

# Unit 10 Teaching Speaking

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**Aims of the unit:** Through learning and discussion ,students will get to know:

1. the main characteristics of spoken language
2. principles for teaching speaking
3. typical types of speaking activities
4. How to organize speaking activities?

# 10.1 What are the characteristics of spoken language?

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- Speaking is a skill, just like swimming, driving a car, or playing ping-pong.
- Too often, in the traditional classroom, the learning of English has been relegated to linguistic knowledge only, e.g. knowledge of vocabulary and grammar rules, with little or no attention paid to practising language skill.

# How can we tell the difference between knowledge and skill?

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- According to Bygate (1987:4) one “fundamental difference is that both can be understood and memorised, but only a skill can be imitated and practised”.
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# Characteristics of spoken language

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- **Spontaneity**
  - **Time-constraint**
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# Spontaneity

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In most situations, people do not plan ahead of time what they are going to say.

The fact that speech is spontaneous means that it is full of false starts, repetitions, incomplete sentences, and short phrases.

Should we expect the students to produce complete sentences in language classroom?

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# Time-constraint

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- The students must be able to produce unplanned utterances in real time; otherwise people will not have the patience to listen to them.
  - Which of the following activities do you think would help to prepare students for real life speech in English?
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- ❑ Reading aloud (needs to be supplemented with more realistic activities as the level increases).
  - ❑ Giving a prepared talk (may be used for advanced level)
  - ❑ Learning a piece of text or dialogue by heart more realistic activities as the level increases).
  - ❑ Interviewing someone, or being interviewed (Yes. It helps to prepare students for real life speech .)
  - ❑ Doing a drill (needs to be supplemented with more realistic activities as the level increases) .
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- Also students must consider whom they are talking to and be able to check if they are being understood.
  - e.g.
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- **Kelly:** Hey Jack, how's the project coming along?
  - **Jack:** What project?
  - **Kelly:** The one you and Craig are working on.
  - **Jack:** Craig and I?
  - **Kelly:** Yeah, for the science fair.
  - **Jack:** Oh, that project. It's finished. I'm so busy working on another project for my economics class that I almost forgot about it. I hope it'll work like we want to.
  - **Kelly:** Oh, I'm sure it will.
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# 10.2 Principles for teaching speaking

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*Teacher asks the students to read the part from P159 to 160 and then gets them to think about how they can improve speaking teaching.*

- ❑ Balancing accuracy-based with fluency-based practices
  - ❑ Contextualising practice
  - ❑ Personalising practice
  - ❑ Building up confidence
  - ❑ Maximising meaningful interactions
  - ❑ Helping students develop speaking strategies
  - ❑ Making the best use of classroom learning environment to provide sufficient language input and practice for the students
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# 10.3 Designing speaking tasks

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- One important consideration: **Proficiency level** of the students (challenging but not too difficult.)
  - If the task is too easy or too difficult, the students may be demotivated.
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# Common characteristics in successful speaking tasks

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- ❑ **Maximum foreign talk**
  - ❑ **Even participation**
  - ❑ **High motivation**
  - ❑ **Right language level**
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## □ **Maximum foreign talk**

- Try to avoid students' talking in the mother tongue, and avoid too much Teacher Talk.

## □ **Even participation**

- Try to avoid outstanding students' dominating discussions. Try to guarantee **equal opportunities** for students of different levels.

## □ **High motivation**

- Interesting topic, and clear objective. Make sure that the task is in line with the students' ability
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## □ **Right language level**

- The task must be designed so that the students can complete the task successfully with the language that they have. Otherwise the task will become frustrating and the students are likely to give up or revert to the native language.
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## 10.4 Type of speaking tasks

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It is important to provide the students with a variety of speaking activities because:

- A variety of speaking activities will enable students to cope with different situations in reality.
  - Variety helps keep motivation high.
  - Variety may suit students of different learning styles.
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- There are two major purposes for listening. One is **to get information** and the other is **for social reasons**.
  - Since speaking is reciprocal of listening, the same is true of speaking.
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- According to Littlewood, as has been mentioned in Unit 2 (p. 22) communicative speaking activities can be divided into two types:  
**functional communication activities,**  
and **social interaction activities:**
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# Structural Activities

Pre-C.A.

