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STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING ORAL ENGLISH IN AN EFL
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Autora:

Sonia Janet Cruz Lascano

Director:

Ing. Luis Aníbal Toro Salazar

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Tema: STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING ORAL ENGLISH
IN AN EFL CLASSROOM

Autora: Sonia Janet Cruz Lascano

Luis Aníbal Toro Salazar, Ing f. _____

DIRECTOR DE TEMA DE INVESTIGACIÓN

Telmo Enrique Viteri Arroyo, Ing. f. _____

DIRECTOR DIPA

Pablo Poveda Mora, Ab.

SECRETARIO GENERAL PUCESA f. _____

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Y RESPONSABILIDAD

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Sonia Janet Cruz Lascano

CI. 180185089-0

DEDICATION

Every step ahead in my life always has a motivation,
it is my family, that is a God's blessing.

RESUMEN

La información contenida en este trabajo de investigación es el resultado de la búsqueda en fuentes bibliográficas, pues considero que hoy en día existe un campo muy amplio conformado por libros, internet, libros electrónicos, ensayos, etc.

La investigación está dividida en tres capítulos. El primero nos presenta una visión general sobre las diferentes metodologías y la manera en que ellas enfocan la enseñanza del “lenguaje oral en inglés” dentro del proceso enseñanza- aprendizaje. El segundo capítulo se refiere a la clasificación de las actividades para practicar ‘hablar en inglés’ de acuerdo con el nivel de suficiencia y la frecuencia con que éstas ocurren en el aula.

Han sido identificadas cuatro clases de actividades. El capítulo Tres expone ejemplos de estrategias que han sido utilizadas en este campo y otras que podrían ser usadas.

Como fuentes de información principales he tomado las publicaciones de autores importantes como Scott Thornbury (2005), Diane Larsen Freeman (2000), y lo más actualizado que se puede encontrar en internet para poder presentar un compendio útil y contemporáneo.

Mi aporte es información que en la práctica puede ayudar a quien se inicie en el conocimiento de *‘cómo enseñar a hablar en inglés’*.

ABSTRACT

All the information in this research is the result of bibliographical resources, considering that today there is a wide field of information from books, internet, e-books, papers, etc.

The researching is presented in three chapters, the first one is concerning to a general view about the different methodologies and the way the focus speaking in the teaching-learning process. The second chapter refers to the classification of the speech activities according to the level of proficiency and the frequency that the speech occurs in the classroom. Four groups of activities were identified. Chapter three has to do with samples of strategies that has been use and others that can be used in the classroom.

The sources has been publications from authors like Scott Thournbury (2005), Diane Larsen_Freeman(2000), and the most updated information from the internet, in order to present useful content.

I think that you can find practical information that helps to someone who attempts to know how to improve teaching speaking.

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CHAPTER I

1.1. Speaking as a skill

Oral language is a foundation of all language development and, therefore, the foundation of all learning. It is the base for the other language strands. Through speaking and listening, students learn concepts, develop vocabulary, and perceive the structure of the English language--essential components of learning.

Students who have a strong oral language base have an academic advantage. School achievement depends on students' ability to display knowledge in a clear and acceptable form in speaking as well as writing.

Oral language is a powerful learning tool for communicating thinking and learning. Speech is a vehicle to link individuals to society. Exchanges students have with their peers and teachers can help them come to know the world in more personal and socially responsible ways. When students talk about their ideas, they clarify their thinking. They can figure out what they believe and where they stand on issues.

To ensure that speech occupies a central position in the classroom, it must be planned for and directed. When given status, support, and value, it can turn a classroom into a vibrant, interactive environment for learners.

. Oral language should be a condition of learning, rather than a discrete subject area or a separate lesson in an English language arts program. Oral language can grow naturally out of other activities. Oral language is best developed through meaningful use in a trusting environment taking into account students' cultural backgrounds.

The first thing to keep in mind is that when we are helping our language students learn to speak English, we are not actually teaching them to speak. Unless they are infants, they already know how to do that. What we are really helping them with falls into three categories:

1.1.1. Improving fluency (speaking smoothly)

1.1.2. Improving pronunciation (saying words properly)

1.1.3. Improving enunciation (Saying words/phrases clearly - I think this includes word and sentence intonation)

Some would say that vocabulary, grammar, and cultural usage also fall into how we teach speaking, but I'd say that while they are critical, they are not only in the domain of speaking. Speaking is about using our mouth and vocal cords to make sounds that people understand as language. It certainly involves other elements like grammar and vocabulary, but they aren't the core of it.

So, back to the main question of how to teach speaking. Let's look at each of the three elements I mentioned above.

1.1.1. Improving Fluency

Fluency comes from practice - plain and simple. However it needs to be practice that involves extended use of the language and use of extended sentences. You can not build fluency by repeating single words or short phrases. Fluency at its heart relates to being able to speak for longer periods of time in a smooth way. Broadly speaking, here are a few things that can help build fluency:

- speeches or presentations
- group discussions
- role plays
- negotiations and debates
- interviews and meetings
- chatting in small groups

1.1.2. Improving Pronunciation

Pronunciation is the ability to say words properly with the correct sounds in the correct places. This is a skill that can take a VERY long to develop, but with consistent work and practice, it can be done. There are two keys to proper pronunciation 1) tons of native speaker input and 2) tons of speaking by the learner with native speakers. However, practice and lessons that target specific trouble areas can make a huge difference in a student's ability to deal with issues in pronunciation.

- working on specific vowels

- working on trouble consonants (e.g. th for French speakers)
- Working on understanding movement and location of mouth and tongue when making sounds.

1.1.3. Improving Enunciation

Teachers play an important role in structuring the type of classroom environment that will promote effective oral language development. They can establish a classroom tone which promotes openness, respect, and trust. Students should feel some ownership in the classroom voice. Language use is a natural part of this learning environment where purposeful talk is seen as an important means to language learning.

Teachers are seen as role models for language, demonstrating the standard for language use. However, at the same time, they should recognize that students bring different dialects into the classroom. It is important to accept students' language and to extend that language so that students develop flexibility and competence.

At the same time teachers as language diagnosticians. By listening to their students talk, teachers can come to know the students, their interests, and their language needs. They learn what students know, how they learn, and the language and experiences they bring to the classroom. Based on this information, teachers can provide for more stimulating and meaningful language activities.

An important goal in a language arts program is to create purposeful and varied activities that will develop individuals who can comfortably and competently participate in a range of situations requiring speech. Hook and Evans (1982) identified four overall kinds of speaking situations that students should encounter, not only in the classroom but in their adult lives. The types of speech range from personal, exploratory speech to more formal, ceremonial speech. Students need to develop fluency and confidence in their oral language through experiences in many types of speech situations, forward we will describe what kinds of groups and activities arouse in this situations.

1.2. Different Language Teaching Methods focused on Speaking.

1.2.1. The Grammar Translation Method.- The fundamental purpose of learning a foreign language is to be able to read literature written in the target language .To do this students need to learn about the grammar rules about vocabulary of the target language, then it is unexpected that students use the oral language to communicate in class, the monitor –the teacher- is the authority and they are limited to listen to, to translate and to read ,to learn about the grammatical rules but not producing speech in class.

1.2.2. The direct Method.- This method has one very basic rule “No translation is allowed” ,the students has to convey the meaning directly in the target language through the use of demonstrations and visual aids with no recourse to the students’ native language.

Since the teacher uses the target language to ask something like any questions or to give instructions, the students have to replay in the target language, allowed them to produce speech in order to communicate with the teacher. Lessons should contain some conversational activity; it means some opportunity to use language in real context.

In Direct Method teachers also work in `pronunciation and self-correction which facilitates language learning.

Considering that Direct Method includes much more activities with nousing the student’s native language there are advantages over the Grammar Translation Method.

But we will see that later arouse new methods that foster oral activities in the classroom.

1.2.3. The Audio- Lingual Method.

This methods drills students in the use of grammatical sentence patterns. It is expected that students acquire the sentence patterns of the target language was

through conditioning –helping learners to respond correctly to stimuli through shaping and reinforcement. Learners could overcome the habits of their native language and form the new habits required to be target language speakers.

In a classroom in which the Audio-Lingual Method is working, teacher monitor the activities ,most of them has to deal with repetitions of dialogs, sometimes he stop and uses a backward build-up drill (expansion drill) .The purpose is to break down the troublesome sentence into smaller parts. The teacher starts with the end of the sentence and has the class repeat the last two words, since they can do this, the teacher adds a few more words, and the class repeats this expanded phrase. Little by little the teacher build up the phrases until the entire sentence is being repeated.

The same dialog allows the teacher to move next to a higher phase of the lesson, students must substitute single-slots, then students repeat a word or phrase in the original sentence with the new one that the teacher gives them.

A strong tool in this method is speaking, even it is not a student's production, but it is important that they acquire the basic structures in making sentences that will allow them to advance to more complex text or dialogues.

1.2.4.. The Silent Way

The problem with students learning through Audio- Lingual method (since it is still practiced today) is the inability to readily transfer the habits they had mastered in classroom to communicative use outside it.

The Silent Way method (Caleb Gattegno) did not stem directly from the Cognitive Approach, it shares certain principle with it. For example one of the basic principles of the Silent Way is that “Teaching should be subordinating to learning “, In other words Gattegno believed that to teach means to serve the learning process rather than to dominate it. He focused at language learning from the perspective of the learner by studying the way babies and young children learn, he concluded that we learn by mobilized our inner resources (our perception, awareness, cognition, imagination, intuition, creativity, etc). Then in this process we integrate into ourselves whatever

“new” that we create, and we use it as a stepping stone for the further learning. It is a communicative method that has to use oral communication as a strong tool.

The students are who create the new expressions, based on something they already know and build from that to the unknown. Languages share a number of features, sounds are the most basic. The teacher gives them only what help is necessary...Language is not repeated after a model. Students need to develop their own “inner criteria” for correctness, to trust and to be responsible for their own production all four skills are worked on from the beginning of the lesson, although there is a sequence in that students learn to read and write what they have already produced orally.

1.2.5. Desuggestopedia

This Method claims that the reason for our inefficiency in teaching-learning English is that we set up psychological barriers to learning: We fear that we will be unable to perform, that we will be limited in our ability to learn, that we will fail (Georgi Lozanov).

One of the ways the students’ mental reserves are stimulated is through integration of fine arts, an important contribution to the method made by Evelyn Gateva.

One of the principles is that “Learning is facilitated in a cheerful environment”, students can learn from what is present in the environment, and even their attention is not directed to it. (“Peripheral learning”).

