

Better speaking: from practice to performance

Edmund Dudley and Sinéad Laffan

English Teachers' Day

Vienna, 5 December 2018

In this session

- Speaking: challenges and difficulties
- Strategies and activities for boosting confidence and improving performance
- Review and reflection

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Challenges and difficulties

Think about the classes when you focus on speaking skills:

- What are some of the challenges that you face?
- What would you say are the main difficulties that your students face?

Tell a partner, and then compare your answers

Challenges and difficulties

Some of the challenges that I face are...

The main difficulties for my students are...

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Strategies and activities...

...for boosting confidence and improving performance

1. re-thinking *I don't know*
2. improving interactive communication
3. making sense of roleplays
4. phone; a friend
5. ready-made language
6. extending utterances creatively
7. try it again?
8. collaborative practice

1. Re-thinking *I don't know*



I don't know...

When a student says this in class, do they feel that it is:

a.) evidence that their knowledge has been exhausted?

or

b.) the moment where learning can begin?

1. Re-thinking *I don't know*

In speaking tasks, we can:

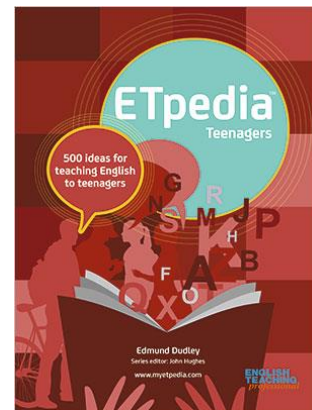
- provide students with face-saving phrases
- practise with a scale of 1-5
- help students develop skills of speculation

1. Re-thinking *I don't know*

- face-saving phrases

- ▶ *That's something I've never really thought about.*
- ▶ *I wouldn't know how to answer this question in my first language.*
- ▶ *I'm not a hundred per cent sure what you are asking with this question.*
- ▶ *I've never been asked this question before, so I'm not sure how to answer it.*

In most cases, this will lead to the question being rephrased or modified by the examiner.



1. Re-thinking *I don't know*

- practice with a scale of 1-5

Which is the only country in the world whose national flag contains no red, no white, and no blue?

1. I have no idea at all. Let's say...
2. I don't know. How about..?
3. I'm not sure. Could it be...?
4. I think it might be...
5. I'm a hundred percent sure it's...



Flag of Jamaica

1. Re-thinking *I don't know*

- help students develop skills of speculation

Put this language on the classroom wall.
Encourage students to use it in speaking tasks.

1. I have no idea at all. Let's say...
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2. Improving interactive communication

Before doing a paired task:

- provide students with some phrases for responding with empathy and interest to what their partner says
- to begin, encourage students to ask their partner to go first
- Were they really listening? They should ask a follow-up question once their partner has answered

2. Improving interactive communication

Before doing a paired task:

- provide students with some phrases for responding with empathy and interest to what their partner says

Really?
Are you serious?
What a nightmare!
Man, that sounds terrible!

2. Improving interactive communication

Speaking task:

Tell your partner about a time when you were caught in bad or dangerous weather.

Where were you?

Who were you with?

What happened?

What did you do next?

2. Improving interactive communication

A: Tell your partner about an occasion when you were caught in bad or dangerous weather. Where were you? Who were you with? What happened? What did you next?

B: Listen and respond appropriately.

Really?
Are you serious?
What a nightmare!
Man, that sounds terrible!

Ask some follow-up questions.

3. Making sense of roleplays

Before we practice roleplays in class, it might be worth:

- practising them in L1
 - to become aware of social norms involved
 - to notice what kind of language you need
- talking about real-life experience
 - to fill some of the gaps in students' real-life experiences

3. Making sense of roleplays

8 Work in pairs. Imagine the following situation. Your friend from another town is coming to stay with your family for two weeks over the summer holidays. Give him / her some advice. Discuss the following points:

- What he / she should pack for the visit.
- Activities you could do together.
- Advice on staying with your family.
- What sports he / she can do in your town.

Swap roles and repeat the Speaking activity.

Solutions 3e Intermediate, OUP

- practise in L1
- talk about real-life experience of the situation

4. Phone; a friend

- give students a prompt for a speaking task
- students work in pairs
- they film each other on their phones
- let them do several takes until they are happy
- camera operator can give “buddy feedback” between takes
- students share the finished product



4. Phone; a friend

What are the benefits of this technique?

- students are motivated to repeat and correct
- they have control
- they *enjoy* being filmed (strange, but true...)
- peer-feedback is usually welcome

Any drawbacks?

- time-consuming
- background noise sometimes an issue



5. Ready-made language

1. That's an interesting question...
2. Let me think about that for a minute...
3. Different people have different opinions on this topic. Personally, I think...
4. This isn't really one of my favourite topics, but...
5. I guess my answer to that question would be...
6. When I think about this topic the first thing that springs to mind is...

