Teaching Listening and Speaking

From Theory to Practice

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Introduction

Courses in listening and speaking skills have a prominent place in language programs around the world today. Ever-growing needs for fluency in English around the world because of the role of English as the world's international language have given priority to finding more effective ways to teach English. It is therefore timely to review what our current assumptions and practices are concerning the teaching of these crucial language skills. Our understanding of the nature of listening and speaking has undergone considerable changes in recent years, and in this booklet I want to explore some of those changes and their implications for classroom teaching and materials design.

The teaching of listening has attracted a greater level of interest in recent years than it did in the past. Now, university entrance exams, exit exams, and other examinations often include a listening component, acknowledging that listening skills are a core component of second-language proficiency, and also reflecting the assumption that if listening isn't tested, teachers won't teach it.

Earlier views of listening showed it as the mastery of discrete skills or microskills, such as recognizing reduced forms of words, recognizing cohesive devices in texts, and identifying key words in a text, and that these skills should form the focus of teaching. Later views of listening drew on the field of cognitive psychology, which introduced the notions of bottom-up and top-down processing and brought attention to the role of prior knowledge and schema in comprehension. Listening came to be seen as an interpretive process. At the same time, the fields of discourse analysis and conversational analysis revealed a great deal about the nature and organization of spoken discourse and led to a realization that reading written texts aloud could not provide a suitable basis for developing the abilities needed to process real-time authentic discourse. Hence, current views of listening emphasize the role of the listener, who is seen as an active participant in listening, employing strategies to facilitate, monitor, and evaluate his or her listening.

In recent years, listening has also been examined in relation not only to comprehension but also to language learning. Since listening can provide much of the input and data that learners receive in language learning, an important question is: How can attention to the language the listener hears facilitate second language learning? This raises the issue of the role "noticing" and conscious awareness of language form play, and how noticing can be part of the process by which learners can incorporate new word forms and structures into their developing communicative competence.

Approaches to the teaching of speaking in ELT have been more strongly influenced by fads and fashions than the teaching of listening. "Speaking" in traditional methodologies usually meant repeating after the teacher, memorizing a dialog, or responding to drills, all of which reflect the sentence-based view of proficiency prevailing in the audiolingual and other drill-based or repetition-based methodologies of the 1970s. The emergence of communicative language teaching in the 1980s led to changed views of syllabuses and methodology, which are continuing to shape approaches to teaching speaking skills today. Grammar-based syllabuses were replaced by communicative ones built around notions, functions, skills, tasks, and other non-grammatical units of organization. Fluency became a goal for speaking courses and this could be developed through the use of information-gap and other tasks that required learners to attempt real communication, despite limited proficiency in English. In so doing, learners would develop communication strategies and engage in negotiation of meaning, both of which were considered essential to the development of oral skills.

The notion of English as an international language has also prompted a revision of the notion of communicative competence to include the notion of intercultural competence. This shifts the focus toward learning how to communicate in cross-cultural settings, where native-speaker norms of communication may not be a priority. At the same time, it is now accepted that models for oral interaction in classroom materials cannot be simply based on the intuitions of textbook writers, but should be informed by the findings of conversational analysis and the analysis of real speech.

This booklet explores approaches to the teaching of listening and speaking in light of the kinds of issues discussed in the preceding paragraphs. My goal is to examine what applied linguistics research and theory says about the nature of listening and speaking skills, and then to explore what the implications are for classroom teaching. We will begin with examining the teaching of listening.

1

The Teaching of Listening

In this booklet, we will consider listening from two different perspectives:

      (1) *listening as comprehension*

      (2) *listening as acquisition*

Listening as Comprehension

Listening as comprehension is the traditional way of thinking about the nature of listening. Indeed, in most methodology manuals *listening* and *listening comprehension* are synonymous. This view of listening is based on the assumption that the main function of listening in second language learning is to facilitate understanding of spoken discourse. We will examine this view of listening in some detail before considering a complementary view of listening – listening as acquisition. This latter view of listening considers how listening can provide input that triggers the further development of second-language proficiency.

Characteristics of spoken discourse

To understand the nature of listening processes, we need to consider some of the characteristics of spoken discourse and the special problems they pose for listeners. Spoken discourse has very different characteristics from written discourse, and these differences can add a number of dimensions to our understanding of how we process speech. For example, spoken discourse is usually instantaneous. The listener must process it "online" and there is often no chance to listen to it again.

Often, spoken discourse strikes the second-language listener as being very fast, although speech rates vary considerably. Radio monologs may contain 160 words per minute, while conversation can consist of up to 220 words per minute. The impression of faster or slower speech generally results from the amount of intraclausal pausing that speakers make use of. Unlike written discourse, spoken discourse is usually unplanned and often reflects the processes of construction such as hesitations, reduced forms, fillers, and repeats.

Spoken discourse has also been described as having a linear structure, compared to a hierarchical structure for written discourse. Whereas the unit of organization of written discourse is the sentence, spoken language is usually delivered one clause at a time, and longer utterances in conversation generally consist of several coordinated clauses. Most of the clauses used are simple conjuncts or adjuncts. Also, spoken texts are often context-dependent and per-

sonal, assuming shared background knowledge. Lastly, spoken texts may be spoken with many different accents, from standard or non-standard, regional, non-native, and so on.

Understanding spoken discourse: bottom-up and top-down processing

Two different kinds of processes are involved in understanding spoken discourse. These are often referred to as *bottom-up* and *top-down* processing.

Bottom-up processing

Bottom-up processing refers to using the incoming input as the basis for understanding the message. Comprehension begins with the received data that is analyzed as successive levels of organization – sounds, words, clauses, sentences, texts – until meaning is derived. Comprehension is viewed as a process of decoding.

The listener's lexical and grammatical competence in a language provides the basis for bottom-up processing. The input is scanned for familiar words, and grammatical knowledge is used to work out the relationship between elements of sentences. Clark and Clark (1977:49) summarize this view of listening in the following way:

1. [Listeners] take in raw speech and hold a phonological representation of it in working memory.
2. They immediately attempt to organize the phonological representation into constituents, identifying their content and function.
3. They identify each constituent and then construct underlying propositions, building continually onto a hierarchical representation of propositions.
4. Once they have identified the propositions for a constituent, they retain them in working memory and at some point purge memory of the phonological representation. In doing this, they forget the exact wording and retain the meaning.

We can illustrate this with an example. Imagine I said the following to you:

> "The guy I sat next to on the bus this morning on the
> way to work was telling me he runs a Thai restaurant in
> Chinatown. Apparently, it's very popular at the moment."

To understand this utterance using bottom-up processing, we have to mentally break it down into its components. This is referred to as "chunking." Here are the chunks that guide us to the underlying core meaning of the utterances:

- the guy
- I sat next to on the bus
- this morning
- was telling me
- he runs a Thai restaurant in Chinatown
- apparently it's very popular
- at the moment

The chunks help us identify the underlying propositions the utterances express, namely:

- I was on the bus.
- There was a guy next to me.
- We talked.
- He said he runs a Thai restaurant.
- It's in Chinatown.
- It's very popular now.

It is these units of meaning that we remember, and not the form in which we initially heard them. Our knowledge of grammar helps us find the appropriate chunks, and the speaker also assists us in this process through intonation and pausing.

