

Teaching Listening and Speaking: From Theory to Practice

Jack C. Richards

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 as a consequence of the role of English as the world's international language have given priority to finding more effective ways to teach English and 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 have undergone considerable changes in recent years however, and in this paper I will explore what some of those changes are and what their implications are 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. University entrance exams, school leaving and other examinations now 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 saw 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 to the role of prior knowledge and schema in comprehension. Listening came to be seen as an interpretive process. At the same time the field of discourse analysis and conversational analysis revealed a great deal about the nature and organization of spoken discourse and led to a realization that written texts read aloud could not provide a suitable basis for developing the abilities needed to process real-time authentic discourse. Current views of listening hence 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.

Listening has also been considered from a further perspective in recent years when it is examined in relation not only to comprehension, but also to language learning. Since listening can provide much of the input and data 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, and how noticing can be part of the process by which learners can incorporate new words forms, and structures into their developing communicative competence. This role for listening will also be examined here.

Approaches to the teaching of speaking in EFL/ESL 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, reflecting 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 syllabuses built around notion, functions, skills, tasks or 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 they 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 to 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.

Approaches to the teaching of listening and speaking will be explored here in the light of the kinds of issues discussed above. 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

I wish to consider listening from two different perspectives, which I refer to as *listening as comprehension*, and the second, *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 which triggers the further development of second language proficiency.

Characteristics of spoken discourse

In order to understand the nature of listening processes, we need to consider some of the characteristics of spoken discourse and the special problems it poses 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 “on-line” and there is often no chance to listen to it again. Spoken discourse also often 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 intra clausal 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 clauses co-ordinated. Most of the clauses used are simple conjuncts or adjuncts. Spoken texts too are often context dependent and personal, often assuming shared background knowledge. Lastly, spoke texts may be spoken with many different accents, from standard to non-standard, to 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 refers to using the incoming input as the basis for understanding the message. Comprehension begins with the data that has been received which is analysed as successive levels of organization – sounds, words, clauses, sentences, texts – until meaning is arrived at. 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. They [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."

In order to understand this utterance using bottom-up processing, we have to mentally break the utterance down into its components. This is referred to as

“chunking” and 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 expresses, 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 which 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 be able 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 relations 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, exercises such as dictation, cloze listening, the use of multiple choice questions after a text and similar activities which require close and detailed recognition and processing of the input and which assume that everything the listener needs to understand is contained in the input.

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

- Identifying the referents of pronouns in an utterance
- Recognize the time reference of an utterance
- Distinguish between positive and negative statements
- Recognize the order in 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:

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

Students hear:

- That's a nice camera.
- That's not a very good one.
- This coffee isn't hot.
- This meal is really tasty.

Students choose the correct response

- | | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |

b) 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

- The bank's *downtown* branch is closed today.
- Is the city office open on *Sunday*?
- I'm going to the *museum* today.

Students check information focus

- | | |
|-------|------|
| Where | When |
| Where | When |
| Where | When |

c) 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, 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. Background knowledge may take several forms. It may be previous knowledge about the topic of discourse, it may be situational or contextual knowledge, or it may be 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 respond to the following utterance:

“I heard on the news there was a big earthquake in Los Angeles last night.”

On recognizing the word “earthquake” we generate a set of questions we want to hear or obtain responses to:

- 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 about the questions.

Or 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 surgery)
- Participants: (e.g. the dentist, the patient, the dentist’s assistant)
- Goals: (e.g. to have a check up 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 places between my colleague and I:

- “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. A minimum amount of information is given 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 and 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 about a specific topic or topic, 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 the following statements:

- a) I’m going to the casino.
- b) I’m going to the dentist.
- c) I’m going to a job interview.

The meaning of “good luck” differs according to the situation we mentally refer it to, 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, and 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 crab grass 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 to apply to the narrative – “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 and 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 were mentioned.

Students listen to part of a story, complete the rest of it, then listen and compare endings.

