ELT Methods and Practices

Unit 7: Dealing with Speaking Skills

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Contents

Task 1

The following are extracts from the speech of native speakers of English and demonstrate some of the features of naturally spoken English. Can you identify some of the features of spoken English which you wouldn't normally find in a piece of writing? Try to find examples of facilitation and compensation devices from the extracts below. Can you also provide examples of your own?

Extract 1:

It's erm – an intersection of kind of two – a kind of crossroads – of a minor road going across a major road – and I was standing there – and there was this erm- kind of ordinary car – on the minor road- just looking to come out – onto the big road – and coming down towards him on the big road was a van –followed by a lorry – now- just as he started to come onto the main road –the van – no the lorry star-started to overtake the van – not having seen the fact that another car was coming out.

Extract 2:

Teacher: Morning Mrs. Williams. I've brought the money
Secretary: Hello Mr James- erm- what money?
Teacher: you know, the money for the books
Secretary: The money for what books?
Teacher: Oh, I thought Mrs Priors had told you about the reading books for the third years.
Secretary: Oh yes, they've been ordered.
Teacher: So where shall I put it?
Secretary: What? …oh over there on the filing cabinet…

Facilitation:

a) **Simplified structure**: Use of coordinating conjunctions or no conjunction at all. Avoidance of complex noun groups with many adjectives; repetitions of same sentences adding further adjectives:

   …………………………………………..

b) **Ellipsis**: Speakers omit parts of sentences.

   …………………………………………..

c) Use of idiomatic, conventional expressions called formulaic

   ……...…………………………………..

d) **Use of time creating devices** (fillers and hesitation devices): These give the speaker time to formulate what he/she intends to say next.

   ……………………………………………...

Compensation

- Speakers frequently correct what they say, e.g. they may substitute a noun or an adjective for another.
- Speakers use false starts.
- They repeat or rephrase in order to give the listener time to understand and to remind him/her of things that were said. This helps reduce memory load and lighten planning load.

Task 2

Identifying skills and strategies

1 to 6 below are speaking skills and strategies. a – f are definitions of these strategies, and i to vi are examples. Match the speaking skills and strategies with the definitions and examples.

Speaking strategies	definition	example
1. turn taking		
2. repair		
3. seeking clarification		
4. feedback		
5. boundary or transition marking		
6. paralinguistic devices		

Definitions:

   a. Asking the person you are speaking to explain something they have said.

   b. Using things like body language, gesture and eye contact to send a message to the person you are speaking to.

   c. Signalling that you have finished speaking or knowing when and how to get into a conversation.

   d. Indicating that you have finished talking about a topic and perhaps also showing that you are about to introduce a new topic into the conversation.

   e. Correcting yourself when you speak, or rephrasing something when you feel the person you are talking to hasn't understood.

   f. Using small words or sounds to indicate to the speaker that you are listening to what they are saying.

Examples:

   i. A: I suppose I was feeling depressed … no, what I really mean is … I was feeling sad.

   ii. A: What was that you said about using the washing machine?
B: Oh – you can use it whenever you like.
A: Oh so I don't need to book a time.
B: No.

   iii. A: Ok … now let's move on to …

   iv. After making her point, Ann sat back in the chair and looked at her colleagues to see if anyone would disagree with her.

   v. A: … and the weather was fantastic

B: Great
A: It didn't rain once

   vi. A: .. and I think that's all we can say about it.
B: OK, but I think another point worth considering is …

Task 3

Numbers 1 to 5 describe different tasks that can help develop students' awareness of speaking skills and strategies. Letters a to e describe activities that can be included with these tasks. Match the tasks to activities.

Tasks	Activities
1. Students analyse a transcript of some authentic native speaker interaction.	
2. Students watch an authentic video or DVD of native speakers performing specific spoken genre.	
3. Students perform a speaking task in small groups. One of the students takes the role of observer.	
4. The teacher films students performing a specific spoken genre.	
5. The teacher gives students invented words or phrases to use in a conversation.	

Activities

a. The filmed item is played back to students who evaluate their ability to use speaking strategies and communicate clearly.

b. The excerpt is played without sound and the teacher asks students to focus on the body language and eye contact that native speakers use.

c. The students try to drop the word or expression into the conversation thereby forcing the other student to seek clarification.

d. The teacher asks students to find and underline specific words or expressions that are used as speaking strategies.

e. The observer is asked to focus on two or three speaking strategies and evaluate the group's effectiveness. After the activity the observer gives feedback to the group on these strategies.

Task 4

Below is a list of activity types for speaking. Read the description of each type and decide which of the interaction skills students are most likely to develop and use in each type of activity:

1. Questions and answers: These activities are based on the notion of information gap where students must interact in order to complete the information which is missing.

2. Dialogues and role plays: Short dialogues based on small situations: answering the door, making a telephone call, welcoming visitors etc. or acting out social roles based on simple situations and character descriptions.

3. Pictures and picture stories: for example spot the difference, describing pictures, sequencing pictures to tell a story.

4. Puzzles and problems: These require learners to make guesses, draw on their general knowledge and personal experience, use their imagination and test their powers of logical reasoning.

5. Discussions and decisions: These require the learner to collect information and share information to reach a decision.

6. Monologues: These activities help students practise speaking in long turns (telling jokes, recounting the plot of a film, book, giving a short lecture or speech).

Task 5

Problems with fluency with some learners

The following are some of the problems of the "silent learner"- the student who finds great difficulty in contributing to any kind of discussion in English and who is reluctant to take advantage of opportunities to develop oral fluency.

a. Inhibition/lack of confidence.

b. Fear of making mistakes.

c. The feeling of having nothing to say on the subject.

d. Lack of appropriate language.

e. Lack of practice in conventions of conversational interaction.

Below is a list of measures the teacher can take in order help students overcome these problems. Decide which measure is more appropriate for each of the problems.

- Pre-teach key vocabulary.
- Thoroughly prepare for any discussion through brainstorming and exchange of ideas.
- Organise the class so that activities take place in small groups.
- Pursue a policy of placing low priority on correction in certain activities.
- Provide stimulus materials (e.g. texts on the topic to be discussed).
- Analyse a video tape of native speakers involved in heated discussion.

Can you suggest any other measures?

Task 6

Below are some steps in a typical lesson that aims to develop spoken fluency. Put these steps in the most logical order.

a. The teacher elicits or gives feedback either on the content or the performance of the speaking activity.

b. The students spend some time planning the content of the speaking activity.

c. The teacher introduces the speaking activity and perhaps provides some information input that will help students carry out the activity.

d. The teacher gives feedback on the language that students used in the activity and might highlight and correct mistakes that learners made during the activity.

e. The teacher gives instructions for the activity. This might mean that the students read some instructions or perhaps role cards.

f. The students do the speaking activity and the teacher monitors and listens in on their progress.

Notes

Note on History of Published Versions:

The present work is the edition 1.0.

Reference Note:

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Financing

- The present educational material has been developed as part of the educational work of the instructor.

- The project "Open Academic Courses of the University of Athens" has only financed the reform of the educational material.

- The project is implemented under the operational program "Education and Lifelong Learning" and funded by the European Union (European Social Fund) and National Resources.