




*Welcome
to class*



**Let's watch
video!**



Unit 1:
**Successful oral
fluency
practice**



SUCCESSFUL ORAL FLUENCY PRACTICE

IMAGINE OR RECALL A SUCCESSFUL SPEAKING ACTIVITY IN THE CLASSROOM THAT YOU HAVE EITHER ORGANIZED AS TEACHER OR PARTICIPATED IN AS STUDENT. WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS ACTIVITY THAT MAKE YOU JUDGE IT AS SUCCESSFUL?



COMPARE YOUR IDEAS WITH THOSE SHOWN IN THE BOX BELOW.

Characteristics of a Successful Speaking Activity

- ❖ **More learner talk.** As much as possible a big part of the period allotted to the activity is in fact occupied by learner talk.
- ❖ **Even participation.** Classroom discussion is not dominated by a minority of talkative participants. All get a chance to speak and participate in the discussion.
- ❖ **High motivation.** Learners are eager to speak because they are interested in the topic and have something new to say about it.
- ❖ **Acceptable language.** Learners express themselves in utterances that are relevant, easily comprehensible to each other, and of an acceptable level of language accuracy.

In practice, however, few classroom activities succeed in satisfying all the criteria in the preceding box. What must be the problems in getting learners to talk in the classroom? Think back to your experiences either as a teacher or a learner.

NOW LOOK AT THE BOX BELOW AND SEE IF THE PROBLEMS I HAVE COME ACROSS IN MY TEACHING ARE THE SAME AS YOURS.

Problems with Speaking Activities

1. Inhibition. Unlike reading, writing, and listening, speaking requires some degree of real time exposure to an audience. Learners are often inhibited to speak in a foreign language, worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism or losing face, or simply shy of the attention their speech attracts.

2. Nothing to say. Learners often complain that they cannot think of anything to say.

3. Low or uneven participation. Only one participant can talk at a time if he or she is to be heard, and in a large group this means that each one will have only very little talking time. This problem is compounded by the tendency of some learners to dominate, while others speak very little or not at all.

4. Mother-tongue use. Most learners tend to use the native language because it is easier, and it feels more natural.



WHAT A TEACHER CAN DO TO HELP SOLVE SOME OF THE PROBLEMS:

- **Use group work.** This increases the amount of learner talk in a limited period of time and also lowers learner inhibitions. It is true that the teacher cannot supervise all learner speech, so that not all utterances will be correct and learners may occasionally shift to the first language. However, even taking into consideration occasional mistakes and mother tongue use, the amount of time remaining for positive, useful oral practice is still likely to be more than in the whole class set up.
- **Base the activity on easy language.** In general, the level of language needed for discussion should be lower than that used in intensive language learning activities. It should be easily recalled and produced by the learners, so that they can speak fluently with the minimum of hesitation. It is a good idea to teach or review essential vocabulary before the activity starts.



□ *Make a careful choice of topic and task to stimulate interest.*

On the whole, the clearer the purpose of the discussion, the more motivated participants will be.

□ *Give some instruction or training in discussion skills.* Clear instruction on how to go about the activity should be given the class. To facilitate group interaction and to ensure that everyone contributes to the discussion, a chairperson for each group should be appointed.

□ *Keep students speaking the target language.* A monitor for each group may be appointed to remind the group participants to speak English. Still the best way to keep students to use the target language is simply to be there yourself as much as possible reminding them and modeling the language use yourself.



UNIT 2:
**THE FUNCTIONS OF
TOPIC AND TASK**



What is the topic?

A good topic to which learners can relate using ideas from their own experience and knowledge; the ability-grouping topic is therefore appropriate for most schoolchildren, schoolteachers or young people whose school memories are fresh. It should also represent a genuine controversy, in which participants are likely to be fairly evenly divided. Some questions or suggested lines of thought can help to simulate discussion, but not too many arguments for and against should be 'fed' to the class in advance: leave room for their own initiative and originality.

A topic-centred discussion can be done as a formal debate, where a motion is proposed and opposed by prepared speakers, discussed further by members of the group, and finally voted on by all.



Task

A task is essentially goal-oriented: it requires the group, or pair, to achieve an objective that is usually expressed by an observable result, such as brief notes or lists, a rearrangement of jumbled items, a drawing, a spoken summary. This result should be attainable only by interaction between participants: so within the definition of the task you often find instruction such as ‘reach a consensus’, or ‘find out everyone’s opinion’.

A task is often enhanced if there is some kind of visual focus to bare the talking on: a picture, for example.



Which is better?

When I have done the above experiment with teachers the task-centred activity scores higher with most groups on all criteria: there is more talk, more even participation, more motivation and enjoyment. When asked why, participants say things like: 'I knew where I was going, there was some purpose in speaking'. 'It was a challenge – we were aware that time was running out and we had to get a result'; 'It was more like a game, we enjoyed it'.