Teaching bottom-up processing

Learners need a large vocabulary and a good working knowledge of sentence structure to process texts bottom-up. Exercises that develop bottom-up processing help the learner to do such things as the following:

- Retain input while it is being processed
- Recognize word and clause divisions
- Recognize key words
- Recognize key transitions in a discourse
- Recognize grammatical relationships between key elements in sentences
- Use stress and intonation to identify word and sentence functions

Many traditional classroom listening activities focus primarily on bottom-up processing, with exercises such as dictation, cloze listening, the use of multiple-choice questions after a text, and similar activities that require close and detailed recognition, and processing of the input. They assume that everything the listener needs to understand is contained in the input.

In the classroom, examples of the kinds of tasks that develop bottom-up listening skills require listeners to do the following kinds of things:

- Identify the referents of pronouns in an utterance
- Recognize the time reference of an utterance
- Distinguish between positive and negative statements
- Recognize the order in which words occurred in an utterance
- Identify sequence markers
- Identify key words that occurred in a spoken text
- Identify which modal verbs occurred in a spoken text

Here are some examples of listening tasks that develop bottom-up processing:

Example

Students listen to positive and negative statements and choose an appropriate form of agreement.

Students hear	*Students choose the correct response*	
That's a nice camera.	Yes	No
That's not a very good one.	Yes	No
This coffee isn't hot.	Yes	No
This meal is really tasty.	Yes	No

Example

The following exercise practices listening for word stress as a marker of the information focus of a sentence. Students listen to questions that have two possible information focuses and use stress to identify the appropriate focus. (Words in italic are stressed.)

Students hear	*Students check information focus*	
The bank's *downtown* branch is closed today.	Where	When
Is the city office open on *Sunday*?	Where	When
I'm going to the *museum* today.	Where	When

Example

The following activity helps students develop the ability to identify key words.

> *Students hear*
> My hometown is a nice place to visit because it is close to a beach, and there are lots of interesting walks you can do in the surrounding countryside.
>
> *Students' task*
> Which of these words do you hear? Number them in the order you hear them.
>
> beach   shops   walks   hometown
>
> countryside   schools   nice

Top-down processing

Top-down processing, on the other hand, refers to the use of background knowledge in understanding the meaning of a message. Whereas bottom-up processing goes from language to meaning, top-down processing goes from meaning to language. The background knowledge required for top-down processing may be previous knowledge about the topic of discourse, situational or contextual knowledge, or knowledge in the form of "schemata" or "scripts" – plans about the overall structure of events and the relationships between them.

For example, consider how we might respond to the following utterance:

> "I heard on the news there was a big earthquake in China last night."

On recognizing the word *earthquake,* we generate a set of questions for which we want answers:

- Where exactly was the earthquake?
- How big was it?
- Did it cause a lot of damage?
- Were many people killed or injured?
- What rescue efforts are under way?

These questions guide us through the understanding of any subsequent discourse that we hear, and they focus our listening on what is said in response to the questions.

Consider this example – Imagine I say the following to a colleague at my office one morning:

"I am going to the dentist this afternoon."

This utterance activates a schema for "going to the dentist." This schema can be thought of as organized around the following dimensions:

- A setting (e.g., the dentist's office)
- Participants (e.g., the dentist, the patient, the dentist's assistant)
- Goals (e.g., to have a checkup or to replace a filling)
- Procedures (e.g., injections, drilling, rinsing)
- Outcomes (e.g., fixing the problem, pain, discomfort)

When I return to my office, the following exchange takes place with my colleague:

- "So how was it?"
- "Fine. I didn't feel a thing."

Because speaker and hearer share understanding of the "going to the dentist" schema, the details of the visit need not be spelled out. Minimal information is sufficient to enable the participants to understand what happened. This is another example of the use of top-down processing.

Much of our knowledge of the world consists of knowledge about specific situations, the people one might expect to encounter in such situations, what their goals and purposes are, and how they typically accomplish them. Likewise, we have knowledge of thousands of topics and concepts, their associated meanings, and links to other topics and concepts. In applying this prior knowledge about things, concepts, people, and events to a particular utterance, comprehension can often proceed from the top down. The actual discourse heard is used to confirm expectations and to fill out details.

Consider the meaning of the expression "Good luck!" and how its meaning would differ if said as a response to each of the following statements:

- I'm going to the casino.
- I'm going to the dentist.
- I'm going to a job interview.

The meaning of "good luck" differs according to the situation we mentally refer it to and according to the background knowledge we bring to each situation when it is used.

If the listener is unable to make use of top-down processing, an utterance or discourse may be incomprehensible. Bottom-up processing alone often provides an insufficient basis for comprehension. Consider the following narrative, for example. Read it carefully one or two times. What is the topic?

> *Sally first tried setting loose a team of gophers. The plan*
> *backfired when a dog chased them away. She then entertained*
> *a group of teenagers and was delighted when they brought*
> *their motorcycles. Unfortunately, she failed to find a Peeping*
> *Tom listed in the Yellow Pages. Furthermore, her stereo system*
> *was not loud enough. The crabgrass might have worked,*
> *but she didn't have a fan that was sufficiently powerful.*
> *The obscene phone calls gave her hope until the number was*
> *changed. She thought about calling a door-to-door salesman*
> *but decided to hang up a clothesline instead. It was the*
> *installation of blinking neon lights across the street that did*
> *the trick. She eventually framed the ad from the classified*
> *section.*
> (Stein and Albridge, 1978)

At first, the narrative is virtually incomprehensible. However, once a schema is provided – "Getting rid of a troublesome neighbor" – the reader can make use of top-down processing and the elements of the story begin to fit in place as the writer describes a series of actions she took to try to annoy her neighbor and cause him to leave.

Teaching top-down processing

Exercises that require top-down processing develop the learner's ability to do the following:

- Use key words to construct the schema of a discourse
- Infer the setting for a text
- Infer the role of the participants and their goals
- Infer causes or effects
- Infer unstated details of a situation
- Anticipate questions related to the topic or situation

The following activities develop top-down listening skills:

- Students generate a set of questions they expect to hear about a topic, then listen to see if they are answered.
- Students generate a list of things they already know about a topic and things they would like to learn more about, then listen and compare.

- Students read one speaker's part in a conversation, predict the other speaker's part, then listen and compare.
- Students read a list of key points to be covered in a talk, then listen to see which ones are mentioned.
- Students listen to part of a story, complete the story ending, then listen and compare endings.
- Students read news headlines, guess what happened, then listen to the full news items and compare.

Combining bottom-up and top-down listening in a listening lesson

In real-world listening, both bottom-up and top-down processing generally occur together. The extent to which one or the other dominates depends on the listener's familiarity with the topic and content of a text, the density of information in a text, the text type, and the listener's purpose in listening. For example, an experienced cook might listen to a radio chef describing a recipe for cooking chicken to compare the chef's recipe with her own. She has a precise schema to apply to the task and listens to register similarities and differences. She makes more use of top-down processing. However, a novice cook listening to the same program might listen with much greater attention trying to identify each step in order to write down the recipe. Here, far more bottom-up processing is needed.