The dialog that students learn contains language they can use immediately, and music is very important, songs allow to freeing the speech muscles and evoking positive emotions. The teacher should present and explain the grammar and vocabulary but not dwell on them; sometimes he can focus in certain topics before to return to the whole text again. Communication takes place on “two planes”, on one the linguistic message is encoded; and on the other are factors which influence the linguistic message. On the conscious plane the students attends to the language; on

the subconscious plane the music suggests that learning is easy and pleasant. When there is a unity between conscious and subconscious learning is enhanced.

The fine arts (music, art and drama) enable suggestion to reach the subconscious. The arts are the mean to practice speech and the use of new vocabulary. Sometimes the games handle the conscious attention of the learner not focus on linguistics forms but rather on using the language. Learning can be fun.

Speaking communicatively is emphasized, in fact, it is believed that students will learn best if their conscious attention is focused not on the language forms, but on using the language. Students also read in the target language and write imaginative compositions.

1.2.6. Community language learning

The method advises teachers to consider their students as “whole persons”, it means teachers consider not only their student’s intellect, but also have some understanding of the relationship among students’ feelings, physical reactions, instinctive protective reactions and desire to learn.

It is believed that a way to deal with the fears of students is for teachers to become “language counselors”. A language counselor does not mean someone trained in psychology; it means someone who is skillful understander of the struggle students face as they attempt to internalize another language. The teacher who can understand can indicate his acceptance of the student. By understanding students’ fear and being sensitive to them, he can help students overcome their negative feelings and turn them into positive energy to further their learning.

Sometimes the students are assertive, as when they are having a conversation. At these times, the teacher facilitates their ability to express themselves in the target language. He physically removes himself from the circle; thereby encourage students to interact with one another. At other times in the lesson, the teacher is very obviously in charge and providing direction. At all times initially, the teacher structures the class; at later stages, the teacher may assume more responsibility for

this. As Radin and Tranel have observed the Community Language Learning Method is neither student -centered, non teacher-centered, but rather teacher-student-centered, with both being decision –makers in class.

Building a relationship with and among students is very important, in a trusting relationship, any debilitating anxiety that students feel can be reduced, thereby helping students to stay open to the learning process. Students can learn from their interaction with each other as well as their interaction with the teacher. A spirit of cooperation, not competition can prevail.

Community Language Learning emphasizes pronunciation patterns and vocabulary based on the language the students have generated. The most important skills are understanding and speaking the language at the beginning, with reinforcement through reading and writing.

1.2.7. Total Physical Response

In TPR the use of commands is very important to direct behavior .The commands are given to get students to perform an action. The action makes the meaning of the command clear. At first for clarify meaning the teacher performs the action with the students .The student’s actions tell the teacher whether or not the students understand.

Teachers who use TPR believe in the importance of having their students “enjoy” this experience in learning to communicate in a foreign language. In fact, TPR was developed in order to reduce the stress people feel when study foreign languages and thereby encourage students to persist in their study beyond a beginning level of proficiency.

The way to do this is to base foreign language learning upon the way the children learn their native language. At some point, some students will be “ready to speak”. At that point there will be a role reversal with individual students directing the teacher and the other students.

The teacher interacts with the whole group of students and with individual students. Initially the interaction is characterized by the teacher speaking and the students responding nonverbally. Later on the students become more verbal and the students and the teacher responds nonverbally.

Students perform the actions together. Students can learn by watching each other. At some point, however, those students must demonstrate their understanding of the commands in order to retain them. As students begin to speak, they issue commands to one another as well as to the teacher.

Vocabulary and grammatical structures are emphasized over other language areas. These are embedded within imperatives. The imperatives are single words and multi-word chunks. One reason for the use of imperatives is the frequency of occurrence in the speech directed at young children learning their native language.

Understanding the spoken word should precede its production the spoken language is emphasized over written language. Students often do not learn to read the commands they have already learned to perform until after ten or more hours of instruction.

1.2.8. Communicative Language Learning

It was observed that students could produce sentences accurately in a lesson, but could not use them appropriately when genuinely communicating outside of the classroom. Others noted that being able to communicate required more than mastering linguistic structures. Students may know the rules of linguistic usage, but be unable to use the language (Widdowson 1978). It became clear that communication required that students perform certain functions as well, such as promising, inviting, and declining invitations within a social context. In fact, being able to communicate required more than linguistic competence; it required communicative competence –knowing when and how to say what to whom. Such observation contributes to a shift in the field of teaching a foreign language, from a linguistic structure – centered approach to a Communicative Approach (Widdowson 1990).

Communicative Language Teaching aims broadly to apply the theoretical perspective of the Communicative Approach by making communicative competence the goal of language teaching and by acknowledging the interdependence of language and communication. What this looks like in the classroom may depend on how the tenets are interpreted and applied.

In CLT, whenever possible, 'authentic language' –language as it is used in a real context- should be introduced. In an writing or reading activity being able to figure out the speaker's or writers intentions is part of being communicatively competent. Students should work with language at the discourse or suprasentential (above the sentence) level. They must learn about cohesion and coherence, those properties of language which bind the sentence together.

The teacher acts as a facilitator in setting up communicative activities as an advisor during the activities. One of the teacher's major responsibilities is to establish situations likely to promote communication. In communicating, a speaker has a choice not only about what to say, but also how to say, a speaker has the opportunity to learn forms appropriately as an important part of communicative competence.

The most obvious characteristic of CLT is that almost everything is done is done with a communicative intent. Students use the language a great deal through communicative activities such as game, role plays, and problem-solving tasks.

Activities that are truly communicative, according to Morrow (in Johnson and Morrow 1981), have three features in common: information gap, choice, and feedback. An information gap exists when one person in an exchange knows something the other person does not. The speaker has a choice of what she will say and how she will say it. If the exercise is tightly controlled so that students can only say something in one way, the speaker has no choice and the example, if a student must replay to her neighbor's question in the same way as her neighbor replied to someone else's question, then she has no choice of form and content, and real communication does not occur.

True communication is purposeful. A speaker can thus evaluate whether or not his purpose has been achieved based upon the information she receives from his listener. If the listener does not have an opportunity to provide the speaker with such feedback, then the exchange is not really communicative. Forming questions through a transformation drill may be a worthwhile activity , but is it not keeping with CLT since a speaker will receive no response from a listener, so is unable to assess whether her question has been understood or not.

Students work on all of four skills from the beginning. Just as oral communication is seen to take place through negotiation between speaker and listener, so too is meaning thought to be derived from the written word through an interaction between and the reader and the writer. The writer is not present to receive immediate feedback from the reader, of course, but rather tries to understand the writer's intentions and the writer writes with the reader's perspective in mind. Meaning does not, therefore, reside exclusively in text, but rather arises through negotiation between the reader and writer.

Judicious use of the students' native language is permitted in CLT. However whenever possible, the target language should be used not only during communicative activities, but also for explaining the activities to the students or in assigning homework. The students learn from these classroom management exchanges, too, and realize that the target language is a vehicle for communication, not just an object to be studied.

Techniques and materials associated with CLT are: authentic materials: newspapers, magazines, weather forecast, timetables, radio or TV broadcast; scrambled sentences, language games, picture story trip, role play.

CHAPTER II

2.1. Activities by different types of speech

The activities following described go from the basis to the more complicated and advance. Because the experiences in Groups I and II on the following pages are the basis for more formal speech activities, students should have many experiences with these before experiencing those listed in Groups III and IV.

Group I -- Activities for often-used types of speech: inner speech, conversation, talking circles, question and answer, discussion (both small group and whole class), storytelling, oral interpretation.

Group II -- Activities for less-used types of speech: introduction, interview, panel discussion, seminar, business meeting, formal speech, illustrated talk, announcement

Group III -- Activities for more limited types of speech: debating and dramatization (role playing, improvisation, choral reading/speaking, readers theatre, play reading)

Group IV -- Activities for primarily professional types of speech: special and vocational speeches (e.g., toasts, election speeches, valedictorian speeches, introductory speeches, acceptance speech.

2.1.1. Activities for often-used types of speech. Group I

In the classroom students use informal talk to make their thinking explicit to themselves as well as to others. They also use it to assimilate new concepts and knowledge before attempting more technical and formal language use. Teachers also promote talk to build classroom relationships. By talking in pairs, in small groups, and in whole class discussion, students learn to co-operate and collaborate.

Underlying all other speech activities, inner speech is important for learning, serving as a mediator between thought and external speech. Walter (1989) suggests that one way teachers can assist learning is by encouraging the "quality and quantity of interior dialogue--the private talking with oneself that clarifies thought and allows rational discourse with others" (p. 33). Students should be aware of their speech

processes and, therefore, able consciously to clarify and extend their learning. Whatever the language activity, teachers need to encourage students to be aware of the potential of inner speech in their learning. Simple statements, such as, Put it in your own words, Talk it out, Tell me what you're thinking, encourage the development of inner speech and form the base for other speech activities.

The social interchange of thoughts. Information or feelings between people is 'dialogue' (conversation). In life and in the classroom, conversation is used to establish self-esteem, build relationships, assess feelings, and seek information. While conversation can be difficult to structure, there are times that focused conversation should be encouraged in the classroom. Students can productively converse about such topics as assignments, literature, film and television, and current issues. Good conversation sets the tone for more structured discussion.

Tchudi and Mitchell (1989) give the following suggestions for using partnerships and dialogues:

- Collaborative writing: Students working together as co-authors on a piece of writing share ideas, coach each other, and serve as peer editors and proofreaders, producing a stronger piece of writing than either student might produce alone.
- Mini-debates: Students take opposite sides of an issue and discuss it either for themselves or for an audience.
- Interviews: Students can interview each other about an area of expertise or, as a team, interview an outside expert. Students should realize that interviews simply are structured conversations.
- Response to literature: Students read and work out their interpretation of a literary selection.

A useful method of getting full participation from a class without putting any individual on the spot is through a strategy called Think-Pair-Share. This strategy allows for individual reflection prior to responding.

- Teachers pose a question requiring abstract thought (e.g., what are the implications of raising the driving age to twenty-one?).
- Students think and jot down a response.
- Pairs are formed and they talk about their responses with a partner.
- As a class, they then share responses

2.1.1.1. Talking Circles

Are useful when students need to share feelings or when the topic under consideration has no right or wrong answer. Students are seated in a circle. One student holds an item such as a small stone while speaking. Only the student holding the object is allowed to speak. When finished, the student passes the item clockwise to the next person. This procedure is followed until all participants have had an opportunity to speak. Any participant who does not wish to speak may pass and silence is an acceptable response. Comments that put down others or oneself (e.g., "I don't think anyone will agree with me, but ..." or "I'm not very good at ...") should be discouraged.