Students read news headlines, guess what happened, then listen to the 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 depending 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. An experienced cook, for example, might listen to a radio chef describing a recipe for cooking chicken and listen to compare the chef’s recipe with her own. She has a precise schema to apply to the task and listens to register similar and differences. She makes more use of top-down processing. A novice cook listening to the same program however, 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 sequence in current teaching materials involves a three part lesson sequence consisting of pre-listening, while listening and post-listening and contains activities which link bottom-up and top-down listening (Field, 1998). The pre-listening phase prepares the 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 which 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, focussing on sections that students could not follow. This may involve a micro-analysis of sections of the text to enable students to recognize such feature as blends, reduced words, ellipsis etc 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 makes use of 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: those 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 non-linguistic input;
- *Storing and memory processes:* associated with the storing of linguistic and non-linguistic 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

Planning	This is a strategy for determining learning objectives and deciding the means by which the objectives can be achieved.
<i>General listening development</i>	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
<i>Specific listening task</i>	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
<i>General listening development</i>	Consider progress against a set of pre-determined 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
<i>Specific listening task</i>	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.
<i>General listening development</i>	Assess listening progress against a set of pre-determined criteria Assess the effectiveness of learning and practice strategies Assess the appropriateness of learning goals and objectives set
<i>Specific listening task</i>	Check the appropriateness and the accuracy of what has been understood Determine the effectiveness of strategies used 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 the 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 2006

Step	Activity
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 arrive at the understanding. They identify the parts that cause confusion and disagreement and make a note of the parts of the text that 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 has been based on the following assumptions:

- Listening serves the goal of extracting meaning from messages
- In order to do this learners have to be taught how to use both bottom up and top down processes in arriving at an understanding of messages

- The language of utterances, i.e. the precise words, syntax, expressions used by speakers are temporary carriers of meaning. Once meaning has been 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 seek to enable listeners to recognize and act on the general, specific or implied meaning of utterances, and these include sequencing tasks, true-false comprehension tasks, picture identification tasks, summary tasks, dicto comp 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 that are typically not employed when comprehension is the focus of listening are those which require accurate recognition and recall of words, syntax and expressions that occurred in the input. Such activities would include dictation, cloze exercises, identifying differences between a spoken and written text. Activities such as these are discouraged because they focus on listening for words rather than listening for meaning, i.e. they give too much emphasis to bottom-up listening processes rather than top down ones.

Few would question the approach to the teaching of listening described above 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 serve as a trigger which activates 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 noticing features of the input, and their later emergence in his own speech.

In order for language development to take place, however, more appears to be 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, they need to be used in oral production. This involves a process that has been variously referred to as restructuring, complexification and producing stretched output. Van Patten (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 which 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 can firstly 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 would be situations where listening to extract information is the primary focus of listening, such as listening to lectures, listening to announcements, listening to sales presentations etc, and situations where listening serves primarily a transactional function, such as 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 these 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 in this case?

I would propose a two-part cycle of teaching activities as the basis for the listening as acquisition phase of a lesson, namely:

- a) noticing activities
- b) 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 from a list, 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:

- in the case of conversational texts, pair reading of the tape scripts
- written sentence- completion tasks requiring use of expressions and other linguistic items that occurred in the texts
- dialog practice based on dialogs that incorporate items from the text
- role plays in which students are required to use key language from the texts

For example here is the listening text from an activity in Interchange Level 2, 3rd edition.

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 focus 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 text above 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 hence 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 above

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.

By linking listening tasks to speaking tasks in the way described above, opportunities can be provided for students to notice how language is used in different communicative contexts, and 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 or foreign language learners. Learners consequently often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how well 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, questioning strategies) to

indirect approaches which 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. Luoma (2004) for example, 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 on-line processing
- Involved reciprocity (i.e. interactions are jointly constructed)
- Shows variation (e.g. between formal and casual speech), reflecting speaker roles, speaking purpose, and the context

Some of these features were discussed in the section on listening above.

Conversational routines

A marked feature of conversational discourse is the use of fixed expressions or "routines", which often have specific functions in conversation and which 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 those 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 amove 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, and 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 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 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 of more or less qual status, a casual speech style is appropriate that stresses affiliation and solidarity.

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 are quite distinct in terms of form and function and require different teaching approaches.