A typical lesson in current teaching materials involves a three-part sequence consisting of pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening and contains activities that link bottom-up and top-down listening (Field, 1998). The pre-listening phase prepares students for both top-down and bottom-up processing through activities involving activating prior knowledge, making predictions, and reviewing key vocabulary. The while-listening phase focuses on comprehension through exercises that require selective listening, gist listening, sequencing, etc. The post-listening phase typically involves a response to comprehension and may require students to give opinions about a topic. However, it can also include a bottom-up focus if the teacher and the listeners examine the texts or parts of the text in detail, focusing on sections that students could not follow. This may involve a microanalysis of sections of the text to enable students to recognize such features as blends, reduced words, ellipsis, and other features of spoken discourse that they were unable to process or recognize.

Listening Strategies

Successful listening can also be looked at in terms of the strategies the listener uses when listening. Does the learner focus mainly on the content of a text, or does he or she also consider how to listen? A focus on how to listen raises the issues of listening strategies. Strategies can be thought of as the ways in which a learner approaches and manages a task, and listeners can be taught effective ways of approaching and managing their listening. These activities seek to involve listeners actively in the process of listening.

Buck (2001:104) identifies two kinds of strategies in listening:

- **Cognitive strategies**: Mental activities related to comprehending and storing input in working memory or long-term memory for later retrieval
    - *Comprehension processes*: Associated with the processing of linguistic and nonlinguistic input
    - *Storing and memory processes*: Associated with the storing of linguistic and nonlinguistic input in working memory or long-term memory
    - *Using and retrieval processes*: Associated with accessing memory, to be readied for output
- **Metacognitive strategies**: Those conscious or unconscious mental activities that perform an executive function in the management of cognitive strategies
    - *Assessing the situation*: Taking stock of conditions surrounding a language task by assessing one's own knowledge, one's available internal and external resources, and the constraints of the situation before engaging in a task
    - *Monitoring*: Determining the effectiveness of one's own or another's performance while engaged in a task
    - *Self-evaluating*: Determining the effectiveness of one's own or another's performance after engaging in the activity
    - *Self-testing*: Testing oneself to determine the effectiveness of one's own language use or the lack thereof

Goh (1997, 1998) shows how the metacognitive activities of planning, monitoring, and evaluating can be applied to the teaching of listening.

Metacognitive strategies for self-regulation in learner listening (Goh 1997, 1998)

Planning	This is a strategy for determining learning objectives and deciding the means by which the objectives can be achieved.
General listening development	▪ Identify learning objectives for listening development. ▪ Determine ways to achieve these objectives. ▪ Set realistic short-term and long-term goals. ▪ Seek opportunities for listening practice.
Specific listening task	▪ Preview main ideas before listening. ▪ Rehearse language (e.g., pronunciation) necessary for the task. ▪ Decide in advance which aspects of the text to concentrate on.
Monitoring	This is a strategy for checking on the progress in the course of learning or carrying out a learning task.
General listening development	▪ Consider progress against a set of predetermined criteria. ▪ Determine how close it is to achieving short-term or long-term goals. ▪ Check and see if the same mistakes are still being made.
Specific listening task	▪ Check understanding during listening. ▪ Check the appropriateness and the accuracy of what is understood and compare it with new information. ▪ Identify the source of difficulty.
Evaluating	This is a strategy for determining the success of the outcome of an attempt to learn or complete a learning task.
General listening development	▪ Assess listening progress against a set of predetermined criteria. ▪ Assess the effectiveness of learning and practice strategies. ▪ Assess the appropriateness of learning goals and objectives set.
Specific listening task	▪ Check the appropriateness and the accuracy of what has been understood. ▪ Determine the effectiveness of strategies used in the task. ▪ Assess overall comprehension of the text.

Goh and Yusnita (2006) describe the effectiveness of strategy instruction among a group of 11- and 12-year old ESL learners in Singapore:

> Eight listening lessons which combined guided reflection and teacher-led process-based discussions were conducted. At the end of the period of metacognitive instruction, the children reported in their written diaries a deeper understanding of the nature and the demands of listening, increased confidence in completing listening tasks, and better strategic knowledge for coping with comprehension difficulties. There was also an increase in the scores in the listening examinations of the majority of the students, particularly the weaker listeners, suggesting that metacognitive instruction also had a direct impact on listening performance.

Another approach to incorporating listening strategies in a listening lesson involves a cycle of activities, as seen below.

Steps in guided metacognitive sequence in a listening lesson from Goh and Yusnita (2006)

Step 1	**Pre-listening activity** In pairs, students predict the possible words and phrases that they might hear. They write down their predictions. They may write some words in their first language.
Step 2	**First listen** As they are listening to the text, students underline or circle those words or phrases (including first-language equivalents) that they have predicted correctly. They also write down new information they hear.
Step 3	**Pair process-based discussion** In pairs, students compare what they have understood so far and explain how they arrived at the understanding. They identify the parts that caused confusion and disagreement and make a note of the parts of the text that will require special attention in the second listen.

Step 4	**Second listen**
	Students listen to those parts that have caused confusion or disagreement areas and make notes of any new information they hear.

Step 5	**Whole-class process-based discussion**
	The teacher leads a discussion to confirm comprehension before discussing with students the strategies that they reported using.

Listening as Acquisition

Our discussion so far has dealt with one perspective on listening, namely, listening as comprehension. Everything we have discussed has been based on the assumption that the role of listening in a language program is to help develop learners' abilities to understand things they listen to.

This approach to teaching of listening is based on the following assumptions:

- Listening serves the goal of extracting meaning from messages.
- To do this, learners have to be taught how to use both bottom-up and top-down processes to understand messages.
- The language of utterances – the precise words, syntax, and expressions – used by speakers are temporary carriers of meaning. Once meaning is identified, there is no further need to attend to the form of messages unless problems in understanding occurred.
- Teaching listening strategies can help make learners more effective listeners.

Tasks employed in classroom materials enable listeners to recognize and act on the general, specific, or implied meaning of utterances. These tasks include sequencing, true-false comprehension, picture identification, summarizing, and dicto comp,[1] as well as activities designed to develop effective listening strategies. Although what is sometimes called "discriminative listening" (Wolvin and Coakely, 1996) is sometimes employed (i.e., listening to distinguish auditory stimuli), it is generally taught as an initial stage in the listening process, the ultimate goal of which is comprehension. Activities not typically employed when comprehension is the focus of listening are those that require accurate recognition and recall of words, syntax, and expressions that occurred in the input. Such activities include dictation, cloze exercises, and identifying differences between a spoken and written text. Activities such as these are often discour-

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[1] dicto comp: A technique for practicing composition, in which the teacher reads a passage, and then students must write out what they understand and remember from the passage, keeping as closely as possible to the original but using their own words where necessary.

aged because they focus on listening for words (bottom-up listening) rather than listening for meaning (top-down listening).

Few would question the approach to the teaching of listening just described when the focus is listening as comprehension. But another crucial role has been proposed for listening in a language program, namely, its role in facilitating second language acquisition. Schmidt (1990) has drawn attention to the role of consciousness in language learning, and in particular to the role of *noticing* in learning. His argument is that we won't learn anything from input we hear and understand unless we notice something about the input. Consciousness of features of the input can trigger the first stage in the process of incorporating new linguistic features into one's language competence. As Slobin (1985:1164) remarked of L1 learning:

> The only linguistic materials that can figure in language-making are stretches of speech that attract the child's attention to a sufficient degree to be noticed and held in memory.

