

## Introduction

In our many years as language teachers and teacher educators, we have had many opportunities to observe speaking lessons conducted by teachers in training, beginning teachers, and experienced teachers. We have also had numerous discussions with local and international postgraduate students about how activities for speaking are typically conducted in their countries. It is clear that, in many situations, although a great deal of speaking is done in the language classroom, the activities serve mainly to provide opportunities for talk, and little *teaching* of speaking actually takes place. In some learning environments, the development of speaking is neglected altogether because high-stakes examinations focus more on the written language.

### Why teach speaking?

Many teachers we know feel that they should be doing more to help their students develop their speaking abilities and, therefore, are keen to know how they can teach speaking better. When asked why they felt speaking was important, these are some common responses:

- All language learners should be able to converse well with other speakers of the language.
- My students are ESL learners and need the language to do well in their school.
- All my students can read and write well in English, but they are poor at speaking and listening.
- I have seen many learners who memorize words from their dictionaries, but cannot speak or listen in English.
- My students don't like talking to their classmates because they can't correct each other's mistakes; they want me to point out their mistakes to them.
- My students speak a non-standard form of the language and cannot communicate in formal situations.
- Many of my students say they practice a lot on their own (by copying recordings they hear), but when they have to speak to native speakers, they fail terribly.

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Excerpt

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- Some of my students are poor speakers. So I need to help them improve.
- Many of my students are too afraid to talk in class. They are shy and lack confidence.
- Some of my students sound very “bookish” when they speak – it is as if they are reading from a book!
- My students love to speak English, but they make a lot of grammatical mistakes.
- My students speak a colloquial and non-standard type of English. I need to teach them how to speak standard English for formal communication.
- While my students are quite competent in grammar and vocabulary, one glaring gap remains in their general ability to present or communicate well.

### Teaching or merely doing?

After considering current practices in conducting speaking lessons, many teachers come to a similar conclusion: although speaking activities occur frequently in their classrooms, learners seldom have the opportunity to learn the skills and strategies and the language to improve their speaking. While learners do a lot of talking in class activities, there is often insufficient teaching of speaking as a language communication skill. We'll illustrate this kind of situation, using the case of Teacher M.

Teacher M realized from early in her career that it was important to develop her students' speaking abilities. She wanted to make sure that her students had plenty of opportunities to communicate with one another in English, so she set aside two lessons a week for speaking practice. She planned many interesting activities for her students. Her lessons were carefully guided by instructional objectives. These objectives were in the form either of what the students should produce (e.g., presentations, debates, descriptions), or what they had to do (e.g., discuss, narrate, role play). Sometimes, when they had finished the activities, Teacher M would ask them to present the outcomes to the rest of the class. At other times, she would simply move on to another activity, such as reading or writing.

In many ways, Teacher M was successful in carrying out her speaking lessons. Her students used the spoken language in a variety of interesting learning scenarios. They often enjoyed their speaking activities because they could talk with one another and practice the target language. Some also felt that they had a lot of fun. There were, however, limitations in the way

she planned her lessons, which resulted in her students missing valuable opportunities to develop their speaking abilities. One of these limitations was a lack of explicit teaching. The students were left almost entirely on their own to carry out each activity. For example, after setting students a discussion task, Teacher M merely observed what went on in each group and made sure that they were on task and finished on time. Sometimes, she prepared her students with some key ideas or vocabulary items before they began their discussion. She did not, however, plan activities for developing their speaking competence further.

Thus, while her students managed to complete each activity by drawing on their existing language and cognitive resources, they did not learn anything new that they would not have done without her help. Teacher M did not teach any skills and strategies or new language items explicitly to help improve their speaking further. There were few activities where she focused the learners' attention on specific speaking skills, and the language and genres related to the speaking activities, after they had completed them. She also did not give much feedback on the one-off oral communication activity that the students participated in. One of the reasons was the large size of the class. Moreover, she was happy just to see that her students participated in the speaking activities and felt that she should not focus too much on the lack of accuracy in their language use.