→ *Bingo* and/or card activity

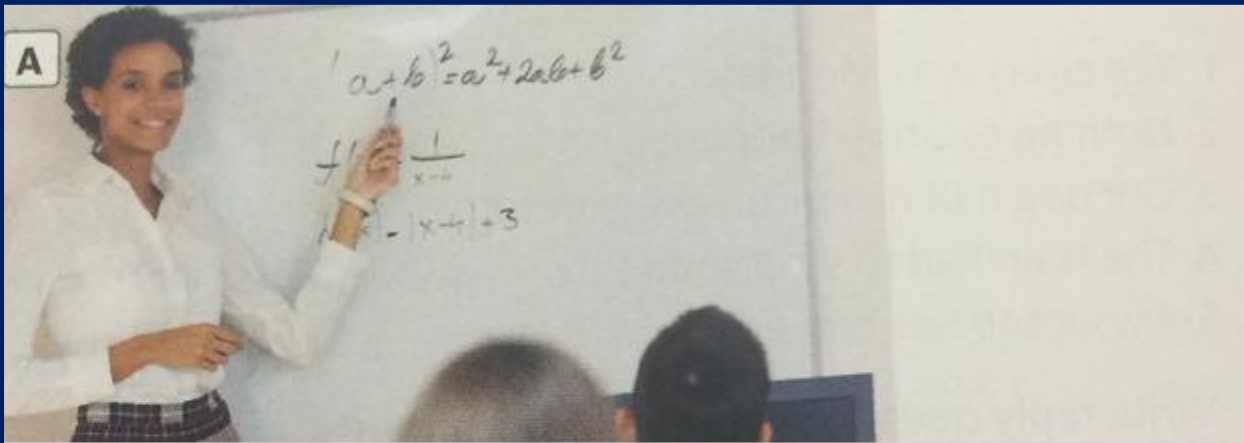
5. Ready-made language

- having useful chunks of language helps students buy time and collect their thoughts
- confidence is boosted not so much by using the phrases, but by *having* them ready

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6. Extending utterances creatively

What do you do when students respond to a question with “*I have no idea what to say*”?



A photograph of a female teacher in a white shirt pointing at a whiteboard. The whiteboard contains the following mathematical expressions:

$$(a+b)^2 = a^2 + 2ab + b^2$$
$$f(x) = \frac{1}{x+2}$$
$$|x-1| + 3$$

The teacher is smiling and looking towards the camera. In the foreground, the backs of two students' heads are visible.

A

- 1 Do you agree that in the modern world, science is a more important subject than languages? Give reasons.
- 2 Do you think technology sometimes makes it harder for people to communicate with each other? Why? / Why not?

Solutions 3e Intermediate OUP

6. Extending utterances creatively

Talk about your grandmother

Do you think technology sometimes makes it harder for people to communicate with each other? Why? / Why not?

Begin like this: *My grandmother always says...*

6. Extending utterances creatively

Talk about your grandmother

- provides a solid, personal context
- answers become more complex and interesting
- gives students an idea of what to say

Students should be clear that they do not have to talk about their real grandmother – or to tell the truth

6. Extending utterances creatively

Talk about when you were nine

Do you think technology sometimes makes it harder for people to communicate with each other? Why? / Why not?

Begin like this: *When I was nine...*

6. Extending utterances creatively

Talk about when you were nine

- same advantages as the *my grandmother* technique
- also provides a natural bridge from past tense to present tense

7. Now what?

A student has done a speaking task – and it hasn't gone very well. What is your response?

Does correction lead to improvement?

Do students appreciate / pay attention to correction?

What else might be effective?

4 **SPEAKING** Does your school have a music or sports club? What other clubs are there? Are you a member of any?

What should schools spend most money on: music, sport or school trips? Justify your opinions.

Solutions 3e Pre-Intermediate, OUP

7. Try it again?

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Solutions 3e Pre-Intermediate, OUP

A poor attempt at speaking could be caused by a number of factors other than proficiency level...

...insufficient time to prepare, lack of ideas, nerves, confidence, etc

→ Instead of correcting, *invite the student to try again.*

The second attempt is usually considerably better

8. Collaborative practice

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Solutions 3e Pre-Intermediate, OUP

1. Roll the dice

Work with a partner. Roll the dice. Whatever number is rolled, you have to say that many sentences in your answer. Then pass the dice

2. Double up

Two students collaborate on a single monologue, taking turns to speak as if they were a single person

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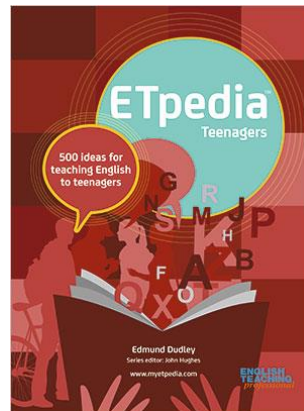
Review and reflection

Think on your own and then discuss:

- Which of the strategies and techniques explored today might be successful in addressing some of the challenges and difficulties you mentioned in Part I?
- Which challenges remain?

Reference

- Dudley, E (2018) *ETpedia Teenagers* Pavilion Publishing



www.pavpub.com/etpedia-teenagers

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