Schmidt (1990:139) further clarifies this point in distinguishing between input (what the learner hears) and intake (that part of the input that the learner notices). Only intake can serve as the basis for language development. In his own study of his acquisition of Portuguese (Schmidt and Frota 1986), Schmidt found that there was a close connection between his noticing features of the input and their later emergence in his own speech.

However, for language development to take place, more is required than simply noticing features of the input. The learner has to try to incorporate new linguistic items into his or her language repertoire, that is, to use them in oral production. This involves processes that have been variously referred to as restructuring, complexification, and producing stretched output. VanPatten (1993: 436) suggests that restructuring refers to:

> . . . those [processes] that mediate the incorporation of intake into the developing system. Since the internalization of intake is not mere accumulation of discrete bits of data, data have to "fit in" in some way and sometimes the accommodation of a particular set of data causes changes in the rest of the system.

Complexification and stretching of output occurs in contexts

> . . . where the learner needs to produce output which the current interlanguage system cannot handle . . . [and so] . . . pushes the limits of the interlanguage system to handle that output. (Tarone and Liu 1995: 120–121)

In other words, learners need to take part in activities that require them to try out and experiment in using newly noticed language forms in order for new learning items to become incorporated into their linguistic repertoire.

What are the implications of this view of the role of listening in language learning to the teaching of listening? I would suggest that we first distinguish between situations where comprehension only is an appropriate instructional goal and those where comprehension plus acquisition is a relevant focus. Examples of the former are situations where listening to extract information is the primary focus of listening, such as listening to lectures, announcements, sales presentations, etc., and situations where listening serves primarily as a transactional function, such as in service encounters. In other cases, however, a listening course may be part of a general English course or linked to a speaking course, and in those situations both listening as comprehension and listening as acquisition should be the focus. Listening texts and materials can then be exploited, first as the basis for comprehension and second as the basis for acquisition.

What classroom strategies are appropriate for the listening-as-acquisition phase? I would propose a two-part cycle of teaching activities:

1. Noticing activities
2. Restructuring activities

Noticing activities involve returning to the listening texts that served as the basis for comprehension activities and using them as the basis for language awareness. For example, students can listen again to a recording in order to:

- Identify differences between what they hear and a printed version of the text
- Complete a cloze version of the text
- Complete sentences stems taken from the text
- Check off entries from a list of expressions that occurred in the text

Restructuring activities are oral or written tasks that involve productive use of selected items from the listening text. Such activities could include:

- Paired reading of the tape scripts in the case of conversational texts
- Written sentence-completion tasks requiring use of expressions and other linguistic items that occurred in the texts
- Dialog practice that incorporates items from the text
- Role plays in which students are required to use key language from the texts

As an example, here is the listening text from an activity in *Interchange, Third Edition, Level 2.*

> Mike has just returned from Brazil. Listen to him talk about Carnival. What did he enjoy most about it?
>
> *Mike*: Isn't that music fantastic? It's from a samba CD that I got when I was in Rio for Carnival. Wow! Carnival in Rio is really something! It's a party that lasts for four whole days. It's held late in February or early March, but you need to book a hotel room way in advance because hotels fill up really quickly. Carnival is celebrated all over Brazil, but the most famous party is in Rio. The whole city is decorated with colored lights and streamers. It's really very beautiful. Everyone is very friendly – especially to visitors from other countries. The best part about Carnival is the big parade. The costumes are unbelievable – people work on them for months. It's really fantastic to watch. Everyone dances the samba in the streets. I'd really recommend you go to Rio for Carnival if you ever have the chance.

The listening activities that accompany this text focus on listening for comprehension and on understanding details from the passage. However, the text could also be used as the basis for a follow-up acquisition activity. For example, students could be given the preceding text with some key lexical and grammatical items deleted and the passage used as a cloze listening. Then the students could be asked to work in pairs and rewrite the monolog as a question-and-answer exchange between Mike and a friend. Once this was done, the dialog could be used for pair practice. In this way, students would have the chance to acquire for active use some of the vocabulary and grammar used in the text.

I am therefore advocating that in contexts where comprehension and acquisition are the goals of a listening course, a two-part strategy is appropriate in classroom teaching and instructional materials, namely:

Phase 1: Listening as comprehension
Use of the materials as discussed in the preceding section.

Phase 2: Listening as acquisition
The listening texts used are now used as the basis for speaking activities, making use of noticing activities and restructuring activities.

Linking listening tasks to speaking tasks in the way described above, provides opportunities for students to notice how language is used in different communicative contexts. They can then practice using some of the language that occurred in the listening texts.

2 | *The Teaching of Speaking*

The mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for many second-language or foreign-language learners. Consequently, learners often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how much they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency. Oral skills have hardly been neglected in EFL/ESL courses (witness the huge number of conversation and other speaking course books in the market), though how best to approach the teaching of oral skills has long been the focus of methodological debate. Teachers and textbooks make use of a variety of approaches, ranging from direct approaches focusing on specific features of oral interaction (e.g., turn-taking, topic management, and questioning strategies) to indirect approaches that create conditions for oral interaction through group work, task work, and other strategies (Richards, 1990).

Advances in discourse analysis, conversational analysis, and corpus analysis in recent years have revealed a great deal about the nature of spoken discourse and how it differs from written discourse (McCarthy and Carter, 1997). These differences reflect the different purposes for which spoken and written language are used. Jones (1996:12) comments:

> In speaking and listening we tend to be getting something done, exploring ideas, working out some aspect of the world, or simply being together. In writing, we may be creating a record, committing events or moments to paper.

Research has also thrown considerable light on the complexity of spoken interaction in either a first or second language. For example, Luoma (2004) cites some of the following features of spoken discourse:

- Composed of idea units (conjoined short phrases and clauses)
- May be planned (e.g., a lecture) or unplanned (e.g., a conversation)
- Employs more vague or generic words than written language
- Employs fixed phrases, fillers, and hesitation markers
- Contains slips and errors reflecting online processing
- Involves reciprocity (i.e., interactions are jointly constructed)
- Shows variation (e.g., between formal and casual speech), reflecting speaker roles, speaking purpose, and the context

Conversational routines

A marked feature of conversational discourse is the use of fixed expressions, or "routines," that often have specific functions in conversation and give conversational discourse the quality of naturalness. Wardhaugh (1985:74, cited in Richards 1990) observes:

> There are routines to help people establish themselves in certain positions: routines for taking off and hanging up coats; arrangements concerning where one is to sit or stand at a party or in a meeting; offers of hospitality; and so on. There are routines for beginnings and endings of conversations, for leading into topics, and for moving away from one topic to another. And there are routines for breaking up conversations, for leaving a party, and for dissolving a gathering. . . . It is difficult to imagine how life could be lived without some routines.

Consider the following routines. Where might they occur? What might their function be within these situations?

- This one's on me.
- I don't believe a word of it.
- I don't get the point.
- You look great today.
- As I was saying, . . .
- Nearly time. Got everything.
- I'll be making a move then.
- I see what you mean.
- Let me think about it.
- Just looking, thanks.
- I'll be with you in a minute.
- It doesn't matter.