2.1.1.2. Discussions

Consist of a group of students exchanging information, opinions, or experiences and working toward a common goal or adding to common knowledge. Discussions are an effective means of helping students learn to express themselves in small groups or whole class settings. They are usually more structured than conversations.

Teachers need to be aware of the questions they ask during whole class discussion. In addition, teachers must listen carefully to students' responses. To ensure that whole-class discussions do not become teacher monologues, consider the following:

- Questions should reflect all levels of thinking.
- Questions should be well thought-out and engaging.
- Questions should allow for expansion and elaboration.
- Questions should be directed so all students can participate.
- Questions and subsequent responses should be followed by appropriate wait time.
- Questions should cause students to draw upon previous knowledge.

- Questions should cause students to give reasons or provide evidence.
- Questions should also come from students, and students should be encouraged to speak to each other as well as the teacher.

In small group discussions each student has many more opportunities to talk and be listened to than in whole-class discussions. Because students must take responsibility for their group's learning, group work develops independence. It fosters and enhances skills in collaboration and allows a teacher to interact more closely and more frequently with individual students. Co-operating effectively in small groups is a life skill.

To ensure that group discussions are as effective as possible, teachers should consider the following:

- Students should have a clear reason for small-group discussions. If the group is to discuss a subject, that subject should be clear. Discussion guides can provide additional guidance.
- The group should be of a manageable size. Usually a group of five is large enough for good interaction and small enough for efficient management.
- If the group is to be organized with definite roles and responsibilities, these roles should be clear to all members, whether it is the teacher or the students who make the assignments. Over the course of a semester or year, students should have the opportunity to experience a variety of group roles.
- The group should establish a sense of how to conduct its business most efficiently. It should establish both procedure and degree of formality.
- All members should work for the good of the group in the interest of accomplishing the task.
- The group should have some sense of how long it will hold its discussion and what it will do with its accomplishments (Hook & Evans, 1982).

Numerous methods are available to encourage effective small group discussions. Among them are the following:

- **Group talk:** This method helps students discuss a given question. Whipple (1975) suggests the following guidelines be given to the students before they

begin their discussions. A tape recorder can be used to monitor the discussions.

Starting Rules:

1. Read today's question and tell yourself what it means.
2. Discuss its meaning; tell others what you think the question means.
3. Decide on one meaning; agree on the meaning before you start answering the question.

Discussion Rules:

4. Contribute; give your thoughts on the question.
5. Be relevant; stick to the subject.
6. Listen; try to understand what someone else is saying.
7. Respond; comment on what others have said.

Ending Rules:

8. Sum up; help in the summary by trying to remember the main ideas discussed.
9. Evaluate; listen to the playback and comment on how well the Grouptalk rules were followed (Moffett and Wagner, 1983, pp. 87-88).

- Guided Discussion: Literature-based or issue-based discussion sheets can be prepared to guide the group. For example, a literature-based guide such as the following could be used:

Thirty Below

Elizabeth Brewster

The prairie wind sounds colder than any wind I have ever heard.

Looking through frosted windows

I see snow whirl in the street and think how deep all over the country now
snow drifts and cars are stuck on icy roads.

A solitary man walking wraps his face in a woollen mask, turns his back sometimes so as not to front this biting, eye-smarting wind.

Suddenly I see my dead father in an old coat too thin for him the tabs of his cap pulled over his ears, on a drifted road in New Brunswick walking with bowed head towards home.

(Brewster, 1972. Used by permission of Oberon Press.)

- Task:
 - Have one member of the group reread the poem aloud.
 - In the assigned groups, discuss responses to the following questions.
 - Reach group consensus on each response.
 - Record the responses and be prepared to have one group member report them.

Questions:

1. What images came to mind as you read/heard the poem?
2. Trace the poet's thoughts.
3. What is the theme of the poem?
4. What common human feelings are explored in the poem?
5. Is this an effective poem? Why or why not?

Each group member can initial its group's response sheet and share it with the teacher.

An "issue-based" discussion guide such as the following could also be used in conjunction with a theme or as an introduction to a novel such as Robb White's *Deathwatch*.

You are stranded in the desert dressed in summer clothing. In your desperation you have driven fifty miles off the road, and now your car is out of gas. There is nothing around you but cactus and sand, and it is 40 degrees

in the shade. You must try to reach the highway. You can carry only a limited number of things with you.

Look at the list below. Your task is to rank the fifteen items in order of their importance and utility in ensuring your survival. Place 1 by the most important item, 2 by the second most important, and so on through 15, the least important survival item. Consider what you know about the desert in making your decisions. Work individually; then as a group.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| __any part of the car | __first-aid kit |
| __sunglasses | __AM-FM radio |
| __jar of Tang | __lipstick |
| __four Hershey bars | __blanket |
| __map of the area | __slingshot |
| __box of matches | __pair of boots |
| __silk scarf | __Coleman lantern |
| __ten metres of nylon rope | |

(Belgard, 1984, p. 55. Used with permission of the National Council of Teachers of English.).

- Jigsaw: Students are divided into groups of no more than five ("home" groups). They research and become experts on a particular piece of the topic, theme, or issue. They then form new "expert" groups. (Each expert group includes one student from each home group.) Each member shares specific expertise with the others. For example, students could use a jig-saw format to investigate contemporary poetry.
 1. Four poets are chosen to be investigated by the class.
 2. Students form groups of four. This is the home group.
 3. As a group, the students decide which poet each group member will investigate.
 4. Students form expert groups where each of the members is investigating the same poet.

5. Using the anthologies found in the resource centre, students collectively decide on four to eight representative poems by their poet.
 6. Students in each group prepare some background notes on the poet's life, the poet's style, and the poems they have chosen. They decide the best order of presentation of the poems and background information.
 7. Students return to their home group and present a mini-seminar sharing their expertise.
- **Brainstorming:** Brainstorming involves students gathering in groups to solve a problem or generate ideas. The following format can be used:
 1. a topic is given
 2. group is formed
 3. each member presents as many ideas as possible
 4. each member builds on another member's ideas
 5. after a set time, brainstormed ideas are categorized and organized
 6. Results are shared with the whole class.

Brainstorming can be used in numerous situations, including to preview a theme (e.g., "Courage"), or to review a theme or group of literary selections (e.g., choosing ten key selections for a class anthology). Some guidelines for working in groups are listed on the following page.

Working in Groups

Effective group participants exhibit certain traits:

- They listen politely to the viewpoints of others.
- They concentrate on the task at hand without digressing or interrupting other groups or the teacher.
- They discuss issues without arguing too much or rejecting ideas without considering them.
- They share materials with others in the group.
- They accept their roles--chairperson, recorder, monitor, and reporter.
- They are active and positive contributors to the discussion.

- They are active listeners.

2.1.1.3. Storytelling

Is an act of sharing, often as important to the storyteller as to the listener? When people tell someone a good story they release their real language power. Storytelling can come from personal experience, from one's imagination, or from stories heard or read. It involves students by creating a link with peers, with the oral tradition, and with literature. It attunes students to their audience, to the power of language, and to narrative structure. Tanner (1991) provides guidelines for effective storytelling. Students should:

1. Select a story or story segment that lends itself to retelling. Their best choice is a story that has a tightly constructed plot with an interesting beginning, a logical development of episodes, spirited conflict, and a definite climax that brings out a brief, satisfying conclusion.
2. Visualize every scene and character. In their minds they should really "see" what is occurring until they feel they have actually lived that experience.
3. Use simple, powerful language consistent with the story's style. Students should not try to memorize the author's words. They should use their own words, except for a few phrases that they may need to retain to help the "flavour" of the tale. Because words are their only tools for building the story, they should use a rich vocabulary that arouses the imagination.
4. Breathe life into the tale. They should show enthusiasm and spontaneity in their voices, in their bodies, and in their eyes.
5. Create suspense through a varied tone and rate. They should be shown that it is boring to hear everything delivered in the same tone and at the same pace. Variety is necessary to communicate thought and feeling, and to build toward an exciting climax.

6. Use a flexible voice. Students should vocally distinguish between the various people, giants, animals, and monsters that appear frequently in stories. They should use a wide range of pitch, quality, and force. When they turn from character to narrator, they should keep their voices pleasant and pitched for easy listening. They should always articulate clearly so the audience will catch every word (p. 352).
7. Respect the background traditions of the story. Many Indigenous stories, for example, are living and sacred parts of a culture and not intended for public sharing. Only recently have some stories been shared with those outside that specific culture. Before telling such a tale, learn something of the story's importance and background as well as the associated protocol. For example, there are some stories that are to be told only during the winter months.

Some teaching suggestions for storytelling are:

- Students can read and then retell in their own words a story, legend, folktale, or narrative poem using the appropriate tone and some of the dialogue from the selection. Students can tape record their version of the story and share it with younger students.
- Students can read and then retell in their own words a story from a character's point of view that is not the main character in the story.
- Students can review a selection's story line using the "round-robin" technique. One student begins to retell the story until the teacher (or designated student) indicates another student will take over the recitation.
- Students can "sell" a novel to their peers by retelling a chapter or an exciting incident.

2.1.1.4. Reading aloud/oral interpretation

Is reading a work of literature in a way that expresses understanding of the piece. It is reading for meaning and not simply reading words. Oral interpretation should be a frequent part of the language arts program. It provides a great source of pleasure for the reader and listener alike and can dramatically influence students' attitudes about the value of reading literature. In addition, reading aloud encourages effective

listening skills. By reading aloud, teachers can model effective interpretation; however, students should also be given opportunities to read. The following ideas can guide the reading. Students can:

- review the material silently before oral reading, thinking about how they will express the intended meaning through their voice
- express the intent using voice, tone, and rate
- project, ensuring they can be heard by everyone
- use good posture and appropriate gestures to give emphasis to their reading
- Remember that their purpose is to keep their audience interested and entertained.

Some teaching suggestions include the following:

- Students can turn a selection into an oral reading script by using symbols to indicate how a passage should be read:

/ = pause

// = stop

> = softer

< = louder

— = stress

- Students can read aloud from any number of sources or genres--prose, poetry, or plays.
- Students can experiment with dialects by reading regional plays, poems, or stories.
- Students can tape record stories, poems, or plays to be given to elementary schools, hospitals, or libraries.
- Students can select appropriate music and sound effects for a dramatic reading of a selection.
- Students can use Readers Theatre as a group strategy for reading aloud.

2.1.1.5. Assessment of Group I Speech Activities

Speech is fundamental to a person. It is the most personal of the language strands and consequently the one about which teachers need to be particularly sensitive,

especially as far as feedback and assessment are concerned. Assessment is the broad term which refers to collecting information on the progress of students' learning. Evaluation is making a judgement about the information collected relative to the learning objectives. When assessing students' speaking abilities, students and teachers should remember three guiding principles:

- begin with a compliment
- offer a recommendation for improvement
- Conclude with a positive comment.

