handing/emailing it to your trainer. The deadline for completion of this assignment is

Glossary

Concept	Definition
information gap	This is a speaking activity where each participant needs information from the other. Typically each has half the information and they need to ask for the information. It can also be between more than 2 people
peer check	This is a method of checking answers. Before eliciting feedback from the whole class the teacher will often tell pupils to check their answers together in pairs or groups. This builds confidence and will mean the teacher gets more response to elicitations
remote monitoring	This is a method of monitoring classes, where the teacher remains in the background and monitors unobtrusively. The teacher will then give feedback after the task is finished
role-play	This is a speaking activity that requires the participants to adopt roles. It very often has role cards and requires preparation for the role. Examples could include a shopkeeper and customer; a debate between business people and environmentalists; a call centre staff member and a member of the public
speech genre	This is a variety of speech found in a particular place, for a particular purpose or result, between particular people, using a particular channel (i.e. face-to-face; mobile). Examples could include chatting with a friend, giving instructions, making a presentation or telling a joke

Recommended Reading

- **How to Teach Speaking**, Scott Thornbury, Pearson Longman, 2005
- **Ship or Sheep: An Intermediate Pronunciation Course**, Ann Baker, Cambridge, 2006
- **Tree or Three: An Elementary Pronunciation Course**, Ann Baker, Cambridge, 2006
- **Pronunciation Pairs: An Introduction to the Sounds of English - Teacher's Manual**, Ann Baker & Sharon Goldstein, Cambridge, 2008
- **Sounds Easy: Phonics, Spelling & Pronunciation**, Sharon Bassano, Alta, 2002
- **Pronunciation Activities: Vowels in Limericks from Adam to Ursula**, Egelberg, Arlene, Pro Lingua, 1999
- **Discussion Starters series**, Keith Folse, Michigan University Press, 1996-2002,
- **Simple Speaking Activities**, Jill & Charles Hadfield, Oxford, 1999
- **English Pronunciation in Use: Intermediate**, Mark Hancock, Cambridge, 2003
- **Pronunciation Games**, Mark Hancock, Cambridge, 1995
- **Pronunciation Practice Activities: A Resource Book for Teaching English Pronunciation**, Martin Hewings, Cambridge, 2004
- **How to Teach Pronunciation**, Gerald Kelly, Pearson Longman, 2000
- **Keep Talking: Communicative Fluency Activities for Language Teaching**, Friederike Kilppel, Cambridge, 1984
- **JUST: Listening & Speaking - Elementary & Upper- Intermediate**, Lethaby, Harmer & Avcedo, Marshall Cavendish Education, 2005-2007
- **English Pronunciation in Use: Elementary**, Jonathan Marks, Cambridge 2007
- **Newspaper Articles to Get Teenagers Talking**, Peter Dainty, Scholastic, 2006

www.onestopenenglish.com – The website has a huge speaking skills section. Some examples are below:

<http://www.onestopenenglish.com/section.asp?sectionType=listsummary&catid=59410> – selection of lesson plans and activities for speaking skills

<http://www.onestopenenglish.com/section.asp?sectionType=listsummary&catid=59720&docid=153697> – series of articles by Adrian Tennant giving useful tips for teaching speaking

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk> – This website also has a number of articles on this topic. Some examples are below:

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/articles/teaching-speaking-skills-2-overcoming-classroom-problems> – a practical article on overcoming problems in teaching speaking

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/articles/teaching-speaking-skills-1> – a practical article with plenty of tips for teaching speaking