Another limitation in Teacher M's approach to teaching speaking is the rather passive role that the students played in their own learning and speaking development. Although they participated actively in speaking activities, the students were not encouraged to self-regulate their learning by planning, monitoring, and evaluating their own performances. There were also few opportunities for them to develop greater knowledge about themselves as second language speakers. They were not encouraged to understand the demands of various speaking tasks or to use effective strategies for coping with communication. In short, although Teacher M planned many interesting speaking activities, her students did not progress by way of learning new speaking skills. Speaking occurred frequently in her class, but *teaching* of speaking did not.

There are many things that teachers can do to help their students develop specific speaking skills and strategies, and acquire the language they need for a range of speaking demands. We discuss these ideas in this book by proposing a methodological framework and a pedagogical model that show how speaking can be taught systematically, and in a manner that will engage learners in and outside the classroom. The framework is based on theoretical and pedagogical principles for teaching and learning that

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we relate specifically to the teaching of speaking. The pedagogical model demonstrates how teachers can apply these principles in what we refer to as *the teaching-speaking cycle*. In addition to explaining the theoretical rationale for the teaching methodology, we also suggest practical ideas for conducting different types of speaking activities, developing learners' metacognition about their learning, and planning classroom-based assessment of speaking.

### Approach

In this book, we propose a holistic approach to teaching speaking. The approach addresses language learners' cognitive, affective (or emotional), and social needs, as they work towards acquiring good speaking competence. The approach is grounded in a socio-cognitive perspective on language learning, which takes the view that learning is not just a cognitive, but also a social process. The approach emphasizes four key features of learning:

1. Learning is an active, strategic, and constructive process.
2. It follows developmental trajectories.
3. It is guided by learners' introspective awareness and control of their mental processes.
4. It is facilitated by social, collaborative settings that value self-directed student dialogue.

(Bruer 1998: 681.)

The proposed teaching approach takes into account three key factors in successful language learning: teachers, materials, and learners.

#### 1 Teachers

The role of a teacher is to help learners acquire language and skills that they will not be able to achieve on their own. Teachers need to be aware of their students' learning needs and the demands they face when communicating through the spoken language. Teachers can understand more about language learners' cognitive, affective, and social needs from theoretical ideas, as well as personal observations. The observations can be based on conversations with students, information about their background, and learning goals and assessment results. Teachers also need to intervene

actively in students' learning, so as to provide input, scaffolding (or support), and feedback. Planning activities where students can communicate with their classmates is just part of the learning experience teachers can provide for their students. It is not enough simply to get students to talk, because they are unlikely to learn new skills and language if there is little linguistic and background knowledge among them on which to draw. The role of the teacher, therefore, is to structure students' learning experiences so as to support their speaking development, in and outside the classroom. Teachers can do this by designing interesting and appropriate materials.

## 2 Materials

The materials discussed in this book include activities and resources for facilitating second language speaking development. These materials fall into three categories:

1. Those that provide speaking practice.
2. Those that promote language and skills learning.
3. Those that facilitate metacognitive development.

Materials for speaking practice provide contextualized, varied, and interesting prompts and scenarios for talk to take place. Materials for language and skill learning focus on selected elements of the talk, or model spoken texts to increase learners' relevant linguistic knowledge and control of speaking skills. Metacognitive development materials, on the other hand, aim to raise learners' knowledge and control of learning processes, and train them in using communication and discourse strategies.

Materials can be "instructional, experiential, elicitive, or exploratory" in that they "inform learners about the language," "provide experience of the language in use," "stimulate language use," or "help learners make discoveries about the language for themselves" (Tomlinson, 2003: 2). Learning materials, however, are incomplete if they lack a metacognitive dimension that helps learners understand and manage the learning of skills and language. In a holistic approach to teaching speaking, materials should be varied in form and purpose, in order to engage learners in different dimensions of learning. There should be materials that allow learners the freedom to experiment with their own language use so that they can communicate their meaning as clearly as possible, as well as those where they focus on language-specific speaking skills and strategies. There should also be materials that develop learners' metacognitive knowledge about second

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language speaking, and encourage them to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning.

### 3 Learners

Successful second language speaking development depends as much on teachers and materials, as it does on the learners themselves. They should be encouraged to take responsibility for managing their learning and improving their speaking. They can do this by developing awareness about themselves as second language speakers, by better understanding the nature and demands of speaking, and by critically considering strategies that can facilitate their oral communication. Although speech production is an individual endeavor, every learner's development of second language speaking can be greatly facilitated through working collaboratively with his or her peers.