Talk as interaction

This refers to what we normally mean by "conversation" and describes interaction which serves a primarily social function. When people meet, they exchange greetings, engage in small talk and chit chat, 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 2007, 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 the when you first saw him? Were you really ---- nervous?
 Brenda: --- Well, I was hanging out of a window watching him in his card, 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 ti 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 her or him 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
- Interrupting
- Reacting to others
- Using an appropriate style of speaking

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 situation that requires talk for interaction. They feel difficulty in presenting a good image of themselves and sometimes avoid situations which 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

This type of talk refers to situations where the focus is on what is said or done. The message is the central focus here and making oneself understood clearly and accurately, rather than the participants and how they interact socially with each other. In transactions,

.... talk is associated with other activities. For example, students may be engaged in hand-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 non-living 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 non-living 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 these kinds of talk are:

Classroom group discussions and problem solving activities.

A class activity during which students design a poster.

Discussing needed repairs to a computer 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 distinguishes between two different types of talk as transaction. One is 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 are transactions which 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:

Wait person: Hi, what'll it be today?

Client: Just a cappuccino please. Low fat decaf if you have it.

Wait person: Sure. Nothing to eat today?

Client: No thanks.

Wait person: Not a problem.

(Author's data)

The main features of talk as transaction are:

- It has a primarily information focus
- The main focus is 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 classroom lesson above

- 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 questioning
- 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 which can usefully be distinguished has been called talk as performance. This refers to public talk, that is, talk which transmits information before an audience such as morning talks, 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 which 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:

- There is a focus on both message and audience
- It reflects predictable organization and sequencing
- Form and accuracy is important
- Language is more like written language
- It is 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 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 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 oral English course. The first is to determine what kinds of speaking skills the course will focus on. Is it all three of the genres described above 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 issues is 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 as well as subtle phenomena that takes place under the control of “unspoken” rules. In my experience these are best taught thought providing examples embedded in naturalistic dialogs that can serve to model features such as opening and closing conversations, making small talk, recounting personal incidents and experiences, and reacting to what others say. The rules for making “small talk” are that such interactions are often initiated by a comment concerning something in the immediate vicinity or that both participants have knowledge of, and that the comment will elicit agreement, since agreement is face-preserving and non-threatening. Hence safe topics must be chosen such as the weather, the traffic and so on. Students can initially be given models to practice, such as the following:

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

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

B. _____

Another technique to practice the use of conversation starters and personal recounts involves giving conversation starters which students have to respond to by asking one or two follow-up questions. The teacher prepares a handout containing a list of conversational starters (the expressions one uses to start a conversation or to introduce a topic into a conversation such as, "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?") Students move around the class. One student reads out a starter from the list, and his or her partner responds by giving feedback or asking follow-up questions to keep the conversation going.

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 have to ask three or more questions about the topic which the student has to answer quickly. Then another student takes the hot seat. With the activity called question time, before students begin 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 is on the theme of sports, on the students' handout there will be 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?" etc. I first ask students around the class to answer the questions quickly. Then students practice asking and answering the questions in pairs.

Teaching talks as transaction

Talk as transaction is more easily planned since current communicative materials 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 activities, values clarification activities, 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 life style". "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 sequence of activities:

- 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 need for each stage
- Practicing and reviewing: students are assigned roles and practice a role play using cue cards or realia to provide language and other support

However an issue that arises in relation to 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. From this perspective grammar has a mediating role, rather than serving as an end in itself (Thornbury 1998,112). It is a resource that the learner calls upon to make meaning but the focus is on task accomplishment rather than grammatical practice. "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 their 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. Higgs and Clifford (1982,78), for example, reporting experience with foreign language teaching programs in the US, observed:

In programs that have as curricular goals an early emphasis on unstructured communication activities – minimising, 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 appear 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 (e.g. see Foster 1998, Musumeci 1996).

An example of the quality of language that is sometimes produced as students practice transactional functions of language is seen in the following example, 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.

S 1: You how old?

S2: I'm thirty-four .. thirty five.

S 1: Thirty ... five?

S 2: Five.

S 1: Problem?

S 2: I have ... a pain in my throat.

S 1: [In Spanish, What do you have?]

S 2: A pain.

S 1: [In Spanish. What's that?]

S 2: [In Spanish: A pain] A pain.

S 1. Ah, [ain.

S 2 : Yes, and it makes problem to me when I ... swallow.