Additional Material

Activity 4 – Answer Sheet

Text A	What is our main aim in practicing oral English according to the introductory paragraph? To develop learners' ability to communicate freely and spontaneously in English
Text B	Conversation B is probably 2 people talking in private, face-to-face and reacting to each other. How is conversation A described? Public formalized interaction dominated by the teacher and with the whole class listening
Text C	Does the writer think that traditional structure practice is a complete waste of time? Why/why not? No, it is useful practice of the structure but on its own it won't prepare learners very well for real communication
Text A	According to conversation B what will the British Council give you? A list of language schools
Text B	In conversation A the attention of the learner is focussed on the language they are using and on getting the structure right. What is the focus on in Conversation B? Conveying a message or the meaning
Text C	What benefit does working in pairs and small groups have for learners speaking ability? Give the opportunity to use language in private, face-to-face interaction
Text A	How many different pieces of advice are there in conversation A? 3
Text B	Conversation A is a controlled exercise where the language is completely predictable. How is conversation B different? Language is unpredictable, speakers have to listen to each other
Text C	How many ways does the writer give giving practice that is controlled but which includes some of the features of real communication? 4
Text A	Give two examples (not 'should') of structures to give advice in conversation B? 'will', 'if', 'could', 'ways of ...ing'
Text B	What two other responses do the writer say the speaker in Conversation B could have used to reply to the speakers' question? 'If I were you', 'I've no idea', 'What's the matter? Don't you like it here?'
Text C	Name two task types that the writer says give learners a purpose for using the language. Two of the following: discussion, games, problem-solving, information gap activities

Activity 4 – Preparing for Communication

Text A:

Our aim in practicing oral English is to develop learners' ability to communicate freely and spontaneously in English. To achieve this aim, we need to ask the following questions: What is real communication like? How is it different from the kind of controlled practice that usually takes place in language classes? How can we bring features of real communication into language practice?

Consider the two examples below. Conversation A shows a controlled practice exercise practicing the structure 'should'. Conversation B shows how the same structure might be used in real communication.

Conversation A	Conversation B
<p>T: I feel tired.</p> <p>S: You should have a rest.</p> <p>T: I feel ill.</p> <p>S: You should see a doctor.</p> <p>T: I feel hungry.</p> <p>S: You should have a sandwich</p>	<p>SS1: I'd like to try and study in Britain for a few months. What do you think I should do?</p> <p>SS2: Well, first of all, you should go and see the British Council. They'll give you a list of language schools in Britain where you could go and study, and they'll also tell you if there are any ways of getting a grant or a scholarship. And then you could try...</p>

As well as being at a more advanced level, there are several ways in which the language in B is different from that in A:

1. In B, the friend giving advice uses not just the single structure 'should', but a whole range of structures ('will', 'could', 'ways of ...ing'), expressing a variety of different functions (giving advice, making predictions, discussing possibilities). In order to communicate, he or she needs to know how to combine different structures together in context.

Text B:

2. In B, the language is unpredictable. The friend uses the structure 'should' but he or she could have replied in many other ways: by using a different structure (e.g. 'If I were you...') or by giving a different response altogether (e.g. 'I've no idea' or 'what's the matter? Don't you like it here?') To continue the conversation, the two speakers have to pay attention and respond to what the other person is saying. In A, the language is almost completely predictable; the responses are more or less fixed, and there is no chance for a conversation to develop.
3. In B, the speakers are using language for a purpose; there are things the first speaker does not know, and that is why he or she is asking the friend's advice. Although of course the speakers need to use structures correctly, their attention is focused on conveying the message, on what they are talking

about, not on the language they are using. In A, the only reason for using language is to practice 'should'—the teacher is not really seeking advice or even pretending to. The practice is 'meaningful' in the sense that learners are aware of the meaning of what they are saying, but their attention is mainly focused on 'getting the structure right' not on the message they are conveying. They do not even have the option of expressing the same message in a different way e.g. 'Why not have a rest?'

4. The two friends in B are probably talking directly to each other in private; at most, there might be one or two other people listening to the conversation or taking part in it. It is a private, face-to-face interaction; the two speakers react to each other and their personalities affect the way the conversation develops. In A the 'conversation' is a public, formalized interaction, dominated by the teacher and with the whole class listening. There is nothing personal about the responses; they will be the same whichever learners make them.

