TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS

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Thinking about spoken language

- **Speaking is an active process of negotiating meaning and of using social knowledge of the situation, the topic and the other speaker**
- **Speaking does not always mean using grammatically complete and written-like sentences**
- **Speaking strategies differ depending on the purpose of interaction**
- **Speakers jointly develop the text and work together to structure the spoken interaction**

Typical learner problems

- Speaks slowly and takes too long to compose utterances
- Cannot actively participate in conversation
- Spoken English doesn't sound natural
- Poor grammar
- Poor conversation

Typical learner problems

- Cannot sustain spoken interaction beyond short segments
- Frequent communication breakdowns and misunderstandings
- Lack of vocabulary needed to talk about common utterances
- Lack of communication strategies

What makes oral language difficult for the learners?

- Finding the meaningful units of speech – clusters/chunks
- Rate of delivery
- Stress, rhythm, intonation
- Reduced forms
- Idiomatic usage
- Interactive and immediate response
- Native speaker fluency and pronunciation as model
- Social risk-taking required

What's involved in speaking?

Speaking involves three areas of knowledge
- Mechanics (pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary)

- Functions (transaction and interaction): Knowing when clarity of message is essential (transaction/information exchange) and when precise understanding is not required (interaction/relationship building)

- Social and cultural rules and norms (turn-taking, rate of speech, length of pauses between speakers, relative roles of participants). Understanding how to take into account who is speaking to whom, in what circumstances, about what, and for what reason (social skills)

Three major speech types

- Transactions
- Interactions
- performances

The negotiation of meaning-macro level

- Overall discourse structure-macro level
- Turn taking-micro level
- Topic management-micro level

Features of transactions

- Giving or obtaining information, or getting goods and services
- Focus on message
- Communication strategies
- Not dependant on grammatical accuracy

Features of transactions

Information oriented:
- Asking for directions
- Describing how to use something
- Sharing opinions and ideas
- Discussing plans

Goods and services oriented:
- Focus on achieving a goal or service-checking into a hotel-shopping-ordering a meal

Features of interpersonal interactions

- Create social interaction
- Address the face needs of participants
- Focus on participants and their social needs
- Create social interaction
- "Face" the needs of participants
- Focus on participants and their social needs

Features of interpersonal interactions

- Interactive, requiring two-way participation
- Feedback and response
- Reflect patterns and rules-e.g., for openings, topic choice, and closings
- Include greetings, small talk, and narratives

Structure of interpersonal interactions

Opening stages	Beginnings (eg. Salutations and greetings, such as Hello, How are you)
	Initiating exchanges, which establish social relations (e.g. formulaic expressions such as How are things, What have you been up to since I last saw you?)
Middle stages	Development of a wide range of topics
Ending stages	Pre-closing exchanges signalling the ending (e.g discourse markers and formulaic expressions such as Anyway, Well, I'd better be off, Thanks for calling
	Closings (e.g. Bye, See you)

Features of interpersonal interactions

Story telling texts   **Gossip**

                    Opinions   **Chat**

              Continuum of genre types in casual conversation
                                         Slade (1997)

Stages of spoken narrative

Abstract	What is the story going to be about?
Orientation	Who were the participants? When and where did the action take place? In what circumstances?
Complicating action	Then what happened? What problems occurred?
Evaluation	What is the point in the story? So what?
Resolution	How did the events sort themselves out? What finally happened?
Coda	What is the bridge between the events and the present situation of the narrative?

Features of performances

- An audience
- Speaker creates a "product"
- A single speaker produces longer stretches of discourse
- Recognizable "scripts" e.g., welcome speech, business presentation, class talk

Features of performances

- **Accuracy of language**
- **Speech is monitored for accuracy**
- **Language more formal**
- **More like written language**

Abilities required in successful spoken interactions – Bygate (1989)

1. Signalling that one wishes to speak	**This involves using gesture, phrases or sounds (eg Ummm, Well, Can I just same something here, Hang on a minute)**
2. Recognizing the right moment to speak	**This involve recognizing intonation stress, such as falling intonation or changes of pace or volume, pauses or closing discourse markers (e.g. So anyway, yeah)**
3. Using one's turn without losing it before it is finished	**This may involve saying the right amount and getting to the point which vary from culture to culture**

Micro features – turn taking – Bygate (1989)

4. Recognizing signals of other people's desire to speak	This may involve being aware of gesture and body language and initiating phrases or sounds (e.g. er, um)
5. Letting someone else have a turn	This may involve nominating another speaker linguistically (e.g. What do you think? You know him, don't you?)

Micro features – topic management

- **Topics in conversation usually put up by one speaker**
- **Developed or lapses usually through mutual consent**
- **Introduction of a new topic places obligation on other speakers to move it forward**
- **Casual conversation is prone to rapid changes of topic**

Summary-aspects of oral fluency

- Involves transactional, interactional, and performance
- Use of conversational routines
- Use of short and long turns
- Topic range
- Mastery of basic functions
- Use of adjacency pairs

Summary-aspects of oral fluency

- Use of communication strategies
- Use of casual and formal language (politeness)
- Turn-taking skills
- Back channeling (verbal and non-verbal)

Oral skills involve

Ȼ **Extended talk:**
use of connected sentences to
- describe how to make something
- describe something
- give information

Oral skills involve

Ȼ **Knowledge of**
- grammar
- vocabulary
- pronunciation
- stress
- intonation
- communication strategies
- body language

Oral skills involve

- Interactional skills
  socialisation
  telling stories (gossip)

Oral skills involve

- Listening skills
  use clues in the situation to help them work out the meaning
  - identify gist of situation
  - identify specific details
  - follow instructions
  - inferring
  - sequence of events