



DESIGNING SPEAKING MATERIALS



Teachers are


- i Evaluators and selectors of materials
- i Adapters of materials
- i Developers of materials
- i Users of materials
- i Language teaching professionals





DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF SPEAKING

- i More than the other language skills, speech production is intimately tied up with questions relating to affect and identity. How you sound, how well you are understood, and how you project yourself in a range of discourse contexts are inextricably linked in ways that do not hold for the written mode.

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- i Whereas a text can be edited and retracted, reread, analyzed, and objectified from “outside”, spontaneous spoken discourse unites speaker and content at the time of production.


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- i To become a proficient user in spontaneous conversational settings, a second language user needs to acquire an array of cultural and pragmatic skills and knowledge alongside the building blocks of vocabulary and grammar, fluency, and pronunciation

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- i The demands of speech processing in real-time conversational and other speaking contexts place tremendous cognitive load on the second language user as they attempt to draw together the various elements from lexical retrieval to syntactic processing to the motor skills of speech articulation.



Therefore, materials to teach the skill of speaking need to find a balance between several competing demands:

1. individual speakers' affective needs in private and unpredictable discourse contexts (for instance, how to show interest and emotion or handle criticism or differences of opinions appropriately)



2. Informal day-to-day encounters

3. Public or formal uses of spoken discourse such as presentations, examinations, interviews, or formal meetings where accuracy and lexical range may be more valued and cognitive demands are high.

4. Local and international varieties of spoken English



AIMS OF MATERIALS TO TEACH SPEAKING


- i to raise awareness of the feature of speech (speaking does automatically split itself up into neat sentences, and teaching speaking as if it were a matter of placing one accurate sentence after another as in formal writing does not help the learner.)

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- i To help learners understand that effective speaking skills are based on a collaboration between language users.
 - i The fact that context and user strongly influence language choices and interpretations.



TWO MAIN AREAS TO FOCUS ON


- i The learner needs to become aware of some of the differences between spoken and written mode, the “give and take” of speaking, the greater tolerance of mistakes and lower vocabulary range, and the potential for cultural differences


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- i They also need to build strong language production skills, including confident projection of the voice, pronunciation and fluency, pace, gesture/gaze and so on. Often, aspects of the spoken form (for example, idioms or strategies for seeking clarification) are taught in isolation from these fundamental productive skills



ASSESSING MATERIALS FOR THE SKILL OF SPEAKING

- i Are the aims of the materials clear?
- i Are these aims compatible with the nature of speech?
- i What aspect of spoken discourse is being taught/presented, exactly?
- i Is the aspect being taught/presented really something particular to speech, or is it using speech as a means of practicing a language feature/function?

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- i What level of fluency and ease of pronunciation do these materials assume the student has? Is this at odds with the apparent level of the course or of your class?
 - i Are these materials merely prompts for talk, or do they have a clear aim relating to the spoken mode?

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- i Are any uses of discourse strategies being highlighted?
 - i Are there any references to cultural ways of using spoken language?