Quasi-com. Activities

*(sent. pattern drills, dialogues, etc.)*

Functional Com. Act.

Com. Act. *(obtaining information)*

Social Interaction Act.  
*(role-playing, problem-solving, etc.)*

Information Gap, Choices & Feed-back)

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- For beginning students, **pre-communicative activities** are also necessary, which are more structural and allow the learner to practise the forms of the language. However, **we should make speaking tasks as communicative as possible.**
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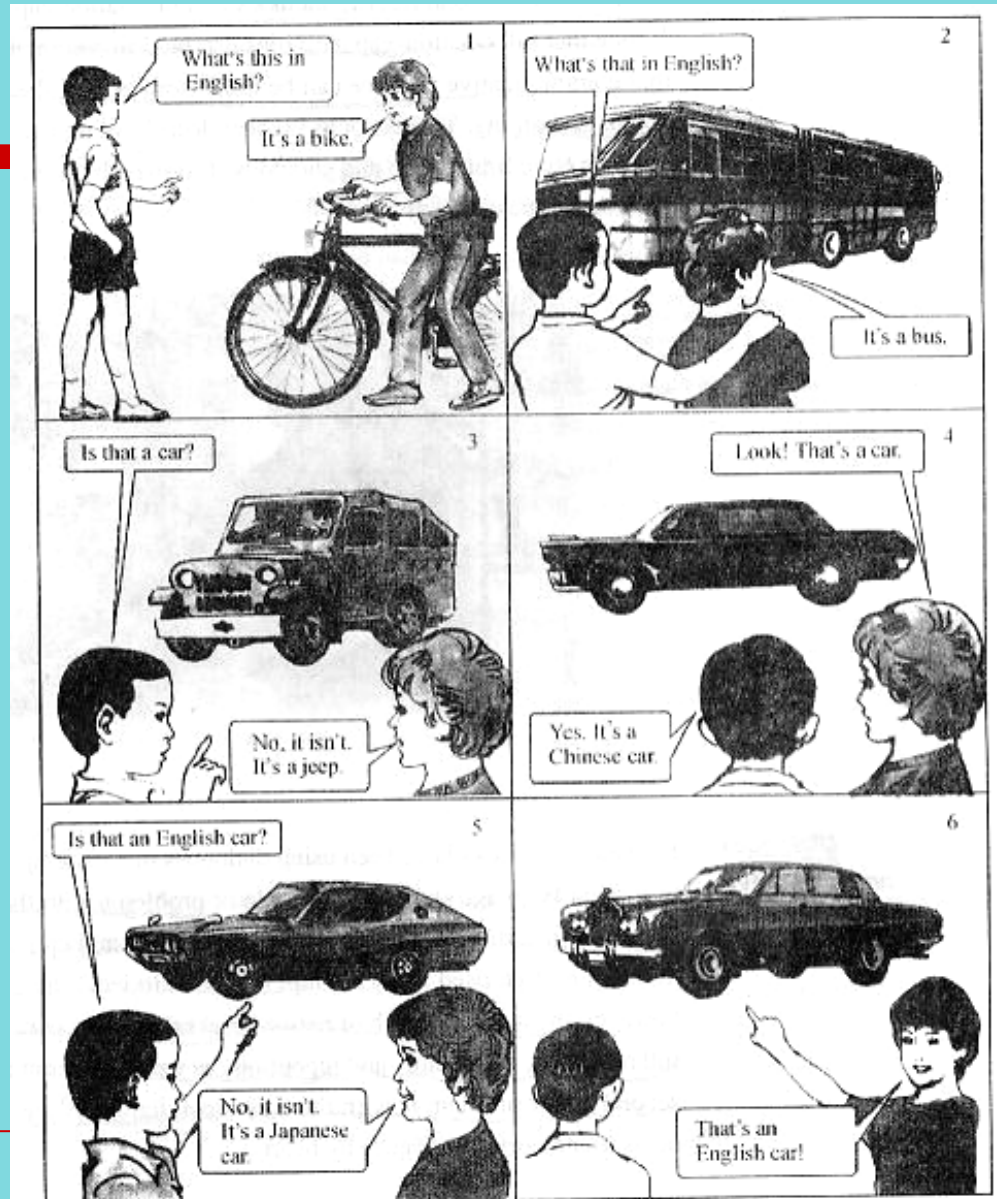
# Some types of speaking activities