Most assessment of Group I speech activities will be anecdotal in nature. Both oral and written critiques are of value. Oral critiques have a particular value because the entire class can benefit when standards are shared. Written critiques provide a permanent record of reactions and recommendations. The assessment forms in this section may be used in a variety of ways and adapted to individual purposes.

2.2. Activities for Less-Used Types of Speech. Group II

Group II activities include many speech activities that are found in daily life as well as in the classroom. They are important because they expand students' oral language repertoires.

Students should have some opportunities to practise introducing speakers, as this is a skill frequently used in adult life. The introduction should be brief and interesting. The students' most important job is to tell who is speaking and why. They should include information that will catch the attention of the audience and is complimentary to the speaker. Students should make sure all words are pronounced correctly, especially the speaker's name which should be mentioned at the beginning and at the end.

Some teaching suggestions for introducing speakers include:

- Students can role play introducing a government official (celebrity, author, or a noted professional) to a school assembly. They can include a name, title, and any biographical information they wish. Students should write out their introduction and then deliver it without notes.

- Students can, in pairs, introduce themselves and their partner to another pair of students.
- Students can take the responsibility of introducing a new student to the class.
- Students can write a one to two minute tribute or testimonial to a classmate. The tribute should be personal but not embarrassing.

2.2.1. Interview.

An interview can often be an effective method of obtaining information. Students will be interviewed themselves whenever they apply for work. Many of them will become the interviewers in the future.

When students are involved in research prior to an interview, they should:

1. Find sources. Decide who is the best person to talk to regarding the subject and contact that person. If using the telephone, students should:
 - research the call beforehand--find the name, title, and position of the person to whom they need to speak
 - explain the purpose of the call--have all the relevant material and information at hand
 - be sensitive to tone--speak clearly, slowly, and pleasantly--and consider the interviewee's time line
 - take notes
 - Follow up--often a thank-you note is appropriate.
2. Plan questions ahead of time. Students should decide what they want to know and plan questions that will require elaboration (rather than "yes" or "no"). As well, they should record and sequence questions.
3. Conduct the interview, remembering to:
 - arrive on time
 - ensure that the person being interviewed understands the purpose of the interview
 - ask the interviewee if a tape recorder may be used
 - if writing, make sure direct quotations are recorded accurately
 - let the person being interviewed do most of the talking

- use voice tone, body language, and encouraging comments to show interest
 - ask for clarification if meaning is not clear
 - be polite and sensitive.
4. End the interview by thanking the interviewee.
 5. Synthesize the information collected and organize it for presentation.

The media interview is an important tool for journalists and can be easily used for the study of interviewing techniques.

Most students will participate in job interviews at some point in their lives. The interview gives the employer an opportunity to form a first-hand impression of applicants and, therefore, it is important to create a good impression. Students need to be prepared for a job interview. They should:

1. Research the job. Find out as much as possible about the job beforehand. Anticipate questions that may be asked and formulate answers. Consider questions like the following:
 - Why are you interested in this job?
 - Why do you think you can be successful in this job?
 - What experience do you have that will assist you in this job?
 - What has been your best work experience?
 - Where do you see yourself five years from now?
2. Dress appropriately.
3. Be on time. Go alone. Smile and shake hands firmly with interviewer(s).
4. Listen carefully to the questions asked. Answer thoughtfully. Speak clearly. Use appropriate body language. Do not slouch, chew gum, or smoke.
5. Exhibit confidence in self.
6. Ask questions about the job. Thank the interviewer.
7. Follow up on the interview. Make some notes, evaluate performance, and write a thank-you card.

Some activities for practising interviews are as follows:

- Teachers or students can identify possible jobs using want ads or government publications. With a partner, students list questions that they anticipate may be asked in a particular job interview. They write answers to the questions, then take turns role playing the interview. After each interview, they should review their performance. Students can be chosen to role play good interview technique for the entire class.
- At the beginning of a course, students prepare questions to ask a peer. They interview the person and, with that information, introduce their partner to the class. A variation would have students presenting an award to their partner (e.g., most likely to succeed in the hockey world, the next Oscar-winning actor, the top engineering graduate). Props, such as home made trophies, can be presented.
- Students can role play characters from literature and the media. For example, Oprah interviews Polonius concerning the relationship between Ophelia and Hamlet, or Jay Leno interviews Jem Finch ten years after *To Kill a Mockingbird* ends.
- With a partner, students can prepare and conduct a mock telephone interview with a well-known author, sports figure, or literary character.

2.2.2. Panel discussions

Occur when a group discusses an issue by pooling its knowledge and working towards a solution. Panel discussions encourage the sharing of different views, and a more open-minded attitude than debate. They also allow for audience participation. A panel is usually made up of three to seven people and the format is similar to the following:

1. Opening remarks by the chairperson.
2. Introduction of speakers.

3. Formal presentation by panel members of different points of view or aspects of the issue.
4. Informal exchange of comments, additions, and rebuttals.
5. Audience's questions and comments.

Some teaching suggestions for panel discussions follow:

- Students take a current school or social issue (e.g., school hours, divorce, or unemployment) and research the topic so that they can form a panel discussion to address the issues, their impact, and possible solutions.
- Imagine that a character from literature (e.g., Macbeth or Grendel) has called together the best astrologers to predict the future. Stage a panel discussion in which the astrologers share their predictions, explaining what can be expected. All predictions should relate in some way to the character selected (e.g., time period).

- Students are assigned to a group of five. Each student will research the life, work, and contributions of a given author. Work assignments can be as follows:

Student One: Provide the introduction and biographical information.

Students Two, Three, and Four: Discuss the author's work and critiques of the work.

Student Five: Give an overview of author's contributions and a conclusion.

Students present their findings in a panel format. Time guidelines (e.g., 15-20 minutes per group) are given. Teachers may also ask for a written submission--sources, notes, and outline.

Symposiums are formal public discussions in which individuals present speeches giving their own views on a pre-selected topic or question. The topic is open to debate and the goal of the symposium is to explore the question and to consider various perspectives and possible answers. In contrast with an informal discussion and panel discussion, the participants prepare and present formal speeches based on their independent research, rather than speaking spontaneously in response to questions from the leader or moderator.

Each participant prepares a formal speech based on their research. The moderator introduces the symposium and each speaker, leads the discussions that follow the individual presentations, and summarizes the symposium.

2.2.3. Business meetings

Are structured discussions which lead to group decisions. Most students will be involved in numerous organizations during their lifetimes and will benefit from knowing the basics of parliamentary procedure which allows for meetings to run smoothly and efficiently. Students should be aware that formal meetings usually follow this pattern:

1. Call to order by the chairperson.
2. Approval of agenda and adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting.
3. Business arising from previous meeting.
4. Reports of various committees.
5. New business.
6. Correspondence and announcements.
7. Adjournment by the chairperson.

Students can benefit from learning the terminology of business meetings and practising such aspects as planning an agenda, chairing a meeting, writing minutes, making and amending motions, voting, and addressing the chair. Students must accept responsibility to contribute and listen to the contributions of others. They must strive to stick to the topic at hand and respect the chairperson's authority.

Students often have difficulty with the format of making motions. A motion leads to a group decision through the following process:

1. The person making the motion begins by saying, "I move that ..."
2. A motion requires a "seconder", a person who agrees that this motion should be discussed: "I second the motion."
3. A discussion of the motion follows. Anyone wishing to speak is acknowledged by the chairperson before speaking. Generally, a person is allowed to speak to a motion twice.

4. As the discussion nears an end, the chairperson asks, "Is there any further discussion?" If not, voting follows. Motions are generally voted on by a show of hands. The chairperson votes only if there is a tie.

Robert's Rules of Order or similar documents provide further information on amending and tabling motions

Some teaching suggestions for business meetings are:

- Teachers might organize a class business meeting to decide upon some class action (e.g., changing a rule or procedure). Half the class are participants; the other half writes the minutes. These minutes are then read to the class and constructively criticized.
- Teachers can arrange for students to attend a Student Council or Municipal/Town/City/Band Council meeting. In class, students can critique what they saw and heard.
- Teachers can divide the class into small groups. Each group enters into a role play situation, chooses a chair, and organizes a class presentation to demonstrate one of the following parliamentary procedures:
 1. Electing a temporary chairperson and secretary for a new club.
 2. Forming a committee to draw up a constitution and by-laws.
 3. Calling a meeting to order, reading the minutes, correcting and approving the minutes, and reading the treasurer's report.
 4. Presenting committee reports and voting on their adoption.
 5. Calling for the nomination of officers, closing the nominations, voting by secret ballot.
 6. Amending and tabling a motion.
- Teachers can select a controversial topic for a business meeting, appoint a chairperson to keep order, and privately ask several students to misbehave during the discussion (e.g., speak without being recognized, interrupt other speakers, and wander off topic). After ten minutes, teachers can end the discussion and ask students to comment on the meeting.

2.2.4. A formal speech

Is a spoken essay and, like an essay, it can be used to inform or explain, to persuade, or to entertain. Effective speeches are carefully prepared, thoroughly rehearsed, and energetically delivered. Students should always consider audience, purpose, and situation.

1. Preparation

- Students should choose a topic that meets the requirements of the given assignment, interests them, and, will interest their audience.
- Students should research the topic and determine the amount of material that can be presented in the stipulated time.
- Students should organize their material, ensuring that their speech has an introduction, body, and conclusion. They should use common transitional phrases (e.g., first, another example is, in conclusion) so the audience will be able to follow their train of thought.

2. Rehearsal

- Students should review their speech, paying attention to overall effectiveness and, the small, but important, details of pronunciation and word choice.
- Students should put the speech in the format they will use for presentation (e.g., index cards).
- Students should practise saying their speeches aloud, concentrating on projection, pauses, gestures, pace, and tone.
- Students should critique their speech. They could get a practice audience or tape their speech.

3. Delivery

- Students should begin their speeches by taking deep breaths and looking at their audience. Good posture should be maintained throughout the presentation.
- Students should begin with energy and capture their audience's attention. There are several ways to accomplish this: startling statement, quotation, rhetorical question, short anecdote, and humour.

- Students should practise good delivery: pacing, pausing, articulating, enunciating, maintaining eye contact, and using appropriate volume and pitch.
- Students should remember their audience and speak to it.
- Students should end with power. They might consider one of the following methods of concluding: summary, anecdote, restatement of thesis, example or illustration, call for audience action, quotation, or humour.

2.2.5. An illustrated talk

(Report) involves the coordination of spoken and visual materials. Students might use posters, charts, graphs, slides, video, overhead projector, chalkboard, props, or handouts.