Teachers should, therefore, encourage learners to support one another's speaking development, not just as communication partners in a speaking task, but also as learning partners who share their learning plans and goals. Through dialogue, students can co-construct knowledge about what is needed to be proficient speakers, and to apply their knowledge and skills in real-time communication. However, learners should not be left alone to struggle through the learning process. Their efforts must be supported by teachers who can provide the necessary scaffolding, input, and guidance.

The figure below illustrates the interrelationships between the three key factors in successful second language speaking development. Learners are positioned at the apex of the triangle to indicate that their learning needs, goals, and outcomes are the most important considerations. However, they can only achieve their objectives if they are supported by well-informed teachers and effective materials. The roles of teachers, materials, and learners will form the basis for the methodological framework proposed later in the book.

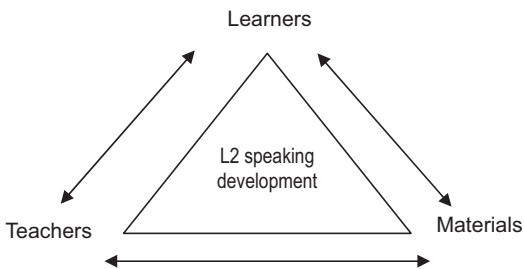


Figure 1: Three key success factors in second language speaking development.

## Outline of chapters

This book is organized into four parts. Part 1 introduces theoretical perspectives to help you consider the importance of speaking for second language learners, as well as understand the nature of second language speaking. Part 2 explains key features of spoken discourse and genre, and how these features are relevant to a teacher's understanding of teaching speaking. Part 3 presents principles for designs, and approaches for planning and teaching speaking programs and lessons. In Part 4, tasks and activities for engaging learners in speaking practice and development are presented. These tasks and activities offer many practical ideas for different stages of the teaching-speaking cycle. This part also includes a discussion of classroom-based ways of assessing speaking to promote learning.

### *Part I: Speaking processes and skills*

Chapter 1 discusses the contribution of speaking to second language acquisition and establishes the importance of speaking in academic learning by second language learners. It also highlights affective, or emotional, factors, namely language anxiety and motivation, which influence language learners' involvement in learning to speak. It invites readers to rethink current practices in teaching speaking, and proposes a holistic approach that accounts for speaking outcomes, as well as cognitive, social, and affective (emotional) processes of learning to speak a second language.

Chapter 2 discusses the quality of learners' spoken output in relation to the cognitive demands that they face. The chapter describes psycholinguistic processes involved during speech production, namely, conceptual preparation, formulation, articulation, and self-monitoring. The effects of these processes on language learners' speaking performance in terms of fluency, accuracy, and complexity are discussed. The chapter concludes with some principles for teaching speaking, based on the discussion of the cognitive processes.

Chapter 3 helps teachers understand what constitutes second language speaking competence so that they can teach it systematically and in a principled manner. This chapter first discusses speaking competence in relation to the broader concept of communicative competence. Next, it examines speaking as a combinatorial skill and proposes a model of speaking competence that comprises linguistic knowledge, speaking skills, and communication strategies.

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### *Part II: Spoken discourse*

Chapter 4 explains the differences and the relationships between spoken and written language, and the purposes and functions of these two forms of communication. The chapter also examines specific grammatical features of spoken discourse and explains how these features contribute to the maintenance of the flow of spoken interaction. The last section of the chapter considers key aspects of pronunciation, and discusses how the intonation and sound systems of English contribute to the creation of meaning among speakers.

Chapter 5 describes discourse features of spoken language, such as how speakers take turns in extended stretches of speech, how they know when to take a turn, and how they negotiate and manage different conversational topics and provide feedback to other speakers. The chapter then introduces the concepts of interactional (socially motivated) and transactional (pragmatically motivated) interactions. This discussion is followed by an explanation of the concept of genre in speaking, which has to do with the way certain types of interaction have predictable beginning, middle, and end structures. At the end of the chapter, we touch briefly on the contributions made to the study of spoken discourse by corpus linguistics.