Pawley and Syder (1983) suggest that native speakers have a repertoire of thousands of routines like these, that their use in appropriate situations creates conversational discourse that sounds natural and native-like, and that they have to be learned and used as fixed expressions.

In designing speaking activities or instructional materials for second-language or foreign-language teaching, it is also necessary to recognize the very different functions speaking performs in daily communication and the different purposes for which our students need speaking skills.

Styles of speaking

An important dimension of conversation is using a style of speaking that is appropriate to the particular circumstances. Different styles of speaking reflect the roles, age, sex, and status of participants in interactions and also reflect the expression of politeness. Consider the various ways in which it is possible to ask someone the time, and the different social meanings that are communicated by these differences.

- Got the time?
- I guess it must be quite late now?
- What's the time?
- Do you have the time?
- Can I bother you for the time?
- You wouldn't have the time, would you?

Lexical, phonological, and grammatical changes may be involved in producing a suitable style of speaking, as the following alternatives illustrate:

- Have you seen the boss? / Have you seen the manager? (lexical)
- Whachadoin? / What are you doing? (phonological)
- Seen Joe lately? / Have you seen Joe lately?

Different speech styles reflect perceptions of the social roles of the participants in a speech event. If the speaker and hearer are judged to be of more or less equal status, a casual speech style that stresses affiliation and solidarity is appropriate. If the participants are perceived as being of uneven power or status, a more formal speech style is appropriate, one that marks the dominance of one speaker over the other. Successful management of speech styles creates the sense of politeness that is essential for harmonious social relations (Brown and Levinson, 1978).

Functions of speaking

Numerous attempts have been made to classify the functions of speaking in human interaction. Brown and Yule (1983) made a useful distinction between the interactional functions of speaking, in which it serves to establish and maintain social relations, and the transactional functions, which focus on the exchange of information. In workshops with teachers and in designing my own materials, I use an expanded three-part version of Brown and Yule's framework (after Jones, 1996, and Burns, 1998): *talk as interaction; talk as transaction; talk as performance*. Each of these speech activities is quite distinct in terms of form and function and requires different teaching approaches.

Talk as interaction

Talk as interaction refers to what we normally mean by "conversation" and describes interaction that serves a primarily social function. When people meet, they exchange greetings, engage in small talk, recount recent experiences, and so, on because they wish to be friendly and to establish a comfortable zone of interaction with others. The focus is more on the speakers and how they wish to present themselves to each other than on the message. Such exchanges may be either casual or more formal, depending on the circumstances, and their nature has been well described by Brown and Yule (1983). The main features of talk as interaction can be summarized as follows:

- Has a primarily social function
- Reflects role relationships
- Reflects speaker's identity
- May be formal or casual
- Uses conversational conventions
- Reflects degrees of politeness
- Employs many generic words
- Uses conversational register
- Is jointly constructed

We can see some of these features illustrated in the following authentic example of a segment of conversational discourse (from Thornbury and Slade 2006: 132–133). Two women are asking a third woman about her husband and how they first met.

Jessie: Right. Right, and so when did you – actually meet him?

Brenda: So we didn't actually meet until that night.

Judy: Oh, hysterical. [*laughs*]

Brenda: Well, I met him that night. We were all, we all went out to dinner. So I had champagne and strawberries at the airport.

Jessie: And what was it like when you first saw him? Were you really – nervous?

Brenda: – Well, I was hanging out of a window watching him in his car, and I thought "oh God what about this!" [*laughs*]

Brenda: And he'd combed his hair and shaved his eyebrows – and

Jessie: Had you seen a photo of him?

> *Brenda*: Oh, yeah, I had photos of him, photos . . . and I'd
>   spoken to him on the phone.
> *Jessie*: Did you get on well straight away?
> *Brenda*: Uh, well sort of. I'm a sort of nervy person when I
>   first meet people, so it was sort of . . . you know . . . just
>   nice to him.
> *Jessie*: – [*laughs*]

The conversation is highly interactive and is in a collaborative conversational style. The listeners give constant feedback, including laughter, to prompt the speaker to continue, and we see the examples of casual conversational register with "nervy" and "hanging out of the window."

Examples of these kinds of talk are:

- Chatting to an adjacent passenger during a plane flight *(polite conversation that does not seek to develop the basis for future social contact)*
- Chatting to a school friend over coffee *(casual conversation that serves to mark an ongoing friendship)*
- A student chatting to his or her professor while waiting for an elevator *(polite conversation that reflects unequal power between the two participants)*
- Telling a friend about an amusing weekend experience, and hearing him or her recount a similar experience he or she once had *(sharing personal recounts)*

Some of the skills involved in using talk as interaction involve knowing how to do the following things:

- Opening and closing conversations
- Choosing topics
- Making small-talk
- Joking
- Recounting personal incidents and experiences
- Turn-taking
- Using adjacency pairs[2]
- Interrupting
- Reacting to others
- Using an appropriate style of speaking

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[2] Adjacency pairs: A sequence of two related utterances by two different speakers. The second utterance is always a response to the first. For example, complain – apologize, compliment – accept, invite – decline.

Mastering the art of talk as interaction is difficult and may not be a priority for all learners. However, students who do need such skills and find them lacking report that they sometimes feel awkward and at a loss for words when they find themselves in situations that require talk for interaction. They feel difficulty in presenting a good image of themselves and sometimes avoid situations that call for this kind of talk. This can be a disadvantage for some learners where the ability to use talk for conversation can be important. Hatch (1978) emphasizes that second language learners need a wide range of topics at their disposal in order to manage talk as interaction. Initially, learners may depend on familiar topics to get by. However, they also need practice in introducing new topics into conversation to move beyond this stage.

> They should practice nominating topics about which they are prepared to speak. They should do lots of listening comprehension for topic nominations of native speakers. They should practice predicting questions for a large number of topics. . . . They should be taught elicitation devices . . . to get topic clarification. That is, they should practice saying "huh," "pardon me," "excuse me, I didn't understand," etc., and echoing parts of sentences they do not understand in order to get it recycled again. Nothing stops the opportunity to carry on a conversation quicker than silence or the use of "yes" and head nodding when the learner does not understand. (Hatch 1978:434)

Talk as transaction

Talk as transaction refers to situations where the focus is on what is said or done. The message and making oneself understood clearly and accurately is the central focus, rather than the participants and how they interact socially with each other. In such transactions,

> . . . talk is associated with other activities. For example, students may be engaged in hands-on activities (e.g., in a science lesson) to explore concepts associated with floating and sinking. In this type of spoken language students and teachers usually focus on meaning or on talking their way to understanding. (Jones 1996:14)

The following example from a literature lesson illustrates this kind of talk in a classroom setting (T = Teacher, S = Student):

T: The other day we were talking about figures of speech. And we have already in the past talked about three kinds of figures of speech. Does anybody remember those three types? Mary?

S: Personification, simile, and metaphor.

T: Good. Let me write those on the board. – Now can anybody tell me what personification is all about again? Juan?

S: Making a nonliving thing act like a person.

T: Yes. OK. Good enough. Now what about simile? . . . OK. – Cecelia?

S: Comparing two things by making use of the words "like" or "as."

T: OK. Good. I'll write that on the board. The other one – metaphor. Paul?