The following guidelines can help make their talk effective:

- Use illustrations only if words alone will not do the job.
- Use only illustrations that can be seen and understood.
- Practise using the illustrations until completely comfortable with them.
- Do not stand between the audience and the illustrations. Speak to the audience, not the illustrations.
- Focus on the words, not the illustrations. Do not try to overwhelm the audience. Do not sacrifice the words for the props.

Some teaching suggestions include:

- Begin by choosing topics with which students are already familiar. However, encourage students to go beyond this comfort zone to explore other possibilities and learn something new. Consideration might be given, for example, to the purpose for a speech. Students might present a speech to inform (e.g., How to Fail as a Speaker), to convince (e.g., Speeches are Good for Teenagers), to move to action (e.g., Improve Your Speech!), or to entertain (e.g., My Moment in the Spotlight).
- Topics can easily parallel what is being read and discussed in the classroom. For example, if investigating careers, students can speak about them; if

reading Canadian literature, students can research and speak about the life and times of an author they were not familiar with before; if exploring the area of science fiction, students can research and speak about a particular aspect of the unknown.

- Teachers can invite guest speakers who will model effective speech or they can show a video of an effective speaker.
- Students can bring an item to class "to sell". They select a slip of paper that indicates their intended audience (e.g., small children, scientists, pet owners, doctors) and deliver their two-minute sales pitch to that audience.
- Students choose a process they can demonstrate (e.g., a card trick, a home repair, pet care) and in three to five minutes demonstrate using an introduction, an explanation, a demonstration, and a conclusion.

2.2.6. An announcement

Is a short statement designed to give information and arouse interest. Announcements are like the leads of news stories in that they answer the five "Ws" (who, what, when, where, and why). As announcements are common in school and out, students can benefit from some experience in this area.

Students should:

- include all necessary facts
- speak slowly and distinctly
- Repeat key information (e.g., date, time, and place) for emphasis.

If using a microphone, students should know microphone technique:

- do not touch the microphone
- keep volume consistent
- maintain appropriate and constant distance from the microphone
- articulate
- use a medium pitched tone
- maintain a normal speaking rate and volume
- Avoid coughing, clearing throat, or shuffling papers.

Some teaching ideas include:

- Students can practise making short announcements urging attendance at given events (e.g., a dance, an exam, a soccer game).
- Students could make announcements related to events in literature (e.g., urging attendance at Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's beheading, the expulsion of the Acadians, Hagar Shipley's funeral).
- Students can write announcements of upcoming events. Each student should leave out pieces of important information (e.g., time, place, or cost). Each student then reads the announcement and asks the listeners to identify what was omitted.

2.2.7. Assessment of Group II Speech Activities

Assessing formal speaking is a complex process. Teachers should be sensitive to the many factors involved in public speaking. Teachers should not expect perfection but should take students from where they are and help them become more effective public speakers. They should consider the purpose of the activity and provide an appropriate amount of feedback for the assignment.

Hook and Evans (1982) suggest a possible method for appraising individuals' contributions to panel discussions that would work well with discussions of almost any type. They suggest that teachers keep a tally sheet and mark each time a student speaks. A plus [+] indicates a helpful contribution, a zero [0] a neutral one, and a minus [-], a contribution that is "digressing, sidetracking, blocking, or overly aggressive" (p. 435). For example,

Student One: 0+++000000

Student Two: ++++

Student Three: 00--0—

Student Four: 000++

2.3. Activities for More Limited Types of Speech. Group III

Group III speech experiences are required during special occasions in life. In English language arts courses, they are used primarily to further the understanding and appreciation of issues.

2.3.1. Debating

Is a discussion of the arguments for and against something and can be either formal or informal. Even two people can have a debate. A useful classroom debate format follows:

1. Decide on a topic and a proposition. For example, "Be it resolved that Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet is relevant to today's youth".
2. Choose four students. Two students take the affirmative. They research and attempt to defend Romeo and Juliet's relevance. The other two students refute the resolution. They attempt to prove that Romeo and Juliet is not relevant.
3. The four students alternate, each presenting speeches of a predetermined time (e.g., five minutes). The order is:
 - first affirmative
 - first negative
 - second affirmative
 - second negative.
4. Each of the four is allowed a few minutes to disprove the other team's arguments. The order is:
 - first negative
 - first affirmative
 - second negative
 - second affirmative.
5. The class may direct questions to the four debaters.
6. A vote is taken.

Debates can be structured so they involve an entire class. Cruchley (1984) developed the following format for a full- class debate:

1. Establish an issue with the class.
2. Divide the class into pro and con. Rearrange the desks to have the two sides face each other.
3. Each student independently records ideas and proofs to justify his/her assigned position. <
4. Begin with the affirmative.

5. Use the following rules:

- Each student is given five points the first time speaking.
- Students get a point for each idea presented.
- Students get two points for each proof cited or example given.
- Points will be deducted if a student speaks without being recognized by the chair, insults the opponents, etc.
- A student may speak only twice.

The chairperson keeps a running tally of points accumulated.

Activities to practise debating might include:

- Students select teams of three or four to debate any of the following: a school issue (e.g., "Be it resolved that the school year be changed"), a youth issue (e.g., "Be it resolved that the driving age be nineteen"), or a social issue (e.g., "Be it resolved that upgraders be charged a fee to attend school").
- Students can place a character from literature "on trial" (e.g., Ralph in *Lord of the Flies*: "Should Ralph be tried?") At the end of the trial students should be polled for their verdicts.
- Students can prepare a "formal" debate using research (e.g., "Be it resolved that immigration policies be changed").

In formal debates, attention must be paid to conventions and time lines.

2.3.2. Drama

Can play an important role in the language arts classroom. Through imaginative role playing, and voice and movement exercises, students can use drama as a basis for learning. They can express themselves, experiment with new ideas, respond to situations, develop understanding, concentrate, and gain confidence.

2.3.2.1. Role playing and improvisation are the bases of much drama.

Choral reading, readers theatre, and play reading can all grow from them. Role playing is pretending that one is another person. Students attempt to think, act, speak, and react as they think that person would. An improvisation is a dramatic representation that has been composed and presented on the spur of the moment.

There is no script and the direction the improvisation takes depends upon the students' interpretation of character. Role playing and improvisation may arise from literary selections (e.g., Dracula meets Lady Macbeth), or they may arise from issues (e.g., a clerk accuses a teenager of stealing).

There are many possibilities for role playing and improvisation in the language arts. For example:

- During the reading of a selection, students can improvise their predictions of what will happen next to the characters.
- If studying a particular theme or issue, students can role play different situations that would demonstrate that theme or issue.
- If studying a particular selection, students, in pairs or small groups, can role play a situation similar to the story. Teachers provide the scenario. If students are studying Ernest Buckler's "First Born Son", for example, teachers could provide the following situation: Your parents want you to stay on the farm but you want to move to Calgary. You love your parents, but ... Improvise the scene.
- Students can write, prepare, and deliver monologues of characters (e.g., Malcolm recalling his father's murder, Bob remembering his last climb with David, Walsh thinking through what he is going to tell his wife).
- Students can select passages in which different people talk about the same experience (e.g., living in an internment camp, living through a snow storm, receiving an unexpected gift). Each reader assumes the personality of a character and improvises a new scene.

2.3.2.2. Choral reading

Is oral reading in unison with others? (This activity is called choral speaking when students recite rather than read a selection.) Choral reading works particularly well with poetry. Participation in choral reading helps students improve their literary interpretation and oral reading as they practise their articulation, breathing, and vocal flexibility. They learn to co-operate as their voices blend or harmonize with others. As students select a piece of literature and prepare it for presentation, they need to consider four questions in order to produce the desired interpretation:

- What should the tempo be?
- Where should we pause?
- Where should we raise/lower our voices?
- Which words should be stressed?

Three possible choral reading/speaking arrangements for poetry are:

- Choral Refrain: The leader reads each line and the group repeats it, or the leader reads the main part of the poem and the group reads the refrain or chorus in unison. "Barbara Allen", "Stolen Child", and "Blow, Blow Thou Winter Wind" lend themselves to this method.
- Antiphonal: The class divides into two or more groups and each group reads one part of the poem. "Psalm 24", "Lord Randall", and "Molly Malone" lend themselves to this arrangement.
- Cumulative: A cumulative effect is created by adding voices as the poem is read. One student or one group reads the first line or stanza, and another student or group joins as each additional line or stanza is read. "The Creation", "Jazz Fantasia", and "Chicago" lend themselves to this format.

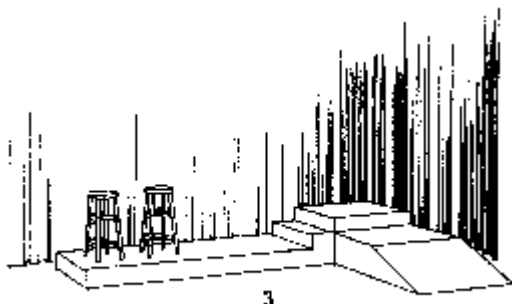
Students can explore different combinations of these patterns.



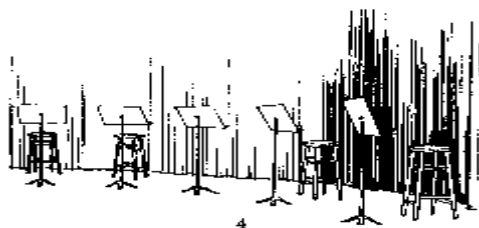
1



2



3



4(Tanner, 1991, p. 344. Used with permission of Clark Publishing Co.)

Readers theatre is a dramatic form in which students read aloud from scripts. Ideas and emotions are conveyed through vocal expression with a minimal use of props and gestures. The focus is on the vocal rather than the visual. Readers theatre benefits both audience and performers. The audience is stimulated intellectually and emotionally by the performance; the performers are challenged to use their imagination and voice. Stories, diaries, essays, poems, plays, and novel segments lend themselves to readers theatre. Because it does not rely on scenery or other visual props, readers theatre can be performed anywhere. It can be staged in a number of ways. See the examples beside the text.

Readers theatre can be very useful to English language arts teachers because it presents literature without all the complexities involved in an actual stage production. In adapting literature to readers theatre, students should consider the following criteria:

- Content should be interesting and compelling.
- It should involve conflict and multi-dimensional characters.

- The language should be vivid and descriptive.

Chamber Theatre is a variation of readers theatre. A narrator is used and other members of the group act out what the narrator is saying. Some possibilities for readers theatre and chamber theatre include "A Christmas Carol", Our Town, A Rope Against the Sun, and The Last Night of the World.