Thus, as a generalization, it is probably advisable to base most oral fluency activities on tasks. However, having said this, it is important to note that there is usually a small but significant minority who do prefer a topic-centred discussion: I found it more interesting: you can go into things more deeply without the pressure of having to reach a decision'; 'I like to debating, exploring issues in free discussions'. Such learners also need to be catered for so occasional topic-centred discussion should be included in a balanced programme.

The background of the slide is a soft-focus image of autumn leaves in various colors including red, orange, yellow, and green. A large, prominent leaf in shades of red and orange is on the left side. Other smaller leaves in yellow and green are scattered throughout the scene.

Unit 3 : Discussion activities



➤ Unit 3: DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

This unit presents a selection of discussion activities suitable for various levels. The study of their strong and weak points as classroom procedures is best done through experience as suggested in the teaching task below. Alternatively, you may find it interesting simply to read and think about the ideas in **Box 9.4** and then look at the following comments.



➤ Task

Classroom - or peer - teaching: trying out activities

Stage 1: Preparation

The activities in **Box 9.4** are laid out more or less in order of difficulty (of both language and task), the simplest first. Select one that seems appropriate for a class you teach, or may be teaching in the future, and, alone or with a colleague, discuss and note down how you expect this to work with them.



Stage 2: Experience

Do the activity. If you cannot conveniently do so with learners, then try it out with a group of colleagues, where one of you role-plays the teacher and the rest are students.

Stage 3: Reflection

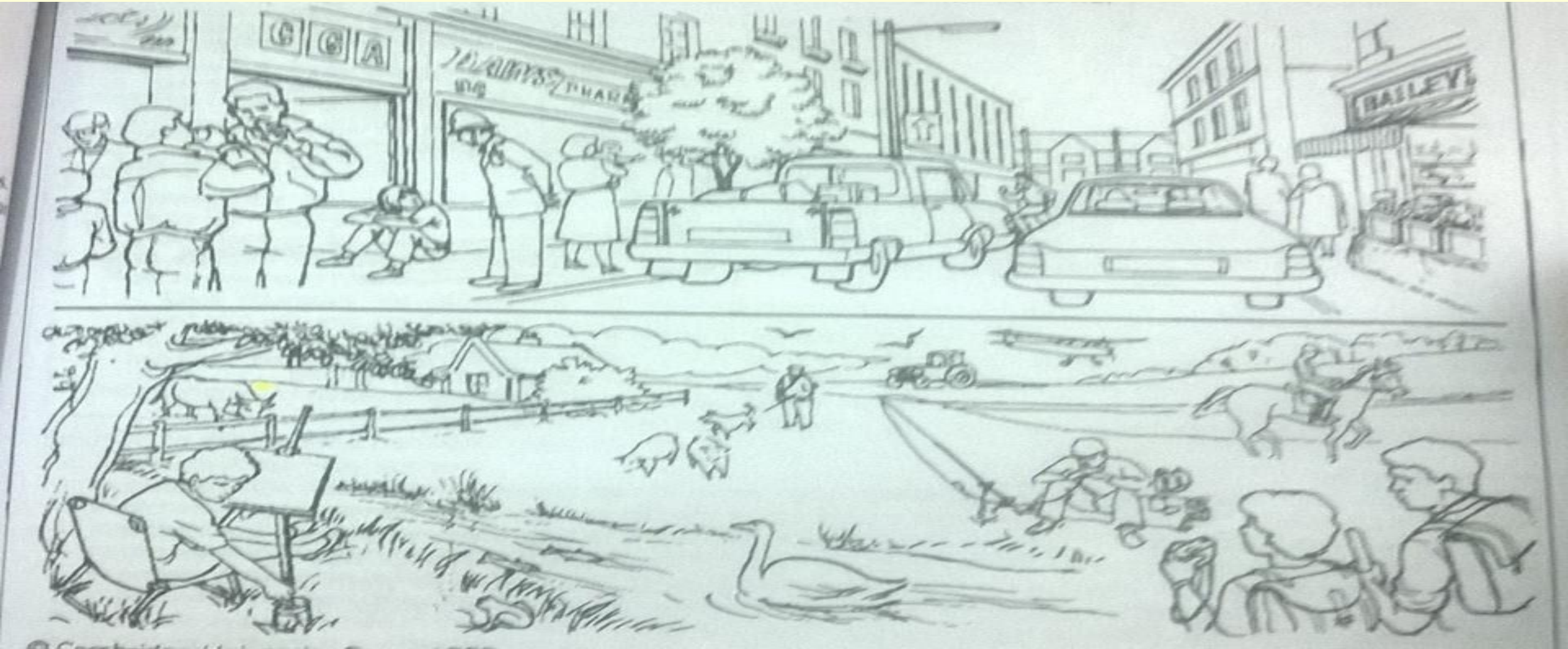
After finishing, discuss (with your observer if you had one) or think about your students' and our own performance. If you did it with a group of learners, base your discussion on the question on the question under Stage 1 above and your anticipatory answers: how accurate were your prediction.