Text C:

This comparison highlights a considerable gap between traditional structural practice and the way we communicate in real life. This does not mean that traditional structural practice is therefore a waste of time; on the contrary, it is a very useful way of practicing the structure 'should'. But it does suggest that this kind of practice alone will not prepare learners very well for real communication in English. This might be achieved by giving practice that is controlled but which also includes some of the features of real communication. The analysis above suggests ways in which this could be done:

- a) By giving practice involving more than just single sentences, so that learners have a chance to use combinations of different functions and structures.
- b) By encouraging learners to give a variety of responses, rather than insisting on one 'set' answer; by encouraging learners to give personal responses; and by doing practice that naturally leads to unpredictable, creative language.
- c) By giving learners a purpose for using language (e.g. through discussion, games, problem solving, information gap activities); and by paying attention to what learners are saying, not only to whether they are using the language correctly.
- d) By organising activities in pairs and small group, to give learners the opportunity to use language in private, face-to-face interaction.

These activities will complement other more structure based practices and should involve your learners in real communication.

Teaching Speaking Skills 1

'I can understand my teacher's English, but when I speak to 'real people' I can't understand them'. This is a comment I'm sure many teachers have heard. While it is a bit of an exaggeration, students clearly feel that classroom-based speaking practice does not prepare them for the real world. Why do students so often highlight listening and speaking as their biggest problems? Partly because of the demands of listening and speaking and partly because of the way speaking is often taught. It usually consists of language practice activities (discussions, information-gap activities etc.) or is used to practice a specific grammar point. Neither teaches patterns of real interaction. So what can we do in the classroom to prepare students for real interaction?

- What do students need?
- Practical suggestions
- What language should I teach?
- How do I get students to use new language
- Further reading

What do students need?

- Practice at using L1 (mother tongue) strategies, which they don't automatically transfer.
- An awareness of formal / informal language and practice at choosing appropriate language for different situations.
- The awareness that informal spoken language is less complex than written language. It uses shorter sentences, is less organized and uses more 'vague' or non-specific language.
- Exposure to a variety of spoken text types.
- The ability to cope with different listening situations. Many listening exercises involve students as 'overhearers' even though most communication is face-to-face.
- To be competent at both 'message-oriented' or transactional language and interactional language, language for maintaining social relationships.
- To be taught patterns of real interaction.
- To have intelligible pronunciation and be able to cope with streams of speech.
- Rehearsal time. By giving students guided preparation / rehearsal time they are more likely to use a wider range of language in a spoken task.

Practical suggestions

- **Transferring L1 strategies**
When preparing for a spoken task, make students aware of any relevant L1 strategies that might help them to perform the task successfully. For example, 'rephrasing' if someone does not understand what they mean.
- **Formal / informal language**
Give students one or more short dialogues where one speaker is either too formal or informal. Students first identify the inappropriate language, then try to change it. Also show students how disorganized informal speech is.
- **Vague language**
Using tapescripts of informal speech, focus on examples of vague language.

- **Different spoken text types**
Draw up a list of spoken text types relevant to the level of your class. Teach the language appropriate for each text type.
- **Interactive listening**
Develop interactive listening exercises. Face-to-face listening is the most common and the least practiced by course books. Any form of 'Live listening' (the teacher speaking to the students) is suitable.
- **Transactional and interactional language**
Raise students' awareness by using a dialogue that contains both. It could be two friends chatting to each other (interactional) and ordering a meal (transactional).
- **Real interaction patterns**
Teach real interaction patterns. Introduce the following basic interactional pattern: Initiate, Respond, Follow-up.
The following interaction could be analyzed as follows:

A: What did you do last night? (Initiate)
B: Went to the cinema (Respond)
A: Oh really? (Follow-up)
What did you see? (Initiate)
B: Lord of the Rings (Respond)
Have you been yet? (Initiate)
A: No it's difficult with the kids (Respond)
B: Yeah of course (follow-up)
- **Understanding spoken English**
After a listening exercise give students the tape script. Using part of it, students mark the stressed words, and put them into groups (tone units). You can use phone numbers to introduce the concept of tone units. The length of a tone unit depends on the type of spoken text. Compare a speech with an informal conversation. In the same lesson or subsequent listening lessons you can focus on reductions in spoken speech, for example, linking, elision and assimilation.
- **Preparation and rehearsal**
before a spoken task, give students some preparation and rehearsal time. Students will need guidance on how to use it. A sheet with simple guidelines is effective.
- Real-life tasks
try to use real-life tasks as part of your teaching.