Plays, of course, are written to be read or to be heard. When students read plays aloud their voices should reflect an appropriate interpretation.

2.4. Activities for Primarily Professional Types of Speech. Group IV

Speech activities related to specialized situations (e.g., toasts, election speeches, acceptance speeches, etc.) can help prepare students for entering certain professions. However,

Teaching the types of speaking needed for professional work is primarily the responsibility of the college or vocational school, not of the high school. The foundation for the specialized speech required of a salesperson or minister are laid in the elementary and high schools, but detailed work is possible only later, when one enters his or her vocation.

(Hook & Evans, 1982, p.436)

If there is a natural opportunity for practising Group IV speech activities, teachers should seize that opportunity. For instance, as students approach graduation, teachers may help them with their addresses and toasts.

Oral communication should be at the heart of the curriculum. It is neither difficult nor expensive for teachers to improve the communication climate of their classrooms to help students learn more effectively.

CHAPTER III

3.1. Teaching speaking strategies in the classroom.

Outside the context of any classroom, all children who are repeatedly exposed to language, in normal circumstances will learn it unconsciously. Most adults can learn a language without studying it. Though they may have more trouble with pronunciation and grammar than younger learners, they may still be able to communicate fluently. Children and adults who learn language successfully outside a classroom context seem to share certain similarities.

First of all, they are usually exposed to language which they more or less understand even if, sometimes, they can't produce the same language spontaneously themselves. Secondly, they are motivated to learn the language in order to be able to communicate. And communication is mainly an oral business. And finally they have opportunities to use the language they are learning, thus checking their own progress and abilities.

All these features of natural language acquisition can be difficult to replicate in the classroom, but there are elements which are no doubt worth imitating. Obviously enough within the classroom environment students don't get the same kind of exposure as those who are "picking up" the language. But we should try to work on motivation, language exposure, maximized talking time and we should offer chances to use the language.

This module will deal with communicative (or conversational) skills that are those skills a speaker must possess when he or she wants to communicate something orally.

Communicative (conversational) skills

When we think about speaking, we mean when the students use any and all the language at their command to perform some kind of oral task. The important thing is that there should be a task to complete and that the students should want to complete

it. The reasons why it is a good idea to give students speaking tasks which provoke them to use all and any language at their command are mainly three:

1) Rehearsal: when students have free discussions or conversations inside the classroom they have a chance to rehearse having discussions or conversations outside the classroom.

Simply enough, when they meet a new friend from abroad the first conversation will be about introducing oneself, one's own family etc. Having them take part in a role-play at the lost property office allows them to rehearse such a real-life event in the safety of the classroom. It is a way for students to "get the feel" of what communicating in the foreign language really feels like.

2) Feedback: engagement in a speaking task which demands for the use of all and any language at the students' command provides feedback for both teacher and students.

3) Engagement: completing a speaking task can be really motivating and give real satisfaction. Many speaking tasks (role-play, discussions, debate, problem-solving etc.) are intrinsically enjoyable in themselves and if planned carefully (by the teacher) and completed successfully (by the students) contribute to increasing their self-esteem.

What is conversation?

Teachers often tend to assume that conversation in the language classroom involves nothing more than putting into practice the grammar and vocabulary skills taught elsewhere in the course. But if we want to teach conversation well, we need to know something about what native speakers do when they have conversations. We have chosen to deal with conversation here, because conversation is what normally occurs in everyday life, in the contacts students will have with foreign friends or foreign people in general. With the term "conversation" we refer to a spoken interaction between two or more people who don't follow a fixed schedule.

The purposes of conversation include the exchange of information, the creation and maintenance of social relationships, the negotiation of status and social roles as well as deciding on joint actions.

The basic unit of a conversation is an exchange. An exchange consists of two moves (an initiating move and a response):

A. Would you like a cup of coffee?

B. Yes, please.

We can give a function to each move. In the case above we have offering (A) and accepting (B). To do so we need to take account of factors such as who the speakers are and where and when the conversation occurs.

An exchange or a series of exchanges are not necessarily the same thing as a conversation:

A. Excuse me?

B. Yes?

A. How do I get to the railway station from here?

B. Go straight on, then take the first turning on the right. The railway station is at the end of the street.

Can you think of other examples of this kind?

The one above is not a conversation because the two speakers want to finish their business as quickly as possible; on the other hand, conversation is open-ended and has the potential to develop in any way. It is possible that the example above could contain a conversation if B enquired about A's nationality and A told him the reason why he wanted to reach the station.

The potential is always there in real life. Unfortunately, many students never have the confidence or opportunity to go beyond simple exchanges like the one above, so one of the main aims when teaching speaking skills is to propose exercises and activities which allow students to develop the ability to initiate and sustain conversation.

Conversation is such a natural part of our lives that many people are not conscious of what happens within it. However, conversation follows certain rules which can be described. During a conversation:

- usually one person speaks at a time;
- the speakers change;
- the length of any contribution varies;
- there are techniques for allowing the other party or parties to speak;
- neither the content nor the amount of what we say is specified in advance.

The two moves in an exchange are related to each other when the second utterance can be identified as related to the first. These are called adjacency pairs. Some examples are:

A. Hello!

B. Hi! (greeting-greeting)

A. Are you OK?

B. Yes.

In some cases we can predict the second part of a pair from the first as in the first example. In other cases there might be a variety of options.

- Let's take a complaint. What are the different parts which might follow a complaint?
- Here are some adjacency pairs where the second part is missing. Can you complete them?
- What nationality are you?
-
- Would you like something to drink?
-
- Remember to record the film on Channel 5 for me this evening.
-
- My head aches.
-

We need to think about ways of developing appropriate second parts to adjacency pairs from the start. For example many drills require students to reply to yes/no questions with "yes" or "no" plus a repetition of the auxiliary. We therefore get exchanges like this one:

A. Has Sandra arrived?

B. No, she hasn't.

What students do not often get are opportunities to practise other options, such as:

A. Has Sandra arrived?

B. There has been an accident on the motorway. She has just called to say she's stuck up.

Another reason why students usually appear flat and unresponsive in conversation is the tendency to encourage them to produce isolated sentences containing a target structure, e.g.

If I won the lottery I'd travel around the world.

We all should keep in mind that a minimal answer does nothing to drive the conversation forward.

Many students have great difficulty in getting into a conversation, in knowing when to give up their turn to others, and in bringing a conversation to a close. In order for conversation to work smoothly, all participants have to be alert to signals that a speaker is about to finish his or her turn and be able to come in with a contribution which fits the direction in which the conversation is moving. We need to train students to sense when someone is about to finish.

Falling intonation is often a signal for this.

Besides, students often lose their turn because they hesitate in order to find the right word.

Teaching them expressions like Wait, there's more or That's not all as well as fillers or

hesitation devices such as Erm..., Well..., etc will help them to keep going.

As regards topics, we must keep in mind that different cultures talk about different things in their everyday lives. Native speakers are very aware of what they should and should not talk about with specific categories of people in their own language. That is why both teachers and students need to develop a sense of taboo subjects if they are to avoid offence.

- Can you think of any taboo subject for English people?

Simplification in informal speech

- Have you ever met a person who pronounces the individual sounds and words of English beautifully but who still sounds very foreign? What's the reason, in your opinion?

In English the sound quality of a word, particularly the vowels and certain consonants, changes depending on whether the word is said in isolation or as a part of a continuous stream of words. Some of this is a result of simplification of informal speech owing to the fact that English is a stress-timed language. This means that between two stressed syllables there is the same interval of time.

Let's take two sentences:

1. I caught a bus.

2. It's a bus I caught.

- Do they contain the same number of words or syllables?
- What do they have in common?

The two sentences are the same length when spoken because they contain the same number of stressed syllables (two each). This means that the unstressed syllables have to be squeezed in. The vowels belonging to unstressed syllables very often become the weak vowel represented by the symbol [ə]. The weak vowel or "schwa" is the most common sound in spoken English.

Another peculiarity of spoken English is elision, that is the "missing out" of a consonant or vowel or even both.

If you give each part of a word the same value (as it normally happens in Italian), this can have a wearying effect on the native speaker listener. This was particularly true with Trinity Exams last year. Students who were very accurate and whose vocabulary was rich but who spoke, I would say, flatly, got lower marks than students who were far less accurate but were able to reproduce the stress-timed pattern typical of the English language. This shows that it is worth pointing out weak forms from the start for recognition and production.

3.2. Planning communicative activities

Many students repeatedly say that their main purpose in learning English is to be able to speak. Nevertheless, most of them don't talk readily in class and the "discussion lessons" in which the teacher does most of the talking are still too prevalent.

Pause and consider: when you were a student, did you take part in any lesson which dealt with discussing a specific issue? Did you talk a lot? Who talked the most?

As a teacher, have you ever favoured discussion in class (obviously using L2)? Were your lessons successful or were you not satisfied with them? In either case which were the issues you discussed?

If you find that lessons where discussion took place were not successful as the teacher did most of the talking, consider if the students were prepared for the discussion or fluency activity. Preparation is a vital ingredient for success. Students need to be orientated to the topic. You just can't enter the classroom and say: Today we are going to talk about ethnic cleansing through the centuries (the issue may be relevant to a fifth-year class, though).

Empathise with your students: if you were one of them, how would you feel? Why would you rather sit quietly in the back row hoping your teacher takes no notice of you than engage in a passionate attack against ethnic cleansing?

Some simple techniques which can be used to prepare students for a particular topic are the following:

- the use of audio/visual aids to arouse interest;
- a general orientation to the topic: a short text, questionnaire, a video extract. (This prespeaking task must never be too long but it is recommended);
- exercises focussing on key words needed for a task.

Students may need to be orientated to the task. The general rule is to formulate tasks in terms students can understand and make sure that the instructions are clear.

Record yourself while you are giving instructions for a speaking activity. Listen. Were the instructions clear? How would you modify them?

One possible paradigm for instruction-giving is as follows:

- Think through instructions from the point of view of the student.
- Include only the essential information in simple, clear language.
- Insist on silence and make sure you can be seen. Make eye-contact.
- Use demonstration and gestures where possible to go with your explanation.
- Make sure the students have understood what to do. Do this by asking for a demonstration or for an answer to a question which proves understanding. A yes/no answer to a question like

Do you understand? Are you with me? is not particularly revealing.

Gower and Walters¹ state that "the way you give instructions indicates the way you exercise control and your attitude to the group... Generally students (...) would not appreciate you trying to be more polite. It would be time-wasting and slow things down and would involve you in more complicated language than they can readily understand".

What is your view?

What has been said so far as regards instructions concerns all the other skills we are going to deal with in the following modules?