Note that not all the ideas listed in Box 9.4 are necessarily good ones: some may have interesting weaknesses!

Box 9.4: DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

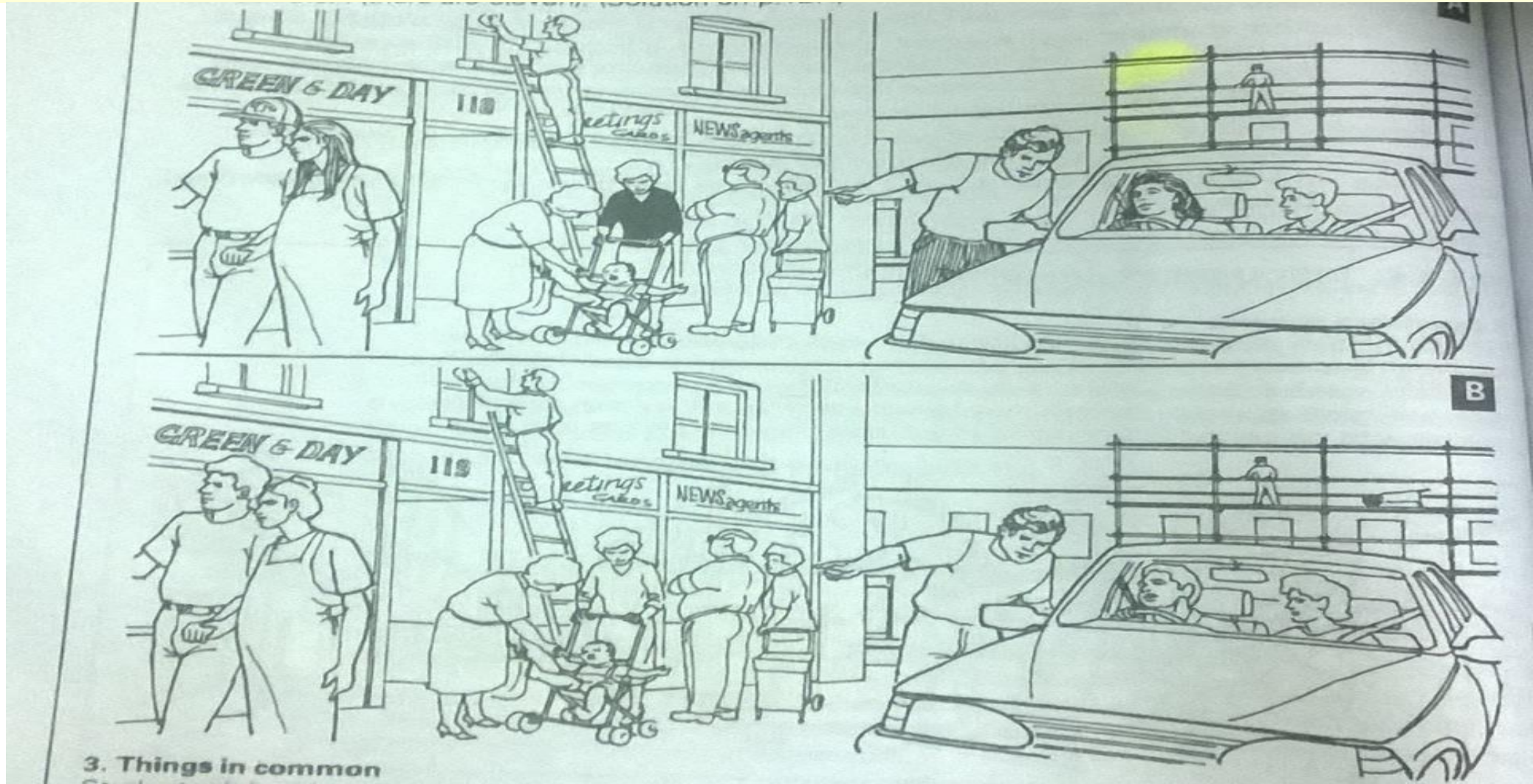
1. DESCRIBING PICTURES

EACH GROUP HAS A PICTURE (ONE OF THE TWO SHOWN BELOW) WHICH ALL ITS MEMBERS CAN SEE. THEY HAVE TWO MINUTES TO SAY AS MANY SENTENCES AS THEY CAN THAT DESCRIBE IT.



2. PICTURE DIFFERENCE

THE STUDENTS ARE IN PAIR, EACH MEMBER OF THE PAIR HAS A DIFFERENT PICTURE (EITHER A OR B).
WITHOUT SHOWING EACH OTHER THEIR PICTURES THEY HAVE TO FIND OUT WHAT THE DIFFERENCES ARE
BETWEEN THEM.