### *Part III: Designs and approaches*

Chapter 6 proposes a methodological framework, founded on theoretical and pedagogical principles, to offer a holistic approach to teaching speaking. The framework takes into consideration the respective roles of teachers, materials, and learners, and accounts for the interrelated development of all three components of speaking competence. It also draws on insights from research and theory to present a selection of methods for organizing learning activities for speaking, including part-skill practice, pre-task-planning, and task repetition.

Chapter 7 demonstrates how the proposed methodological framework can be applied in the classroom, in order to approach the teaching of speaking in a holistic manner. It describes a pedagogical cycle that makes the teaching and learning of speaking systematic and explicit. The teaching-speaking cycle consists of seven stages that make use of different types of activities to engage language learners in working collaboratively and individually. The teaching-speaking cycle also demonstrates how different kinds of learning materials can be used to provide learners with opportunities to practice their speaking through fluency-oriented tasks, learn relevant language items and discourse structures, and acquire speaking



skills and strategies, as well as develop their metacognitive knowledge for self-regulating their learning.

Chapter 8 guides readers in the steps involved in planning a course to develop the systematic teaching of speaking. It considers the speaking needs of learners, and how teachers can assess and analyze learner needs. It then considers how goals and objectives, based on learner needs, can be developed, after which three possible approaches to planning a unit of work are suggested. The first is a general topic-based approach, where the material is organized around topics that are deemed relevant for particular types of learners. The second is a task-based approach, where the tasks to be completed are linked to the spoken skills to be practiced by the learner. The third is a text-based approach, which draws on the idea of genres of speaking that learners may need to use in various social contexts. This discussion is followed by consideration of the kinds of materials that could be used for these approaches. The chapter ends by discussing how learners' progress and achievements in the course could be assessed, as well as how the teacher can go about evaluating the effectiveness of the course.

#### *Part IV: Classroom practices and processes*

Chapter 9 explains how teachers can plan tasks for speaking practice. It describes different types of fluency-oriented tasks: communication-gap tasks, discussion tasks, and monologic tasks. Communicative outcomes for each task type are identified, and explanations for conducting each task are included to guide teachers in using or adapting them for their learners.

Chapter 10 presents activities that help learners focus on language and discourse so as to develop greater accuracy, fluency, and complexity in their speech. It suggests three stages: noticing / sensitizing, analysis, and further practice. It also offers strategies for task repetition so that learners have further opportunities to repeat an earlier task after learning more about the language and strategies needed to enhance their performance.

Chapter 11 discusses metacognition, or thinking about one's thinking, and shows why teachers have an important function in bringing cognitive, social, and affective learning processes into a conscious level. It offers suggestions for metacognitive instruction for L2 speaking development that can help learners plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning.

Chapter 12 highlights the importance of assessment for learning. It focuses mainly on classroom-based assessment, and shows teachers how they can assess learners' speaking performance and development in a principled way, in order to help them further develop as English language speakers. It also discusses ideas for learner self- and peer assessment. The

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chapter concludes by considering how teachers can rate and score learner speaking performances.

### **How to read this book**

Readers of this book can read each chapter independently of the others if they would like to find out more about a particular topic. To derive maximum benefit from the book, however, we would recommend reading the chapters in sequence. Reading chapters in sequence provides the opportunity to consider the principles embodied in the methodological framework and teaching cycle, and to see how these principles are applied to the practical ideas presented in the three chapters in Part 3. Each chapter is organized in the same way:

- It begins with two or sometimes three questions, and these are answered through a discussion of specific topics.
- There are mini-tasks in each major section that teachers can attempt on their own, or with a colleague or classmates.
- Each chapter concludes with a summary of important principles or practical ideas for teaching speaking, relevant to the topics discussed.
- At the end of each chapter are group learning tasks to help readers deepen their understanding of key concepts and issues presented in the chapter. These tasks are more elaborate and require collaboration with others, and are suitable to be used in courses for teaching speaking. They are also suitable topics for written assignments of various types.

There are various features for enhancing the readability and usability of the material:

- Simple tasks are included at different parts of each chapter to encourage reflection on learning and application of ideas learned.
- Figures are included to present abstract points, tables to summarize key points, bullets to emphasize key points, and numbers to delineate steps or progression.
- Handouts and materials that can be used directly in the classroom are included.
- Relevant articles and books have also been suggested for further reading.