Last but not least is the choice of the topic to discuss. Students are sometimes not motivated to talk because they lack involvement in the topic. However, even where

students admit interest, they may be unwilling to talk about it in English because they lack the linguistic resources. It is a good idea to talk about things which are within the students' experience or which they think they might influence their future lives or attitudes. I am thinking of the terrorist attacks to the U.S. last year: the students were motivated and involved to speak about what had happened because they felt it was something that was linked to their hopes and fears for the future.

One idea to help students go is finding the topic to discuss but instead of discussing it under a general perspective, you could try setting a specific related problem. Let's take, for example, the new war the American President would willingly wage against Iraq. You could divide the class into two groups, one in favour of a military response to overthrow Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein, the other more careful and prone to turn to diplomacy and intelligence instead. Give them some articles with different viewpoints and the results of the poll conducted among Americans and tell them they must decide (and agree) on how to cope with this crucial issue: going to war or relying on intelligence and diplomacy?

When dealing with speaking activities, it is important to ensure that the students develop a sense that they are making progress. Often students do not realise just how much more confident and fluent they are becoming. One reason may be that they may rarely get the opportunity to take a leading role in conversation; it is well worth trying, then, to programme activities and pair work in which brilliant students have to sustain a conversation with those at lower level, in order to give them the experience of being the driving force in a conversation.

This is particularly important in view of the consolidation of self-esteem, which we must never forget when dealing with teenagers.

Getting students to compare their current efforts with recordings made in the earliest stages of the course is another way of boosting confidence.

In many cases students will have external objectives such as the oral examinations run by organisations such as Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate and Trinity

College. It is therefore useful to show the extent to which students are making progress towards their examination objective by including an element of exam practice in the programme. This is a possible approach to how this can be set up:

- make your students fully aware of what a satisfactory performance in the examination involves. For example, show them a film of a Trinity exam interview, commenting on the mastery of language but also on fluency and on the examiner's gestures and fillers;
- an identification of areas which are critical for a good performance in the exam might then be followed by controlled practice of exam-type tasks; you should also give your students practice in exam conditions. Feedback from these tasks is particularly valuable in that it fosters self-evaluation and improvement.

3.3. Towards communicative competence

According to William Littlewood² there is a continuum of classroom activities to promote communicative competence:

Control Performing memorised dialogues

Contextualised drills

Cued dialogues

Discourse Chains

Role play

Improvisation

Creativity

3.3.1. Step 1: Controlled activities

Although conversational competence can only come from fluency activities or natural language interaction outside the classroom, there is an argument for the use of controlled activities which help students develop confidence as well as the ability to participate in and maintain simple conversations.

Remember your first English lessons. What kind of student were you? Were you always ready to raise your hand to be invited to speak in the foreign language or did you hope the teacher didn't see you?

Many students have to overcome a psychological barrier before they are prepared to speak in the foreign language. Some students feel uneasy when they have to speak in the classroom situation because there is always an audience, others contribute in the sheltered environment of the classroom but are at a loss when they have to use the language outside. A few prefer not to speak at all and are then denied opportunities for practice.

Within the classroom a major source of threat against speaking is the individual's perception of himself/herself and the other students. Threat reduction is possible by building up personal security through the use of getting-to-know-you activities which promote trust as well as articulation activities³ which give the opportunity to use English sounds in a safe environment.

Getting-to-know-you activities

They are meant to build a positive atmosphere of trust within a group.

They are meant to build a positive atmosphere of trust within a group.

CHAIN NAMES

LEVEL Any level (including beginners) (from A1)

TIME 5-10 minutes

AIM Introducing students to each other

PREPARATION None

PROCEDURE 1. Ask the students to sit in a semi-circle and nominate one student to introduce himself/herself.

2. The person next to him/her must then repeat his/her name, and then introduce himself/herself.

3. Ask your students to repeat this procedure around the semi-circle, each one repeating

the name of the person before them and then saying their own name. For example:

A. I'm Roberto.

B. Roberto, I'm Paola.

C. Roberto, Paola., I'm Francesco.

D. Roberto, Paola, Francesco, I'm Giulia.

More advanced students might tackle the

following:

- A. I'm Francesco. I'm from Mestre.
- B. He's Francesco. He's from Mestre. I'm Bianca, and I'm from Marcon.
- C. He's Francesco. He's from Mestre. She's Bianca. She's from Marcon. I'm Piero, and I'm from Mirano.

REMARKS 1. Twelve represents a maximum number for this activity. (Split the class into two semicircles if the students are more.)

2. You should always take a turn to show you are learning too.

GUESS WHO

LEVEL Elementary to intermediate (A2 to B2)

TIME 15-20 minutes

AIM Students are given statements of personal information about other students and they have to ask questions in order to establish the person's identity.

PREPARATION Have available enough small pieces of paper for the whole class.

PROCEDURE

1. Give each of your students a piece of paper and ask them to write four facts about themselves. These can be anything they choose, e.g. I was born in February, I own a bicycle, I like Limp Bizkit etc. as long as the statement is true.
2. Tell the students to fold their pieces of paper and pass them anonymously to the front of the class.
3. Collect them together and then redistribute them so that each student has personal information about another student.
4. Once the students have had a chance to look at the personal information, tell them that they will have to find out whose information they have by turning the statements

into questions, and then asking other students those questions. You can exercise control over the activity in a variety of ways:

- by deciding on the form of the question which is allowable, such as Who was born in February?;
- by deciding whether to nominate students to speak or to allow them free choice;
- by deciding whether or not to allow students to move about.

5. Once you have decided on the rules for the activity you can set it in motion. The activity ends when everybody has found out whose personal information they have.

REMARKS If the initial statements were collected in the previous lesson, or copied out two or three times, you could distribute more than one set of information to each student. This would be needed to make a mingling activity more successful.

☐ Focus on the "Guess who?" activity. What kind of practical problems may arise?

How would

you cope with them?

Articulation activities

When students come to speak in a foreign language they often find themselves inhibited by the prospects of having to make what to them are strange and even comic sounds. One way to tackle this problem is to give students the opportunity to experiment with sounds.

LISTEN AND RECORD

LEVEL Elementary and above (from A2)

TIME 15-20 minutes

AIM For students: making a recording after listening carefully to a taped model.

PREPARATION Select a natural model for students to imitate.

PROCEDURE Ask the students to listen to the tape and to repeat any of the utterances they have heard, until they are ready to be recorded. The activity is selfdirected, but you should be available for consultation. The finished product can be a subject of feedback and evaluation.

REMARKS the activity is self-regulatory. This is important if students are not to be threatened by having to repeat something they feel uncertain about. This activity also fosters the notion of rehearsing what we are about to say, something many people do in their own language, anyway.

Dialogue building

The use of cues or prompts to build up dialogues is a commonly-used technique. The cues or prompts determine the content of what is said, and dialogue building activities can range from being highly controlled to very free. Dialogue building is not a substitute for fluency work, but used sparingly it allows the possibility of giving weaker students a chance to say something.

☐ Go through a course-book and find an activity of this kind. Send it to our forum saying whether it is a highly controlled one or a free one. Use a ranking scale where 1 stands for highly controlled, 5 very free.

Gambits

In the early stages of conversational development students can be taught to take the part of the person who responds to what somebody else has said, by producing an appropriate response or "gambit".

Here's a list of what we might teach:

1. Language to indicate the speaker's agreement with what has been said:

- Yes, it is.
- Yes, that's right.
- Of course, it is.
- Quite, absolutely true.
- Yes, I do / Yes, he was / Yes, they were....

2. Language which indicates polite disagreement:

- Well, not really.
- Not quite, no.
- Perhaps not quite as bad/good/difficult as that.
- Em, I don't know.

3. Language to indicate possible doubt:

- I'm not quite sure.
- Really?
- Is that right?
- Is that so?
- Are you sure?

4. Language to provide positive and negative feedback:

- Great!
- That's nice.
- Very nice indeed (good, clear, pretty)...
- Really nice.
- Sounds lovely! (informal)
- Not very nice.
- No at all nice/clear ...
- Very nasty indeed (disagreeable, bad, noisy) ...
- Sounds awful. (informal)

5. Language to encourage confirmation and more information:

- Is that right?
- Really?
- No kidding? (informal)
- You're not!

One way of getting students used to the function of short responses is to build them into drills.

Although such practice is semi-mechanical students enjoy the challenge of getting the stress and intonation of the short response right. The important thing is not to use drills too extensively.

3.3.2. Step 2: Awareness activities

Students need to become aware of what native speakers do in conversation if they are themselves to achieve communicative competence in the target language. The focus of the awareness activities will be then on promoting the following issues:

- the ability to "sound" English by drawing attention to critical elements which can be usefully imitated (weak forms);
- development of the ability to interpret what is being said;
- a feeling for what is appropriate in conversation;
- awareness of strategies used to further conversation;
- awareness of the target culture.

Awareness activities can be used from the earliest stages of learning.

Observation tasks

They are used to encourage students to become sensitive to particular features of conversation. Observation should always be directed through the use of task sheets and these can be used to focus on:

- audio recordings of people talking;
- video recordings of people talking;
- conversations as they occur in real time.

The simplest observation tasks require the observer to mark the presence or absence of an articular feature.

ENCOURAGING NOISES

LEVEL Elementary and above (from A2)

TIME 15-20 minutes

AIM Making students sensitive to expressions which encourage the other speaker to continue.

PREPARATION Select an audio or video tape that contains examples of this type of expression. Hand out the task sheet below to the students.

TASK SHEET

Listen to the extract of people talking. Make a tick (✓) next to each of the expressions in the list whenever you hear one of the speakers using it.

Really? Uh huh.

Does He? Is it?

Is that right? Yes.

That's nice. I see.

How interesting. Mmmm.

PROCEDURE 1. Introduce the task so that the students get some idea of what they are looking for.

2. Give out a copy of the task sheet to each student.
3. Play the tape two or three times before focussing on the specific expressions in context.

Sensitivity to the sound system

☐ How often do you notice, focus on and/or correct the following in what your students say?

- Phonetic confusion (pin vs. bin)
- Problems with consonant clusters (str or nch)
- Interference from the written form (half)
- Failure to use the weak form
- Incorrect word stress
- Incorrect intonation

If students are to make themselves easily comprehensible, there is a need to work on their pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation from the start.

Remember that lengthy but infrequent attention to stress and intonation is less effective than short tasks that are built into the overall teaching programme and often as introductory "warming up" activities, end of lesson relaxers, or simply as and when the need arises in response to errors.