What language should I teach?

Spoken language is both interactional and transactional, but what should teachers focus on in class? Suggestions include the following:

- When teaching spoken language, focus on teaching longer transactional turns. This is because native speakers have difficulty with them and because students need to be able to communicate information efficiently whether in their country or in a native-speaker country.
- Teach interactional language by using an awareness-raising approach. For example, with monolingual classes by listening to a recorded L1 conversation before a similar L2 recording.

How do I get students to use new language?

Research on Task-based Learning shows that giving students preparation time significantly increases the range of language used in the performance of the task, whereas the accuracy of the language is not as influenced. If this is so, then it seems sensible to give students preparation time when encouraging them to use new language.

- Imagine you have been working on the language that would be useful for the following task: 'Having a conversation with a stranger on public transport'. You have now reached the stage where you wish students to perform the task. Rather than just give students 10 minutes to prepare and rehearse the task, give students guided preparation time.

A simple preparation guide for the task could be a few key questions like:

How will you start the conversation?

What topics are you going to talk about?

How are you going to move from one topic to another?

How are you going to end the conversation?

After the preparation stage, students give a 'live performance'. This can be in front of the class or group to group in a large class. This increases motivation and adds an element of real-life stress.

- Another way of encouraging students to use new language in a communication activity is to make a game out of it. Give students a situation and several key phrases to include. They get points for using the language.

Similarly, when working on the language of discussion, you can produce a set of cards with the key phrases/exponents on. The cards are laid out in front of each group of 2/3/4 students. If a student uses the language on a particular card appropriately during the discussion, he/she keeps the card. The student with the most cards wins. If he/she uses the language inappropriately, then he / she can be challenged and has to leave the card on the table.

Source: <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/articles/teaching-speaking-skills-1>

Teaching Speaking Skills 2: Overcoming Classroom Problems

This article is written for teachers with large classes of students who have encountered some of the following or similar problems during speaking activities in their classroom.

- Why should we teach speaking skills in the classroom?
 - Motivation
 - Speaking is fundamental to human communication
- Dealing with the arguments against teaching speaking skills
 - Student's won't talk or say anything
 - When students work in pairs or groups they just end up chatting in their own language
 - When all the students speak together it gets too noisy and out of hand and I lose control of the classroom
- Conclusion
- References

Why should we teach speaking skills in the classroom?

Motivation

Many students equate being able to speak a language as knowing the language and therefore view learning the language as learning how to speak the language, or as Nunan (1991) wrote, "success is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the (target) language." Therefore, if students do not learn how to speak or do not get any opportunity to speak in the language classroom they may soon get de-motivated and lose interest in learning. On the other hand, if the right activities are taught in the right way, speaking in class can be a lot of fun, raising general learner motivation and making the English language classroom a fun and dynamic place to be.

Speaking is fundamental to human communication

Just think of all the different conversations you have in one day and compare that with how much written communication you do in one day. Which do you do more of? In our daily lives most of us speak more than we write, yet many English teachers still spend the majority of class time on reading and writing practice almost ignoring speaking and listening skills. Do you think this is a good balance? If the goal of your language course is truly to enable your students to communicate in English, then speaking skills should be taught and practiced in the language classroom.

Dealing with common arguments against teaching speaking skills in the classroom

Students won't talk or say anything

One way to tackle this problem is to find the root of the problem and start from there. If the problem is cultural, that is in your culture it is unusual for students to talk out loud in class, or if students feel really shy about talking in front of other students then one way to go about breaking this cultural barrier is to create and establish your own classroom culture where speaking out loud in English is the norm. One way to do this is to distinguish your classroom from other classrooms in your school by arranging the classroom desks differently, in groups instead of lines etc. or by decorating the walls in English language and culture posters. From day one teach your students classroom language and keep on teaching it and encourage your students to ask for things and to ask questions in English. Giving positive feedback also helps to encourage and relax shy students to speak more. Another way to get students motivated to speak more is to allocate a percentage of their final grade to speaking skills and let the students know they are being assessed continually on their speaking practice in class throughout the term. A completely different reason for student silence may simply be that the class activities are boring or are pitched at

the wrong level. Very often our interesting communicative speaking activities are not quite as interesting or as communicative as we think they are and all the students are really required to do is answer 'yes' or 'no' which they do quickly and then just sit in silence or worse talking noisily in their L1. So maybe you need to take a closer look at the type of speaking activities you are using and see if they really capture student interest and create a real need for communication.