S: It's when we make a comparison between two things, but we compare them without using the words "like" or "as."

T: All right. Good. So it's more direct than simile. Now we had a poem a few weeks ago about personification. Do you remember? Can you recall one line from that poem where a nonliving thing acts like a human person?

S: "The moon walks the night."

T: Good. "The moon walks the night." Does the moon have feet to walk?

S: No.

T: No. So this is a figure of speech. All right. Now our lesson today has something to do with metaphor. Now we're going to see what they have in common . . .

(Richards and Lockhart 1994: 116–117)

Examples of talk as transaction are:

- Classroom group discussions and problem-solving activities
- A class activity during which students design a poster
- Discussing needed computer repairs with a technician
- Discussing sightseeing plans with a hotel clerk or tour guide
- Making a telephone call to obtain flight information
- Asking someone for directions on the street
- Buying something in a shop
- Ordering food from a menu in a restaurant

Burns (1998) distinguishes between two different types of talk as transaction. The first type involves situations where the focus is on giving and receiving information and where the participants focus primarily on what is said or achieved (e.g., asking someone for directions). Accuracy may not be a priority, as long as information is successfully communicated or understood.

The second type is transactions that focus on obtaining goods or services, such as checking into a hotel or ordering food in a restaurant. For example, the following exchange was observed in a café:

Server: Hi, what'll it be today?
Client: Just a cappuccino, please. Low-fat decaf if you
   have it.
Server: Sure. Nothing to eat today?
Client: No, thanks.
Server: Not a problem.

The main features of talk as transaction are:

- It has a primarily information focus.
- The main focus is on the message and not the participants.
- Participants employ communication strategies to make themselves understood.
- There may be frequent questions, repetitions, and comprehension checks, as in the example from the preceding classroom lesson.
- There may be negotiation and digression.
- Linguistic accuracy is not always important.

Some of the skills involved in using talk for transactions are:

- Explaining a need or intention
- Describing something
- Asking questions
- Asking for clarification
- Confirming information
- Justifying an opinion
- Making suggestions
- Clarifying understanding
- Making comparisons
- Agreeing and disagreeing

Talk as performance

The third type of talk that can usefully be distinguished has been called talk as performance. This refers to public talk, that is, talk that transmits information before an audience, such as classroom presentations, public announcements, and speeches. For example, here is the opening of a fall welcome speech given by a university president:

> "Good morning. It's not my intention to deliver the customary state of the university address. There's good reason for that. It would seem to me to be presumptuous for someone who has been here not quite seven weeks to tell you what he thinks the state of the university is. You would all be better prepared for that kind of address than I am. However, I would like to offer you, based on my experience – which has been pretty intensive these almost seven weeks – some impressions that I have of this institution, strengths, or some of them, and the challenges and opportunities that we face here. . . . I also want to talk about how I see my role during the short time that I will be with you . . ."
> (www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/speeches/2003_welcome. pdf. Accessed June 9, 2007)

Spoken texts of this kind, according to Jones (1996:14),

> . . . often have identifiable generic structures and the language used is more predictable. . . . Because of less contextual support, the speaker must include all necessary information in the text – hence the importance of topic as well as textual knowledge. And while meaning is still important, there will be more emphasis on form and accuracy.

Talk as performance tends to be in the form of monolog rather than dialog, often follows a recognizable format (e.g., a speech of welcome), and is closer to written language than conversational language. Similarly, it is often evaluated according to its effectiveness or impact on the listener, something that is unlikely to happen with talk as interaction or transaction. Examples of talk as performance are:

- Giving a class report about a school trip
- Conducting a class debate
- Giving a speech of welcome
- Making a sales presentation
- Giving a lecture

The main features of talk as performance are:

- A focus on both message and audience
- Predictable organization and sequencing
- Importance of both form and accuracy
- Language is more like written language
- Often monologic

Some of the skills involved in using talk as performance are:

- Using an appropriate format
- Presenting information in an appropriate sequence
- Maintaining audience engagement
- Using correct pronunciation and grammar
- Creating an effect on the audience
- Using appropriate vocabulary
- Using an appropriate opening and closing

Teachers sometimes describe interesting differences between how learners manage these three different kinds of talk, as the following anecdotes illustrate.

> *I sometimes find with my students at a university in Hong Kong that they are good at talk as transaction and performance but not with talk as interaction. For example, the other day one of my students did an excellent class presentation in a course for computer science majors, and described very effectively a new piece of computer software. However, a few days later when I met the same student going home on the subway and tried to engage her in social chat, she was at a complete loss for words.*

Another teacher describes a second language user with just the opposite difficulties. He is more comfortable with talk as interaction than with talk as performance.

> *One of my colleagues in my university in China is quite comfortable using talk socially. If we have lunch together with other native speakers, he is quite comfortable joking and chatting in English. However, recently we did a presentation together at a conference and his performance was very different. His pronunciation became much more "Chinese" and he made quite a few grammatical and other errors that I hadn't heard him make before.*

Implications for teaching

Three core issues need to be addressed in planning speaking activities for an English class. The first is to determine what kinds of speaking skills the class will focus on. Is it all three of the genres described in the preceding section, or will some receive greater attention than others? Informal needs analysis is the starting point here. Procedures for determining needs include observation of learners carrying out different kinds of communicative tasks, questionnaires, interviews, and diagnostic testing (e.g., Tsang and Wong 2002). The second issue is to identifying teaching strategies to "teach" (i.e., provide opportunities for learners to acquire) each kind of talk.

Teaching talk as interaction

Talk as interaction is perhaps the most difficult skill to teach since interactional talk is a very complex and subtle phenomenon that takes place under the control of unspoken rules. In my experience, these are best taught by providing examples embedded in naturalistic dialogs that model features such as opening and closing conversations, making small talk, recounting personal incidents and experiences, and reacting to what others say. One rule for making small talk is to initiate interactions with a comment concerning something in the immediate vicinity or that both participants have knowledge of. The comment should elicit agreement, since agreement is face-preserving and non-threatening. Hence, safe topics, such as the weather, traffic, and so on, must be chosen. Students can initially be given models such as the following to practice:

A: Nice weather today.

B: Yes, it is.

A: I hope the weather is nice for the weekend.

B: Me, too.

A: The buses to school are always so crowded.

B: Yes, they are.

Later, students can be given situations in which small talk might be appropriate (e.g., meeting someone at a movie, running into a friend in the cafeteria, or waiting at a bus stop). They can then be asked to think of small talk topic comments and responses.

Giving feedback (or back channeling) is another important aspect of talk as interaction. It involves responding to a conversational partner with expressions that indicate interest and a wish for the speaker to continue, such as "That's interesting," "yeah," "really," and so on. To practice using back channeling in this way, students can examine dialogs from which feedback expressions have been omitted. They can consider suitable ways of providing

them and then practice using them. For example, they can come up with differ-
ent responses to use in the following dialog:

A: I'm going to Hawaii for my next vacation.

B: ——————.

A: Yeah, my parents are taking me there as a graduation
present.

B: ——————. And what do you plan to do there?

A: Well I guess I'll spend a lot of time on the beach.

B: ——————.

A: But I also want to do some snorkeling.

B: ——————.