S 1: When do you have ...?

S 1: Since yesterday morning.

S 1: [In Spanish. No, I mean, where do you have the pain?] It has a pain in?

S 2. In my throat.

S 1: 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.

S 2: Big meal. I er ... I don't know? Fish?

S 1: Fiish, you have to eat, er, fish, for example.

This example shows how low-level students when carrying out communication tasks, often rely on a lexicalised system of communication that is heavily dependent upon on vocabulary and memorized chunks of language as well as both verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to get meaning across. Several ways 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 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 create interaction mediated by a task and then build language awareness and language development around task performance. She proposes the following sequence of activities:

Pretask activities

Introduction to topic and task

- o 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.
- o 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.
- o Ss can be given preparation time to think about how to do the task.
- o Ss can hear a recording of a parallel task being done (so long as this does not give away the solution to the problem).
- o If the task is based on a text, Ss read a part of it.

The task cycle

Task

- o 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.
- o T walks round and monitors, encouraging in a supportive way everyone's attempt at communication in the target language.
- o T helps Ss to formulate what they want to say, but will not intervene to correct errors of form.
- o The emphasis is on spontaneous, exploratory talk and confidence building, within the privacy of the small group.
- o Success in achieving the goals of the tasks help Ss' motivation.

Planning

- o Planning prepares for the next stage where Ss are asked to report briefly to the whole class how they did the task and what the outcome was.
- o Ss draft and rehearse what they want to say or write.

- T goes round 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. (N.B: 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 their reports, rephrases perhaps, but gives no overt public correction.

The language focus

Analysis

- T sets some language-focussed tasks, based on the texts student read or on the transcripts of they recordings they heard. Examples include the following.
Find words and phrases related top 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 round to help; Ss can ask individual questions.
- In plenary, then reviews the analysis, possibly writing relevant language up on the board in list form: Ss may make 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 (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 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" in order 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 do 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 of how talk as performance can be taught (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 which 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.

Phase1. 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 which 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. such as *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, 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 Modelling 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 “modelling 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 OHT
- Skeleton texts
- Jigsaw and information gap activities
- Small group construction of texts
- Dictogloss
- 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, answering questions
- Listening and speaking tasks, e.g. role plays, simulated or authentic dialogues
- Speaking tasks e.g. spoken presentation to class, community organization, 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, 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 learnt 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 which 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 type of criteria we use to assess a speaker's oral performance during a classroom activity will depend on what kind of talk we are talking about and the kind of classroom activity we are using. Green, Christopher and Lam (2002, 228) in a report on teaching discussion skills recommend assigning one student to serve as an observer during a discussion activity using the following observation form:

	Number of contributions					
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 however. 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 obviously have to be used in assessing how well students carry them out.

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

- What will the focus of the activity be: 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?

Conclusions

Approaches to both the teaching of listening and speaking have changed considerably in recent years as insights from research and theory have prompted a rethinking of the processes involved in second language listening, the nature of oral interaction in a second or foreign language, and a reconsideration of what it means to teach these important components of second language proficiency. Cognitively based views of comprehension have clarified how listening draws on different kinds of knowledge – both linguistic, cultural, and contextual – and emphasize the need to help learners understand and use both bottom-up and top-down processes in listening as well as make use of effective listening strategies. Effective approaches to teaching listening need to make a clear distinction between teaching and testing, and provide learners with guided practice in using relevant listening skills for specific listening purposes depending on their needs and their proficiency level.

Approaches to the teaching of speaking have also been able to draw on a better understanding of the nature of spoken language and of the characteristics of different types of spoken discourse (interactional, transactional, and performance-based). The challenge for teachers and materials developers is to find strategies that help learners develop fluency, accuracy, as well as

appropriateness of language use. A combination of teaching methods is appropriate depending on whether the focus of an activity is accuracy, fluency, or appropriateness. The most important question in teaching speaking skills is how can we help learners move beyond the level of *linguistic competence* (mastery of the linguistic system), to achieve *communicative competence*, that is, knowing how to use English appropriately for a range of different communicative purposes, particularly social purposes, educationally-related purposes and work-related purposes. Hopefully the suggestions outlined above and the further references listed below will provide some of the answers to these important questions.

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