Another way to encourage your students to speak in English is simply to speak in English yourself as much as possible in class. If you are shy about speaking in English, how can you expect your students to overcome their fears about speaking English? Don't worry if you are not completely fluent or don't have that elusive perfect native accent, as Swain (1985) wrote "We learn to speak by speaking" and that goes for teachers as well as students. The more you practice the more you will improve your own oral skills as well as help your students improve theirs.

When students work in pairs or groups they just end up chatting in their own language.

Is the activity or task pitched at the right level for the students?

Make sure you give the students all the tools and language they need to be able to complete the task. If the language is pitched too high they may revert to their L1, likewise if the task is too easy they may get bored and revert to their L1. Also, be aware of the fact that some students especially beginners, will often use their L1 as an emotional support at first, translating everything word for word to check they have understood the task before attempting to speak. In the case of these students simply be patient as most likely once their confidence grows in using English their dependence on using their L1 will begin to disappear.

Are all the students actively involved and is the activity interesting? If students do not have something to say or do, or don't feel the need to speak, you can be sure it won't be long before they are chatting away in their L1.

Was the timing of the activity good? The timing of a speaking activity in a class can be crucial sometimes. How many teachers have discovered that their speaking activity ended up as a continuation of the students break-time gossip conducted in the L1? After break-time, why not try giving students an activity to calm them down and make them focus before attempting speaking activities that involve groups or pair work. Another way to discourage students speaking in their L1 is to walk around the classroom monitoring their participation and giving support and help to students as they need it. If certain students persist in speaking in the L1 then perhaps you should ask them to stay behind after class and speak to them individually and explain to them the importance of speaking English and ask them why they don't feel comfortable speaking in English in the class. Maybe they just need some extra reassurance or they don't like working with certain students or there is some other problem that you can help them to resolve.

When all the students speak together it gets too noisy and out of hand and I lose control of the classroom

First of all separate the two points a noisy classroom and an out-of-control classroom. A classroom full of students talking and interacting in English, even if it is noisy, is exactly what you want. Maybe you just feel like you are losing control because the class is suddenly student centred and not teacher centred. This is an important issue to consider. Learner-centred classrooms where learners do the talking in groups and learners have to take responsibility for using communicative resources to complete a task are shown to be more conducive to language learning than teacher-centred classes (Long & Richards 1987). Nevertheless, many classrooms all over the world continue to be teacher centred, so the question you have to ask yourself is, how learner centred is my classroom?

Losing control of the classroom, on the other hand, is a different issue. Once again walking around and monitoring the students as they are working in groups can help, as you can naturally move over to the part of the classroom where the noise is coming from and calm the rogue students down and focus them back on the task without disrupting the rest of the students who are working well in their groups. If students really get too rowdy then simply change the pace of the class and type of activity to a more controlled task, for example a focus on form or writing task where students have to work in silence individually. Once the students have calmed down you can return to the original or another interactive group activity.

Conclusion

These are just some of the problems that teachers with large classes face when teaching speaking activities in the classroom. These problems are not new nor are the solutions offered above. Teachers all over the world continue to face the same hurdles, but any teacher who has overcome these difficulties and now has a large class of energetic students talking and working in English in groups together will tell you it is worth all the trial and error and effort at the outset. If you believe in the importance of teaching speaking skills in the classroom but are having difficulties making speaking activities work in your classroom why not contact your local teaching associations or branch of TESOL. Maybe they run workshops for teaching speaking skills, or maybe they can put you in contact with other teachers in similar situations but with more experience teaching speaking skills who will be willing to share their experiences with you.

Source: <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/articles/teaching-speaking-skills-2-overcoming-classroom-problems>