Another technique to practice the use of conversation starters and narratives
about personal experiences involves giving conversation starters that students
respond to by asking one or two follow-up questions. For example: "I didn't
sleep very well last night." "Look what I bought on Sunday. How do you like
it?" "Did that thunderstorm last night wake you?"

Two simple activities I use to practice topic management are "in the
hot seat" and "question time." In the first activity, a student sits on a chair in
front of the class and makes a statement about something he or she did recently
(e.g., "I saw a good movie on Sunday"). The other members of the class ask
three or more questions about the topic, which the student has to answer
quickly. The "question time" activity, introduces students to a lesson on a new
theme. I prepare up to 15 questions related to the theme and put them on a
handout. For example, if the next unit covers sports, the students' handout
would include questions such as "What sports do you play?" "How often do
you play sports?" "What sports are popular in your country?" "What sport have
you never tried?" I first ask students around the class to answer the questions
quickly. Then students practice asking and answering the questions in pairs.

Teaching talk as transaction

Talk as transaction is more easily planned since current communicative materi-
als are a rich resource of group activities, information-gap activities, and role
plays that can provide a source for practicing how to use talk for sharing and
obtaining information, as well as for carrying out real-world transactions. These
activities include ranking, values clarification, brainstorming, and simulations.
Group discussion activities can be initiated by having students work in groups to
prepare a short list of controversial statements for others to think about. Groups
exchange statements and discuss them, for example: "Schools should do away
with exams." "Vegetarianism is the only healthy lifestyle." "The Olympic games

are a waste of money." Role-play activities are another familiar technique for practicing real-world transactions and typically involve the following steps:

- *Preparing*: Reviewing vocabulary, real-world knowledge related to the content, and context of the role play (e.g., returning a faulty item to a store).
- *Modeling and eliciting*: Demonstrating the stages that are typically involved in the transaction, eliciting suggestions for how each stage can be carried out, and teaching the functional language needed for each stage.
- *Practicing and reviewing*: Assigning students roles and practicing a role play using cue cards or realia to provide language and other support.

An issue that arises in practicing talk as transaction using different kinds of communicative tasks is the level of linguistic accuracy that students achieve when carrying out these tasks. One assumption is that form will largely look after itself with incidental support from the teacher. Grammar has a mediating role, rather than serving as an end in itself (Thornbury 1998:112). "The teacher and the learner have a remarkable degree of flexibility, for they are presented with a set of general learning objectives and problem-solving tasks" (Kumaravadivelu 1991:99). As students carry out communicative tasks, the assumption is that they engage in the process of negotiation of meaning, employing strategies such as comprehension checks, confirmation checks, and clarification requests. These are believed to lead to a gradual modification of learners' language output, which over time takes on more and more target-like forms.

Despite these optimistic claims, others have reported that communication tasks often develop fluency at the expense of accuracy. For example, Higgs and Clifford (1982:78) reporting experience with foreign language teaching programs in the United States, observed the following:

> In programs that have as curricular goals an early emphasis on unstructured communication activities – minimizing, or excluding entirely, considerations of grammatical accuracy – it is possible in a fairly short time . . . to provide students with a relatively large vocabulary and a high degree of fluency . . . These same data suggest that the premature immersion of a student into an unstructured or "free" conversational setting before certain linguistic structures are more or less in place is not done without cost. There appears to be a real danger of leading students too rapidly into the creative aspects of language use, in that if successful communication is encouraged and rewarded for its own sake, the effect seems to be one of rewarding at the same

time the incorrect strategies seized upon in attempting to
deal with the communication strategies presented.

Similar findings have been reported in more recent studies of task work (see Foster, 1998; Musumeci, 1996).

The following example of the quality of language that is sometimes produced as students practice transactional functions of language. This example was observed during a role-play task in a Spanish secondary school English lesson. One student is playing the role of a doctor and the other a patient, and they are discussing a health problem.

S1: You how old?
S2: I'm thirty-four . . . thirty-five.
S1: Thirty . . . five?
S2: Five.
S1: Problem?
S2: I have . . . a pain in my throat.
S1: [*In Spanish*] What do you have?
S2: A pain.
S1: [*In Spanish*] What's that?
S2: [*In Spanish*] A pain. A pain.
S1: Ah, pain.
S2: Yes, and it makes problem to me when I . . . swallow.
S1: When do you have . . . ?
S1: Since yesterday morning.
S1: [*In Spanish*] No, I mean, where do you have the pain? It has a pain in . . . ?
S2: In my throat.
S1: Ah. Let it . . . getting, er . . . worse. It can be, er . . . very serious problem and you are, you will go to New York to operate, so . . . operation . . . the 7th, the 27th, er May. And treatment, you can't eat, er, big meal.
S2: Big meal. I er . . . I don't know? Fish?
S1: Fish, you have to eat, er, fish, for example.

This example shows how low-level students, when carrying out communication tasks, often rely on a lexicalized system of communication that depends heavily on vocabulary and memorized chunks of language, as well as both verbal and nonverbal communication strategies, to get meaning across. Several methods can be used to address the issue of language accuracy when students are practicing transactional use of language:

1. By pre-teaching certain linguistic forms that can be used while completing a task.
2. By reducing the complexity of the task (e.g., by familiarizing students with the demands of the activity by showing them a similar activity on video or as a dialog).
3. By giving adequate time to plan the task.
4. By repeated performance of the task.

Willis (1966) suggests using a cycle of activities with task work using a sequence of activities in a lesson. These activities create interaction mediated by a task and then build language awareness and language development around task performance. She proposes the following sequence of activities:

Pre-task activities
Introduction to topic and task

- T helps Ss to understand the theme and objectives of the task, for example, brainstorming ideas with the class, using pictures, mime, or personal experience to introduce the topic.
- Ss may do a pre-task, for example, topic-based odd-word-out games. T may highlight useful words and phrases, but would not pre-teach new structures.
- Ss can be given preparation time to think about how to do the task.
- Ss can hear a recording of a parallel task being done (so long as this does not give away the solution to the problem).
- If the task is based on a text, Ss read a part of it.

The task cycle
Task

- The task is done by Ss (in pairs or groups) and gives Ss a chance to use whatever language they already have to express themselves and say whatever they want to say. This may be in response to reading a text or hearing a recording.
- T walks around and monitors, encouraging everyone's attempt at communication in the target language.
- T helps Ss to formulate what they want to say, but will not intervene to correct errors of form.

- The emphasis is on spontaneous, exploratory talk and confidence building, within the privacy of the small group.
- Success in achieving the goals of the tasks helps Ss' motivation.

Planning

- Planning prepares Ss for the next stage, where they are asked to briefly report to the whole class how they did the task and what the outcome was.
- Ss draft and rehearse what they want to say or write.
- T goes around to advise students on language, suggesting phrases and helping Ss to polish and correct their language.
- If the reports are in writing, T can encourage peer editing and use of dictionaries.
- The emphasis is on clarity, organization, and accuracy, as appropriate for a public presentation.
- Individual students often take this chance to ask questions about specific language items.

Report

- T asks some pairs to report briefly to the whole class so everyone can compare findings, or begin a survey. There must be a purpose for others to listen. Sometimes only one or two groups report in full; others comment and add extra points. The class may take notes.
- T chairs, comments on the content of group reports, rephrases perhaps, but gives no overt public correction.