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- **Controlled activities**
  - **Semi-controlled activities**
  - **Information-gap activities**
  - **Dialogues and role-plays**
  - **Activities using pictures**
  - **Problem-solving activities**
  - **Other speaking activities**
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# Information-gap activities

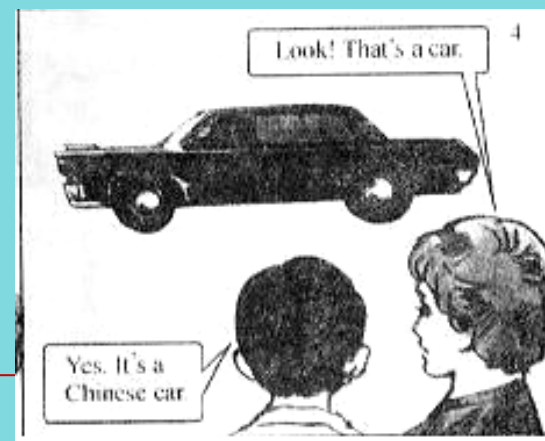
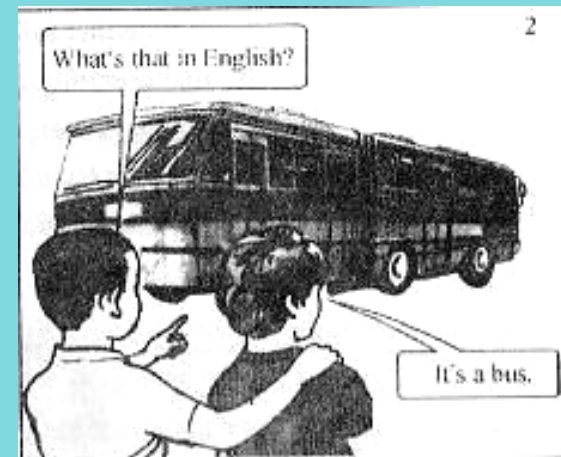
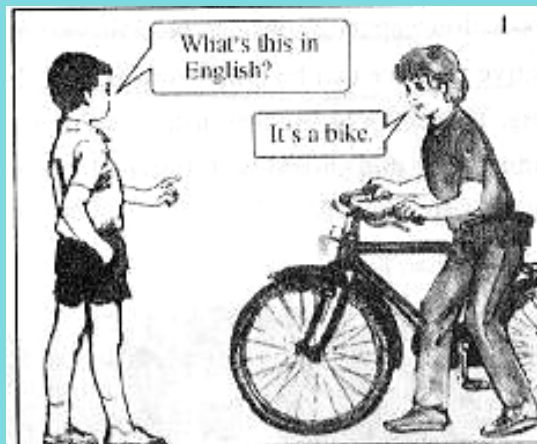
- Compare 2 activities:  
Activity A



## □ Activity B:

Use the same pictures, but cut them up, paste them on cards, and give each student a different picture.

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Directions: Ask your partner what is in his/her picture.

Fore example:

**Student A:** What's in your picture?

**Student B:** There is \_\_\_\_\_.  
What's in your picture?

**Student A:** There is \_\_\_\_\_.

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- Obviously the second activity includes an **information gap** that the first one does not.
  - **Information-gap activities** can be designed at a very elementary level, so that communicative practice can be done from almost the very beginning of foreign language learning.
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# Dialogues and role-plays

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Two problems with most dialogues in textbooks:

- **Not authentic or natural.** The natural speech of native speakers is often phrases or sentence fragments full of pauses, false starts, and repetitions.
  - **The way most dialogues are taught.** Teachers ask students to memorize dialogues by heart.
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What can a teacher do to make a dialogue more communicative?

**Example 1:** Playing the roles in a dialogue

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## Step 1. Practise the dialogue in pairs

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A: What time is it?

B: It's 3:00. Why?

A: Oh, I need to go to the store! Do you want to come?

B: OK. Just a minute. I need to finish this first.

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