3. Things in common

Students sit in pair, preferably choosing as their partner someone they do not know very well. They talk to one another in order to find out as many things as they can that they have in common.

4 Shopping list

Imagine there is a miracle store that actually sells the commodities shown in the table below.

5. Solving a problem

The students are told that they are an educational advisory committee, which has to advise the principal of a school on problems with students.

Comments on the activities in Box 9.4

1. Describing pictures

This is a simple but surprisingly productive activity

For beginner classes. The second time round, with a new picture, the groups almost invariably break their previous record.

2. Pictures differences

A well-know activity which usually produces plenty of purposeful question and- answer exchanges.

3. Thing in common


An 'ice-breaking' activity, which fosters feeling of solidarity by stressing shared characteristics of participants, then the feedback gets a little tedious.

4. Shopping list

An imaginative, fun activity-but, as you will have found if you did it, actually rather sterile in the amount of talk it produces

5. Solving a problem

This is particularly suitable for people who are themselves adolescents, or involved with adolescent education, and is intended for fairly advanced learners



Unit 4:
**Other kinds of
spoken
interaction**



Comment:

Different kinds of interaction

Discussion tasks tend to be based on transactional talk, short turns and fairly detached argument or persuasion and which tend to be neglected are: interaction talk; long turns; talk which is based on (non-classroom) situations, emotions and personal relationships.



1. Interactional talk

This is to some extent a matter of learning conventional formulae of courtesy: how to greet, take leave, begin and end conversations, apologize, thank and so on. But even more than this is culture linked: how the interactional function of speech is realized in different languages depends as much on cultural convention as on knowledge of the words of the language.

For example:

Hi/ Hello ; Nice to meet you ; How are you? Sorry ; Thank you etc.




2. Long turns

The ability to speak at length is one which adult, more advanced or academic students will perhaps need and therefore needs cultivating; for other types of classes it may be less important.

For example :

I like milk.

I like milk because it helps me have a good healthy and increase the height.



3. *Varied situation, feelings, relationships*

It is certainly arguable that learners will need to function in a wide variety of such contexts, and it makes sense to give them opportunities to try using the target language in simulations of at least a selection of them. Conventional task based discussions do not provide such opportunities; but, as the extract quoted here claims, role-play activities do - which is a cogent argument for including them in a language course.



*Teaching these kinds of
interactions in the
classroom*



1. Interactional talk

The way interactional talk is carried out in different languages is very culture linked, and it is difficult to explain the conventions that govern it in a foreign language, it is dubious therefore whether it is worth investing very much effort in teaching and practicing them. My own opinion is that given general language proficiency and a knowledge and common sense. Some kinds of role play can give opportunities for practicing it.



2. Long turns

Some activities that help students to practice speaking in long turns are:

- **Telling stories** (well-known tales or personal anecdotes)
- **Telling jokes**
- **Describing a person or place in detail**
- **Recounting the plot of film, play or book**
- **Giving a short lecture or talk.**
- **Arguing a case for or against a proposal.**



3. **Varied situation, feelings, relationships**

The obvious classroom actives to use here are those based on role play. This topic is discussed more fully in Unit Five.



*Unit 5:
Role play and
related
techniques*



Unit 5: Role play and related techniques

- This refers to all sorts of activities where learners imagine themselves in a situation where they play the role of someone else, and use language appropriate to the new context.



Dialogue

- This is a traditional language-learning technique where students are taught a brief dialogue which they learn by heart. For example:
- A: Look, it's stopped raining!
- B: So it has! Do you want to go out?
- A: Yes, I've got a lot of shopping to do.
- Particularly for the beginners or the less confident, the dialogue is a good way to get learners to practice saying target-language utterances without hesitation and within a wide variety of contexts.



Plays

- These are an expansion of the dialogue technique, where a class learns and performs a play. This can be based on something they have read or composed or on an actual play from literature.
- Rehearsals and other preparations may be time - consuming, but the results can contribute a great deal to learning and to the learners' confidence.



Simulation

In simulations, the individual participants speak and react as themselves, but the group role, situation, and task they are given is an imaginary one.



Role play

Students are given a situation plus a problem or task, as in simulations, but they are also allotted individual roles, written out on cards.

▪ **For example:**

Role Card A: You are a customer in a bake shop. You want a birthday cake for a friend. He or she is very fond of chocolate.

Role Card B: You are shop assistant in a cake shop. You have many kinds of cake, but not chocolate cake.

Factors that contribute to the success of a role play are: making sure that the language demanded is well within the learners' capacity; participants' enthusiasm; careful and clear presentation and instructions. A preliminary demonstration or rehearsal by you together with a student volunteer can be very helpful.



Thank You!