The language focus

Analysis

- T sets some language-focused tasks, based on the texts student read or on the transcripts of the recordings they heard. Examples include the following:
    - Find words and phrases related to the topic or text.
    - Read the transcript, find words ending in "s" and say what the "s" means.
    - Find all the words in the simple past form. Say which refer to past time and which do not.
    - Underline and classify the questions in the transcript.
- T starts Ss off, then students continue, often in pairs.

- T goes around to help. Ss can ask individual questions.
- In plenary, T then reviews the analysis, possibly listing relevant language on the board. Ss may take notes.

Practice

- T conducts practice activities as needed, based on the language analysis work already on the board, or using examples from the text or transcript. Practice activities can include:
  - Choral repetition of the phrases identified and classified
  - Memory challenge games based on partially erased examples or using lists already on blackboard for progressive deletion
  - Sentence completion (base sentence set by one team for another)
  - Matching the past-tense verbs (jumbled) with the subject or objects they had in the text
  - Dictionary reference with words from text or transcript

Teaching talk as performance

Teaching talk as performance requires a different teaching strategy. Jones (1996:17) comments:

> Initially, talk as performance needs to be prepared for and scaffolded in much the same way as written text, and many of the teaching strategies used to make understandings of written text accessible can be applied to the formal uses of spoken language.

This approach involves providing examples or models of speeches, oral presentations, stories, etc., through video or audio recordings or written examples. These are then analyzed, or "deconstructed," to understand how such texts work and what their linguistic and other organizational features are. Questions such as the following guide this process:

- What is the speaker's purpose?
- Who is the audience?
- What kind of information does the audience expect?
- How does the talk begin, develop, and end? What moves or stages are involved?
- Is any special language used?

Students then work jointly on planning their own texts, which are then presented to the class.

Feez and Joyce's approach to text-based instruction provides a good model for teaching talk as performance (1998:v). This approach involves:

- Teaching explicitly about the structures and grammatical features of spoken and written texts
- Linking spoken and written texts to the cultural context of their use
- Designing units of work that focus on developing skills in relation to whole texts
- Providing students with guided practice as they develop language skills for meaningful communication through whole texts

Feez and Joyce (1998: 28–31) give the following description of how a text-based lesson proceeds:

Phase 1 Building the context
In this stage, students:

- Are introduced to the social context of an authentic model of the text-type being studied
- Explore features of the general cultural context in which the text-type is used and the social purposes the text-type achieves
- Explore the immediate context of situation by investigating the register of a model text that has been selected on the basis of the course objectives and learner need

An exploration of register involves:

- Building knowledge of the topic of the model text and knowledge of the social activity in which the text is used, e.g., job seeking

- Understanding the roles and relationships of the people using the text and how these are established and maintained, e.g., the relationship between a job seeker and a prospective employer

- Understanding the channel of communication being used, e.g., using the telephone, or speaking face-to-face with members of an interview panel

Context building activities include:

- Presenting the context through pictures, audiovisual materials, realia, excursions, field-trips, guest speakers, etc.
- Establishing the social purpose through discussions or surveys, etc.
- Cross-cultural activities, such as comparing differences in the use of the text in two cultures
- Comparing the model text with other texts of the same or contrasting type, e.g., comparing a job interview with a complex spoken exchange involving close friends, a work colleague, or a stranger in a service encounter

Phase 2 Modeling and deconstructing the text
In this stage, students:

- Investigate the structural pattern and language features of the model
- Compare the model with other examples of the same text-type

Feez and Joyce (1998:29) comment that "modeling and deconstruction are undertaken at both the whole text, clause, and expression levels. It is at this stage that many traditional ESL language teaching activities come into their own."

Phase 3 Joint construction of the text
In this stage:

- Students begin to contribute to the construction of whole examples of the text-type
- The teacher gradually reduces the contribution to text construction, as the students move closer to being able to control text-type independently

Joint construction activities include:

- Teacher questioning, discussing and editing whole class construction, then scribing onto board or overhead transparencies
- Skeleton texts
- Jigsaw and information-gap activities
- Small group construction of tests
- Self-assessment and peer assessment activities

Phase 4 Independent construction of the text
In this stage:

- Students work independently with the text
- Learner performances are used for achievement assessment

Independent construction activities include:

- Listening tasks, e.g., comprehension activities in response to live or recorded material such as performing a task, sequencing pictures, numbering, ticking or underlining material on a worksheet, and answering questions
- Listening and speaking tasks, e.g., role plays, and simulated or authentic dialogs
- Speaking tasks, e.g., spoken presentation to class, a community organization, or a workplace
- Reading tasks, e.g., comprehension activities in response to written material such as performing a task, sequencing pictures, numbering, ticking or underlining material on a worksheet, and answering questions
- Writing tasks which demand that students draft and present whole texts

Phase 5 Linking to related texts
In this stage, students investigate how what they have learned in this teaching/learning cycle can be related to:

- Other texts in the same or similar context
- Future or past cycles of teaching and learning

Activities that link the text-type to related texts include:

- Comparing the use of the text-type across different fields
- Researching other text-types used in the same field
- Role-playing what happens if the same text-type is used by people with different roles and relationships
- Comparing spoken and written modes of the same text-type
- Researching how a key language feature used in this text-type is used in other text-types

Evaluating performance on speaking activities

The third issue involved in planning speaking activities is determining the expected level of performance on a speaking task and the criteria that will be used to assess student performance. For any activity we use in class, whether it be one that seeks to develop proficiency in using talk as interaction, transaction, or performance, we need to consider what successful completion of the activity involves. Is accuracy of pronunciation and grammar important? Is each participant expected to speak for about the same amount of time? Is it acceptable if a speaker uses many long pauses and repetitions? If a speaker's contribution to a discussion is off topic, does it matter?

As the above questions illustrate, the types of criteria we use to assess a speaker's oral performance during a classroom activity will depend on which kind of talk we are talking about and the kind of classroom activity we are using. In a report on teaching discussion skills, Green, Christopher, and Lam (2002:228) recommend assigning one student to serve as an observer during a discussion activity, using the following observation form:

	Number of contributions by students					
	A	B	C	D	E	F
1. Total number of contributions made						
2. Responding supportively						
3. Responding aggressively						
4. Introducing a new (relevant) point						
5. Digressing from the topic						

A speaking activity that requires talk as performance (e.g., a mini-lecture) would require very different assessment criteria. These might include:

- Clarity of presentation: i.e., the extent to which the speaker organizes information in an easily comprehensible order
- Use of discourse markers, repetition, and stress to emphasize important points and to make the lecture structure more salient to the listeners

Different speaking activities such as conversations, group discussions, and speeches make different types of demands on learners. They require different kinds and levels of preparation and support, and different criteria must be used to assess how well students carry them out.

Conclusion

I will conclude with a set of questions I use to guide myself when preparing speaking activities for the classroom or for textbooks. I also use these questions with teachers in workshops that focus on developing and reviewing classroom materials.

- What will be the focus of the activity – talk as interaction, transaction, or performance?
- How will the activity be modeled?
- What stages will the activity be divided into?
- What language support will be needed?
- What resources will be needed?
- What learning arrangements will be needed?
- What level of performance is expected?
- How and when will feedback be given?

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