Cross-cultural awareness

If we accept the fact that language is embedded in culture, then some elements of crosscultural training are inevitable and the inclusion of some cross-cultural work in the teaching of communicative skills would seem to offer the following advantages:

- cross-cultural issue can generate discussion in their own right;
- knowledge of why people in the English culture behave in certain ways should make native speakers easier to interpret;
- a sensitivity to the ways social norms operate in other languages should make the learning of certain areas of language (such as politeness formulae) easier;

- If students become aware of issues such as social taboos, they are less likely to cause offence by breaking them. Besides, they would begin to fall into the category of foreigner that native speakers find easy to talk to.

CULTURE SHOCK!

LEVEL Pre-intermediate and above (from A2/B1)

TIME 25-30 minutes

AIM For students: discussing the problems people encounter when they have to live in a new country for a period of time.

PREPARATION Make photocopies of the task sheet below.

PROCEDURE 1. Introduce the topic and give out a task sheet to each student.

2. Divide the students into small groups after they have had the chance to complete the task individually.

3. Chair a feedback session to see what generalisations emerge. Remain as neutral as possible throughout.

4. If students have not had experience of living in a foreign country, you can ask them to imagine how strangers might feel.

REMARKS If students going to an English-speaking country to study English realise that settling in problems occur anywhere, learning should be promoted.

TASK SHEET Here are some difficulties people encounter when living in a new country. Please indicate with a tick (✓) how important each one has been or would be for you.

Of very great importance

Of great importance

Of some importance

Of no importance

1. Differences in the weather
2. Being away from the family
3. Differences in the food
4. Differences in the way people make friends
5. Transportation problems
6. Getting used to new ways of learning
7. Adjusting to new ways of doing things, e.g. shopping

8. Difficulties in communicating one's own ideas
9. Different living conditions
10. Different social customs
11. Getting newspapers and magazines from home
12. Meeting people from the same country
13. Knowing what to do in everyday situations
14. Other (please specify)

3.3.3. Step 3: Fluency activities

The communicative needs of the average foreign student fall within a limited range of purposes, the most important of which are:

- the maintenance and development of social relationships;
- information exchange;
- co-operative problem-solving in English;
- expressing ideas and opinions.

GUESS WHO

LEVEL Elementary to intermediate (A2 to B2)

TIME 15-20 minutes

AIM Students are given statements of personal information about other students and they have to ask questions in order to establish the person's identity.

PREPARATION Have available enough small pieces of paper for the whole class.

PROCEDURE 1. Give each of your students a piece of paper and ask them to write four facts about themselves. These can be anything they choose, e.g. I was born in February, I own a bicycle, I like Limp Bizkit etc. as long as the statement is true.

2. Tell the students to fold their pieces of paper and pass them anonymously to the front of the class.

3. Collect them together and then redistribute them so that each student has personal information about another student.

4. Once the students have had a chance to look at the personal information, tell them that they will have to find out whose information they have by turning the statements

into questions, and then asking other students those questions. You can exercise control over the activity in a variety of ways:

- by deciding on the form of the question which is allowable, such as Who was born in February?;
- by deciding whether to nominate students to speak or to allow them free choice;
- by deciding whether or not to allow students to move about.

5. Once you have decided on the rules for the activity you can set it in motion. The activity ends when everybody has found out whose personal information they have.

If students are to achieve communicative competence the practice tasks they are given must:

- provide the experience of using English in real time (in real life the interlocutor does not wait for the right or appropriate answer);
- offer them the chance to express their own feelings and points of view;
- provide the opportunity of using the language for a specific purpose.

It is also important that the tasks are culturally appropriate and perceived as relevant by the students.

The successful introduction of fluency activities to a class which has not encountered them before usually requires an element of learner training. This is because the students may perceive that the burden is placed on them as it is the students who initiate and determine what they want to say (even if within a set of guidelines) and feedback can be delayed as the teacher keeps a low profile throughout the activity to allow the students to express themselves freely. Then it is important, especially with adolescent learners, that learner training covers the why and the how of what the students are being asked to do. The teacher can simply point out the ways in which fluency activities help to promote the objective of oral competence by forcing the learners to use the English they have in their heads. The how refers to the fact that students may not know what is expected of them during the activity. It is a good idea, then, that they perceive elements in common with what they have been used to doing, for example the way of giving instructions for an activity.

In class students very often revert to using L1 in the execution of fluency activities if they are not under scrutiny by the teacher. Some of the reasons for this problem include:

- social unease at using a foreign language with their peers;
- perceiving the task as being difficult to complete in any language;
- becoming affectively involved, that is perceiving a genuine need to use the easiest way of communicating about the solution to the task.

☐ How would you cope with this problem?

First you must give a reason for using English in the completion of a task, not simply telling them to do it in English, but making it purposeful. Then at an early stage tasks must be short and relatively easy. The activity should never appear stressful to the students. You should praise the students who make the effort to use English and make clear that for this particular type of exercise errors are not so important.

Sharing

A great deal of motivating language practice can be generated by asking students to talk about themselves, to share their private store of experience with one another, providing they have a framework in which to do so. The framework, especially in the early stages, should limit the exchanges to quite simple factual information. Such exchanges constitute a natural information gap activity in which all students are able to participate.

The activity that follows is a very simple one aimed at introducing students to fluency activities.

I HATED MATHS - DID YOU?

LEVEL Elementary and above (from A1)

TIME 25-30 minutes

AIM Introducing students to fluency activities

PREPARATION Prepare a task sheet along the following lines, and make photocopies.

TASK SHEET

Look at this list of subjects we study in school:

English

Geography

Physical Education

Chemistry

Italian literature

Mathematics

Physics

History

Art

Work individually for five minutes. Choose one of the subjects you particularly like and list three reasons for liking it. Choose one of the subjects you particularly dislike and list three reasons for disliking it.

Now go round the class and find out if anyone likes or dislikes the same subjects as you. Find out the reasons people gave for liking or disliking a subject and make a list under the headings below:

Reasons for liking a subject Reasons for disliking a subject

PROCEDURE 1. Warm your students up for the task by getting them to list the subjects they did in school. This will check that they know the name of the subjects in English.

2. Give each student a task sheet and explain that they have a maximum of 15 minutes to go round the class. When they have finished, run a feedback session for the whole class and ask questions such as:

- Who likes/dislikes the same subjects?
- What are the most common reasons for liking/disliking particular subjects?

3. Get the students to expand and comment on the reasons given.

Ranking activities

In ranking activities students are required to put the items from a given list into an order of importance or preference. This rearranging phase is usually followed by a

period of discussion when students explain or defend their choice. One of the best known of these activities is "Castaway" in which students have to choose the most essential items to survive on a desert island for three months. A standard procedure for ranking activities is as follows:

1. Familiarise the students with the task through oral presentation. Arouse their interest and go through key words.
2. The students work individually and write down their solutions. Set a time limit.
3. The lists are compared and discussed in small groups.

EUREKA!

LEVEL Pre-intermediate and above (from A2)

TIME 30-35 minutes

AIM Promoting discussion about inventions

PREPARATION put the following list of inventions in random order on a handout or OHT. Do not include the dates.

Gunpowder 1000

Atomic bomb 1945

Wheel 3000 BC

Screw 200 BC

Paper 105

Printing 1440

Microscope 1608

Telephone 1876

Motor car 1885

Aeroplane 1903

PROCEDURE 1. Ask the students to work in pairs to decide on the approximate date for each of the inventions. When they have done this, ask them to put the inventions in the order of their appearance, with the earliest invention first. Allow them to check the answers with you.

2. Now ask each pair to choose from the list three inventions that have had the most positive effect on civilization, as well as the three that had the most negative effect.

They should discuss their choice with another pair and agree on a joint list.

3. Finally, chair a feedback session in which each group presents its list. See if the class can come to a consensus.

REMARKS Students are likely to have different interpretations of the words "positive" and "negative". This is worth exploiting, so allow them to settle the argument themselves.

Role plays

Role plays can range from highly controlled activities - in which all the content is supplied to student - to full-scale simulations in which participants determine what they will say on the basis of background information and the role they are given.

Feedback

Evaluation of the success or failure of conversational performance is not an easy job. In conversation a variety of factors, including the speaker's accent, control of grammar and vocabulary, as well as overall fluency, all contribute to any impression of the performance.

The objective of feedback is to give students the information they need to improve on their performance. Areas for feedback in activities aiming at the development of communicative skills include:

- grammar;
- appropriacy of vocabulary and expressions;
- fluency;
- pronunciation;
- non-linguistic factors affecting communication.

Feedback needs to be staged and selective if it is to avoid demoralising the students. To achieve this teacher need to decide on the areas of communicative performance most relevant to their students. Once the decision is made, it is a question of focussing on the chosen areas in turn until the students reach the required performance level. To assist this process, teachers need to be continually aware of

student performance and progress. One way of doing this might be to keep a record card for each student similar to the one below:

Name Date Nature of task (short talk etc.)

Grammatical correctness

Appropriacy of vocabulary

Fluency and pronunciation

Overall performance

Another way might be to use a tape recorder during speaking activities. This way it gets easier for the teacher to identify areas of weakness which can form the basis of subsequent lessons focusing on accuracy, the presentation of new language, etc.

Other advantages of using tape recordings of students at work include:

- the opportunity for students to hear again their own performance;
- the opportunity to look objectively at how students develop over a period of time.

It is important for teachers to correct mistakes made during speaking activities in a different way from the mistakes made during a study exercise. When students are repeating sentences trying to get their pronunciation right, then the teacher will often correct (appropriately) every time there is a problem. But if students are involved in a passionate discussion about whether smoking should be banned anywhere, the effect of constant interruption from the teacher will destroy the conversational flow, thus mining the purpose of the speaking activity.

It is a good idea to watch and listen while speaking activities are taking place, noting down things that seemed to go well and times when students couldn't make themselves understood or made important mistakes. At the end of the speaking activity the teacher can write the mistakes on the board or on an OHT asking students to correct them. As with any kind of correction, it is important not to single students out for particular criticism.

CONCLUSIONS

The establishment of four categories is very helpful to be clear about what kind of activities we can prepare for each group. In our case activities planned for Group 1 and Group 2 are the appropriately to apply in the classroom.

Classroom speaking activities require that teachers perform certain level of control, but after that learner need a degree of autonomy, of course they have to handle the vocabulary enough to participate in the activities.

The kinds of knowledge that speakers bring to the skill of speaking comprise extralinguistic knowledge, such as background knowledge of topic and culture, and linguistic knowledge, including discourse knowledge, speech knowledge, and knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and phonology.

All kinds of strategies that include real situations, realia, materials, encourage students to develop their speaking skill: speeches or presentations, group discussions, role plays, negotiations and debates, interviews and meetings, chatting in small groups.

In my personal opinion, I think that the new technologies are the helpful tools to include the learners in speaking activities, although for most of the teachers it is a very restricted resource to find in the institutions.

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